PANDEMIC GENRES

Imagining Politics in a Time of AIDS

NEVILLE HOAD

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Austin, April 2024

Introduction

> The highest as the lowest form of criticism is a mode of autobiography.
>
> OSCAR WILDE

I REALIZE, OR IMAGINE, that I have been researching and writing this book my entire adult life, maybe longer, often in ways that felt more like living than researching or writing. There have been many moments, long and short, of dead ends, false starts, frenzied spurts, overwhelmed abandoning, intellectual and political excitement and despair, lag and belatedness, and premature optimism. Waves of activism have surged and subsided. I have read of the end of AIDS many times, as its meaning and impact for various demographics have shifted—though it has also been difficult to think of friends, acquaintances, lovers, allies, and strangers as constituting "demographics."[1] Survivor's guilt happened and then stopped. Laws changed, medicine changed, policies changed, and continue to do so.[2]

Lines between reasoned argument and conspiracy theory got double-crossed. African truck drivers, the 4 H's (homosexuals, Haitians, heroin addicts, hemophiliacs), migrants inter alia were to blame. Male circumcision was a cause then a prophylactic. Then, it was all structural determinants: racism, poverty, political economy. HIV-positive people could be organized into a political identity. They could not or should not be. The disease could be politicized and/or needed to be handled purely scientifically.

An impossible heterogeneity of human experience has been crowded together under the banner of HIV/AIDS, marked by different constituencies of care and neglect, indifference and hatred, guilt and innocence, to name a few, and then how to imagine talking to, for, from, and about those constituencies? On the one hand, efforts to combat the pandemic were seen to have been hamstrung by a deafening silence. On the other, AIDS was from the outset an epidemic of signification—a cacophony of pronouncements, symptoms, fears.[3] We needed to cut through the noise. Difficult internalized

group affects like shame and stigma were the blockages. We needed mourning and militancy to counter those. Governance was the problem. Governance was the solution.

The yoking of sex and death created a deeper psychic crisis in the possibility of imagining social reproduction at all. I could (and will) go on, but I have landed back—for now—on Dennis Altman's assertion in 2000 that HIV/AIDS was best understood as *also a crisis of the imagination*.[4] The sites of that imagining of the crisis were/are manifold: most obviously the body itself in scientific and vernacular understandings partly produced by the long-standing ideological imaginings of race, sex/uality, the body politic in terms of both national and international political and social imaginaries, and then the political or public feelings, along with the personal/private ones that these contending imaginings stir, block, and disavow.[5] Much of this laundry list worms its way into this book that follows, falls behind, and gets ahead of itself. To begin archiving what this book asserts as a crisis in and for the imaginative faculties, I turn to some historical genres of cultural expression that privilege the imagination: novels, poetry, film, and to reading other genres that do not foreground their imaginativeness: beauty pageants, legal and policy documents, and memoir/testimony for what I riskily term their poetics.

I hope to mobilize the Audre Lorde of "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," when she defines "poetry as the revelation or distillation of experience—not the sterile word play that, too often, the white fathers distorted the word poetry to mean—in order to cover their desperate wish for imagination without insight," and when she locates in Black women particularly "an incredible reserve of creativity and power, of unexamined and unrecorded emotion and feeling."[6] These insights underwrote what has been termed the "affective turn" in certain humanities and social science scholarship. Simultaneously the turn to the poetics of genres that disavow their own poetics emerges from the powerful Cesairean declaration that "poetic knowledge is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge."[7]

Nearly twenty years ago, as I was starting to think about HIV/AIDS as a reading and writing project, I wrote about arriving in New York for graduate school, a decade or so earlier:

> The huge and fascinating world of gay Manhattan was emotionally and intellectually difficult to negotiate. The early nineties saw the continuation of the devastation of the AIDS pandemic. Anti-retroviral combination therapy was not yet widely available. I met gay men my age or younger (I was in my mid-twenties) or gay men in their fifties or sixties. It felt like the half-generation older

than me were dead or sick or dying. I briefly dated a man in his mid 40s who recounted that in 1989, he attended at least three funerals a week. At the same time there was a wealth of activism, intellectual inquiry, and quotidian practice around HIV/AIDS that was on the periphery of my consciousness. I remember bowls of condoms on coat-check counters at every gay bar and animated and often combative conversations about testing, safer-sex, seroconversion, status disclosure, monogamy, serodiscordant dating, promiscuity, drug-trials and the like, not realizing that I would revisit many related issues in a radically different context when a decade later I would begin writing about the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa which is now reported to have an infection rate of 25% and 32% in KwaZulu Natal province. I see part of the intellectual challenge of my current work as putting an essay like Douglas Crimp's "How to have promiscuity in an epidemic" in dialogue with questions of transactional sex and migrant labor to see what parts of a theory of sexuality as a collective rather than privatized set of norms and practices can travel or can travel only in a developmental and imperialist way and which ones cannot travel at all.[8]

Rereading that paragraph above, I am now struck by my coy evasion of the laboratory of "sex itself": the unthinkability of not using a condom, the occasional flashlight-bearing safer-sex monitor in backrooms intoning "Lips above the hips, gentleman," the forms of sociality in gay urban worlds that emerged and did not from visits to what a friend somewhat poetically termed "the petting zoos."[9] I will respect my earlier reticence. Out of that concatenation of experience and reflection, cause and effect, diagnosis and remedy, context and event, hope and terror—partially listed and then narrativized above—I found a small quasi-bibliotherapeutic thread to follow. Book-reading had always been a mode, an activity to stall the overwhelming flood of experience, to both lose and find myself, and to learn something about the world. How to start, where to proceed, and when to end became the simple and overwhelming questions. (I fear the haunting of childhood reading of *Alice in Wonderland* here: "'Begin at the beginning,' the King said gravely, 'and go on till you come to the end: then stop.'" Impossible advice to follow, and there relatedly were/are too many heads that warranted the fantasy of chopping off in the history of the imagination that this book attempts.)[10]

In the terrible and heady days of the first decade of the twenty-first century, as HIV/AIDS became a key component of international humanitarianism—the benevolent edge of what Teju Cole would later call "the white savior industrial complex," which I discuss in chapter 5—I had the strange fantasy of providing a reading list to the fleet of aid workers as they flew

between foundation meetings and hastily assembled African orphanages and local NGO offices. Would reading a novel like John le Carré's *The Constant Gardener* (2001) or better and shorter Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001), or a poem like Ingrid de Kok's "The Head of the Household"—analyzed in chapter 4—help them resist the self-consolidating sympathy I suspect underwrote the enterprise, or more importantly help the people they wanted to help? They did not have the time nor inclination to learn isiZulu, isiXhosa, Luganda, Setswana, and Kikuyu (and frankly neither did I), but a poem might be as, if not more, useful in the training of their imaginations in the life worlds of the objects of their care than another policy brief. I remain caught between W. H. Auden's assertion that "poetry makes nothing happen," and Muriel Rukeyser's sense that "poetry extends the document," and Audre Lorde's insistence on the affective and political necessity of poetry.[11]

This book project has been marked by the obsessive making and then tossing of bibliographies. There is, moreover, no doubt that the horizons of my imagination of HIV/AIDS have at least partly been structured by working as an instructor of literature and then as the codirector of an interdisciplinary human rights center at a law school in a US university during a long period of crisis in higher education over the value of the humanities. And then there is the attenuated nature of teaching and the often too lateness of learning, and the competing temporalities of academics and activism. I remember vividly an exchange with Rachel Holmes of FOTAC (Friends of the Treatment Action Campaign) on a panel in Austin in 2007, where I invoked the "Do no harm" sentence of the Hippocratic oath, which probably only works for doctors and may be impossible in an era of telehealth, to say we don't know enough yet to act effectively. She rightly responded, "We have no time. People are dying." My hope is that there might yet be something useful in the incommensurate temporalities of activist and academic work. *Pandemic Genres* probably contains vestiges of those pedagogical and bibliographic/therapeutic dispositional and institutional habits on the question of what, if anything, can the soi-disant literary and cultural critic contribute to understanding and ending the HIV/AIDS pandemic through attention to the historical and affective determinants of the imagination of HIV/AIDS, archived in literary and cultural forms?

Here is how I elaborate that driving question. During the long turn of the last millennium, HIV/AIDS became the focal point of a global public health crisis and a related international humanitarian one, both crises saturated

with national and global sentimentality, and requiring significant work of the imagination. For roughly the twenty years from the founding of World AIDS Day in 1988 to Barack Obama's 2009 reupping of George W. Bush's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (2003), key parts of national and international public spheres cared about AIDS. The demographics on both sides of that relationship of care, real and ostensible, did not remain static. World AIDS Day was founded to raise public awareness around the devastation that HIV/AIDS was causing in mostly gay male communities, themselves highly stratified, in the North Atlantic world.[12] The constituencies, real and imagined, of both iterations of PEPFAR were envisaged differently. Around the mid-1990s, when antiretroviral therapies became widely available in that North Atlantic world, the pandemic became less gay and more African in national and international public spheres: from the toxically rendered 4 H's (homosexuals, hemophiliacs, Haitians, and heroin addicts) to some geographically undesignated "African." As microbiologist and former executive director of UNAIDS Peter Piot noted in passing: "When we think of AIDS, it's Africans, black people and so in that sense there is probably that racist undertone."[13]

Internationally funded "aid"—much of it for HIV/AIDS prevention and then treatment—became a significant part of many African nation-state's healthcare, both in terms of national health budgets, and more pervasively, in terms of a large network of HIV/AIDS nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These events, processes, and institutions form part of the concatenation of discourses, practices, and policies that constitute neoliberalism, which is the global dominant in the imagining of political economy in this long historical moment. While the implementation of neoliberalism obviously differs even in places as geographically proximate as South Africa and Botswana, for the purposes of this book, it is possible to isolate three key features:

1. The extension of free-market principles into the realms of governance, social organization, and subjectivity.
2. The financialization of economic value, deregulation of economies, hegemony of global supply chains, and curbing of government spending, usually through privatization and austerity measures.
3. The individualization of responsibility and decline in the idea of the public good and the commons, and the attendant diminishing of democratic accountability.[14]

While neoliberal logics define the contexts, it is important to note that government expenditure on antiretroviral rollouts in both Botswana and South Africa push, at least partially, against the neoliberal dictum of reduced government spending on public goods like public health, even as the public sector contribution to the rollout has been uneven across the nine provinces of South Africa and the monies from the Global Fund and PEPFAR have been significant.[15] The presence of social and disability grants marks another site of the South African state's sometime resistance to neoliberal economic governance, even as the success of the rollout program meant some people living with HIV lost access to the sustaining support of disability grants because they were no longer deemed "AIDS-sick."[16] Concurrently, the experience of Africans living with HIV/AIDS became a subject/object of aesthetic representation in multiple genres by Africans and others. The figures, tropes, and rhetorical strategies of these diverse cultural representations engaged the representational strategies of the public policy pronouncements of officials of postcolonial states, an emerging global NGO-speak, the organs of international bodies like the United Nations, and national and international journalism, to name a few. *The tropes, figures, and rhetorical strategies of those diverse cultural representations, particularly on the terrain of feeling, comprise the topic of this book.*

The understandable and justified rhetorics of urgency around the pandemic produced a figuring of the human experiences of those people most affected by it: those who needed help, through, on the one hand, a universalist rights talk and, on the other, necessary but dehumanizing discourses of pathogens, practices, numbers, and demographics. The helpers in contrast saw themselves and were seen to inhabit the affective structures of a sympathetic imperial benevolence. In understanding the pandemic, attention to representations of experience that consider questions of the aesthetic, when it was broached at all, was presented as something of a luxury. Much superb ethnographic work—Mark Hunter, Catherine Campbell, Didier Fassin—powerfully suggested that careful listening to the experiential narratives of individuals and communities living and dying in the pandemic could and should impact ameliorative policy initiatives and should give rise to collective mourning and memorializing projects.[17] This book hopes to analyze expressive cultural genres of representation for alternate imaginaries of HIV/AIDS and develop modes of reading dominant, more "realist" genres to highlight the *imaginative* work they enable and block.

Estimates in the early 2000s claimed that South Africans were dying at a rate of 600–800 people a day from HIV-related causes. It takes the work

of the imagination to make that number meaningful.[18] It is this work of the imagination that I have somewhat riskily termed "poetics" in this introduction. This task of imagination is obviously globally stratified—those of us living and dying in the heart of the global pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa will feel and experience it differently from those of us elsewhere, and there is obviously massive internal differentiation within that positing of a divided geography. Although a powerful claim by the South African memoirist, Adam Levin, the subject of chapter 2, reads: "Aids is a riddle. It is invisible and yet is everywhere, all around us, in people we love, in me. It doesn't matter if you are Hiv—positive or negative. The world has Aids. And if you give a shit about the world you have it too." But of course we do not all have it in the same way, and that accusatory "if" condenses many political and affective questions.

I attempt to imagine how we might take Levin's simple sentence "The world has Aids" seriously. What kind of an archive would need to be assembled? What analytic tools, narrative strategies, and disciplinary and interdisciplinary protocols could begin to pose the overwhelming set of questions in that simple sentence? Very few scholar/writers have the learning and/or training to be properly interdisciplinary, but an ill-disciplined reading of that archive can run interference in a global network of easy certainties about Africa, illness, and real and ostensible aid. Let me work through five examples of what could constitute part of this imaginative archive: iconographic, narrative, ethnographic, legislative, and exhortatory— respectively, an anonymous reappropriation of a famous South African photograph, the sentence from Adam Levin's memoir mentioned above, Didier Fassin's recounting of the story of Puleng, the US "President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief" (PEPFAR) (2003), and a passage from Edwin Cameron's *Witness to AIDS* (2005). Both the differences among the five in scale, reach, and power and the oddness of their juxtaposition form part of the comparative point.

In the era of state-sanctioned AIDS denialism in South Africa, it was common to imagine the deaths from the pandemic as the singular sign of the betrayal of the national liberation struggle. This betrayal is most damningly rendered iconic in T-shirts emblazoned with the reappropriation of probably the most famous photograph of the national liberation struggle: Sam Nzima's pieta of Hector Petersen, being carried by his schoolmates after being shot by the police in Soweto in 1976. That iconic image has the caption appended—"Who is killing South Africans now?"[19] I cannot but think that the composition of the image as a pieta accounts for much of its resonance, drawing as it does on centuries of Christian representations of

innocent suffering. That the image shows Petersen being carried by other children rather than by a maternal figure adds to the powerful blasphemy of the photograph. What happens to the figure of the child-headed household under the conditions of the pandemic is front and center of the analysis of the Ingrid de Kok poem in chapter 4. In the early 2000s, that question of "who is killing South Africans now?" was forcibly directed at the Mbeki government. Nevertheless, the answers to that question move far beyond the problems of the response of the organs of the state.

While the pandemic is clearly in South Africa, it is equally clear that it is not simply of South Africa. Jean Comaroff parses this claim with trenchant irony: "The pandemic is savagely cosmopolitan, making blatant the existence of dynamic translocal intimacies across received lines of segregation, difference and propriety."[20] The paradox of a savage cosmopolitanism gets at the deep historical and transnational determinants of the individual deaths caused by AIDS without reinstating the pieties of a failing nationalism, as we also remember the difficulties of distinguishing between friend and enemy, co-national and foreigner, in the periodic spates of xenophobic violence in South Africa.[21] Phaswane Mpe's 2001 novel, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (mentioned in my putative reading list for aid workers), is the text that eerily prefigured those events, with HIV imagined as a central othering strategy, across the divides of city and countryside, foreigner and citizen, the living and the dead.

There are enormous ethical difficulties in broaching Levin's deceptively simple claim that "the world has Aids." PEPFAR, the piece of legislation that I discuss in what follows, asserted that "the world has Aids," though it resisted the universality that the word "world" implies through its focus on "foreign countries." PEPFAR speaks for and about, but very rarely to or from, HIV-positive people around the globe. The only individual voices cited in PEPFAR are those of President George W. Bush and his quotation of a frustrated doctor in rural South Africa. We are regrettably, and perhaps unavoidably, in the ongoing legacy of Marx's indictment of "parliamentary cretinism" in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*: "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented."[22] But AIDS is not only a disease of subalternity. Anyone can get it but not everyone does, and the possibilities of life-sustaining treatment fell and fall too often along the lines of the world's great power cleavages.

Before we get to PEPFAR, let us imagine where to look for the voices and experiences PEPFAR excludes. Testimony is a crucial and powerful form

and practice in galvanizing support for fighting the pandemic, but is not easily translated into policy pronouncements, and necessarily invokes the baggage of native informancy. Testimony cannot avoid its own performative and generic structures, even as it performs the claim of unmediated access to the authenticity of personal and historical experience. Didier Fassin, in an interestingly anxious reading of a story told to him by a dying woman in Alexandra, the oldest "township" in Johannesburg, South Africa, articulates the power and limits of testimony: "But the fact that her life narrative is part of a practice that may be qualified as 'cultural,' in the sense that it is deeply embedded in a space of conventions historically situated, does not exonerate the person receiving it from reflecting on its meaning." Remarking that Puleng was probably unconsciously following autobiographical practices that the media, international organizations, and social science researchers have helped to spread does not mean there is no need to analyze what she meant in telling of herself. Puleng tells Fassin: "On my funeral day, I don't want you to prepare a meal. Because people act like at a party. It costs a lot of money. But what's the use if I'm dead. It's only to put them in debt. No, I just want them to bury me . . . But I don't think of that all the time."[23] We see HIV/AIDS suspending, if not breaking, rituals of cultural continuity because such rituals are not materially sustainable due to debt. We further get the sense that Puleng may authorize Fassin's account even as she is not presented as an author of it, but most importantly for my purposes, we see that the most personal of accounts may also be the most ideologically saturated, which should be a reason for taking them more seriously rather than dismissing them. I run up against this conundrum repeatedly in my second chapter on memoir.

Secondly, there is an idea in Levin's claim that the world may have AIDS that AIDS may be a symptom of the massively complicated commodity chain that distributes resources—material and affective, life and death—so unevenly. There is no international tribunal, nor perhaps can there be, in front of which to make this accusation, but then as Levin, with an aching archness, claims, "But justice has nothing to do with Aids or pain or life. I think I should pin a little note on my forehead just in case I am tempted to forget something absolutely critical to my physical and emotional well-being. 'Remember: Nothing is fair about Aids.'"[24] Survival is a kind of fundamental ethical position here, and for so many in sub-Saharan Africa, impossible. For those of us who have time, silence feels like complicity and to speak at all is to risk obscenity. I am reminded of Paul Farmer's assertion in *Pathologies of Power*: "Writing of the plight of the oppressed is not a particularly effective

way of assisting them";[25] but this may be less true about writing about fictionalized or poetic accounts of such human subjects. Imaginative genres like fiction and poetry and to some extent testimony have already issued an invitation to be read and discussed. Fassin's claim above that Puleng's testimony needs to be analyzed as something other than an instance of socially mediated narrative may open a small window here onto the Lordian affective domain and its agential possibilities.

Let us now focus on a particularly powerful document's imagination of the pandemic—namely the 2003 US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, commonly known as PEPFAR. My first set of questions: How does this plan imagine and equally importantly resist imagining the human subjects it wishes to help? When and where does it imagine the targets of its interventions as individuated human subjects, as a demographic, as a figure to be constructed—the African suffering from HIV and the helping hero/es—to list two such figures. Since I wish to read PEPFAR as a document in the archive of the imagination of AIDS, I have chosen to focus on what might be termed its poetics. Poetics works best for making the work of the imagination meaningful, and PEPFAR has an interesting relation to the Aristotelian unities. Didier Fassin argues powerfully that an insistence on an idea of shared space and time between the centers of the pandemic and the rest of the world is critical for establishing a moral imperative to alleviate the suffering caused by the pandemic: "Contemporaneousness asserts belonging to a common world experience simultaneously in its convergences and confrontations, a world to which we all belong but experience differently."[26]

A poetics also has a techne, a set of rules for constituting its shifting subjects. In many ways it would have been easier to write an analysis on "The Politics of PEPFAR," with PEPFAR seen as driven by aspects of the US domestic agenda—an uneasy mix of evangelical compassion and moralism—saving the world through an imposition of Christian sexual morality; but even "abstinence only" is more complicated than that, and a consideration of the appropriations for PEPFAR reveals that roughly only 7 percent of the monies to be allocated were reserved for abstinence-only prevention initiatives. Let me explain my own numerical manipulations. In its initial allocations 20 percent of PEPFAR's total budget was earmarked for prevention programs, and a third of that had to be for "Abstinence until Marriage" (AUM) programs, so a third of 20 percent is just under 7 percent. The AUM requirement was removed by the Bush administration at the end of its tenure in 2008. Nearly $1.5 billion was spent on such programs, which many

academic studies revealed to have minimal or no prevention impact.[27] If I had led with the dollar amount rather than the percentage, I suspect outrage rather than minimizing might be the readerly affect, but since I don't want the perfect to be the enemy of the good, I didn't. Funding for the AUM programs may have been the price for bipartisan congressional support, and the programs were presumably dropped once that political calculus was no longer in play.

Although it is still possible to discern a family-values agenda in PEPFAR in terms of its concern with children and orphans over homosexuals or men who have sex with men (MSMs) and intravenous drug users. The invention of MSM as a category of people to be reached by HIV prevention efforts reveals a taking seriously of the critique of the idea that sexual acts create identities, though, in many ways, MSM rather quickly becomes an NGO-prompted social identity.[28] Willy-nilly, HIV/AIDS prevention policies fashioned new kinds of people, though PEPFAR tended to imagine preexisting kinds of people, and fairly sentimentally at that.

One of the things that may make it easier for a regime to cut AIDS services at home but expand them abroad is that the predominantly heterosexual nature of HIV transmission in places like sub-Saharan Africa allows for identification in place of demonization where difference along the line of race is mitigated by an imagined sameness along the lines of sexuality, kinship, and, more unevenly, religion. As will become clear, a poetics may contain or imply a politics, but cannot really be reduced to one, especially if we understand politics as a calculus of the possible. To read PEPFAR as if it were a poem is clearly a category error, but to read it for its poetics may allow the work of the imagination in the response to the pandemic to become visible.

Levin's sentence "The world has Aids" makes the world, rather than an individual living and/or dying with it, or a particular country or demographic, the subject of the pandemic. In terms of a more narrowly Aristotelian poetics, we would seem to be in the terrain of the epic here. The pandemic begins *in medias res*—as a moment in a variety of powerful world historiographies, sometimes as repetition, sometimes as rupture. It has been my earlier contention that former South African president Thabo Mbeki's controversial responses to the pandemic facing his citizens, at least partially, grew out of a recognition that HIV/AIDS revealed the persistence of imperial ideas about the lasciviousness of Blackness going back to the roots of the civilizing mission of European imperial interest in Africa.[29] For the historiography of decolonization, HIV/AIDS represents a significant failure

of the transformative promises of independence and freedom, as it does in the great narratives of Enlightenment ameliorative public health. AIDS is not polio or smallpox, in the sense that modern science and public health have not eradicated it, though smallpox in an earlier era of colonization has a terrifying history, sometimes in the mode of avoiding colonial responsibility for genocide.[30] In addition, so much response to the suffering of the pandemic has been to blame the victims: AIDS as God's punishment for sin. I want to risk the absurdity of imagining a reading of PEPFAR as if PEPFAR were a poem, maybe even an epic poem about the world having AIDS. HIV/AIDS is also obviously a tragedy, inspiring pity and terror but little catharsis. What feelings is an epic likely to inspire? And what, if anything, might they be good for?

Secondly, how might those whom PEPFAR imagines as its objects of emergency relief read the poetics of such a document? How might these human subjects understand themselves as imagined by an initiative like PEPFAR? Their experiences are clearly varied in the extreme, and my reading will have to repeat some of the strategies of PEPFAR itself in working through similar processes of abstraction, generalization, condensation, figuration, and ambiguity, while attempting to hold in place the claim that one of the things a poetics is useful for is access to the singular.

The central piece of legislation for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief is Public Law No. 108–25, 117 Stat. 711 (May 27, 2003), passed by the 108th Congress, and self-described as an act "to provide assistance to foreign countries to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, and for other purposes."[31] Its short title is "United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003." The paleonymy of the word "act" can undo readers here, but that might be more generally true of all "acts" rather than be specific to just this one. I read this act as representative of the imagining of the pandemic by the rulers of the most powerful country in the world. "Emergency plan" pulls in at least two directions as something like a contingency plan for an emergency and a plan in response to an emergency. And then in the semantic register of the law, there are "states of emergency"—the legal suspension of the law due to real or imagined threats to the possibilities of governing under the law.[32] The act goes on to imagine aid in a way that violates the national sovereignty of a whole range of countries, especially those in "sub-Saharan Africa," in that it abrogates to itself the right to set health policy for other countries. "Emergency" justifies intervention, and I have not even touched the cluster of (subjective) associations surrounding

the word. One could do something similar with "plan," noting the contrast of its measured, rational, and practical connotations with the urgency of "emergency." Given what we learned about "just in time capitalism," particularly in relation to global supply chains during COVID shutdowns, the phrase "emergency plan" feels somewhat quaint.

As a piece of legislation, however, the rules of its genre require that it refute many of the language features we associate with a poem. It must imagine the language it deploys as minimally ambiguous, limit rather than proliferate its references, create a blueprint for action and accountability, and imagine a consensus in the ways that it should be read. Simultaneously, the act has a poetics in that it must both shorthand and elaborate the set of situations it wishes to ameliorate and perform the forms of its genre, while invoking and perhaps creating poetic chains of association. While its authorship is nominally attributed to the president in its common name—PEPFAR—its official short-title suggests a collective author—a huge collective author—in the words "United States." Although obviously the act is not written by everyone in the United States. This representational strategy of representational democracy opens into a poetics in the sense that the following cluster of questions emerge:

1. (a) Is the authorizing body—Congress—in metonymic relation to the whole US—whichever way we can imagine that?
   (b) Or is a single congressional representative a proxy for his constituents?
2. Does the phrase "United States" denote a staggering diversity of referents—even as it marks a set of limits, most obviously citizenship?
3. May the act itself wish to make the US mean something that it has not meant before i.e., a world leader in the fight against AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis?

Let us move first to the findings of the act:

> Congress makes the following findings: (1) During the last 20 years, HIV/AIDS has assumed pandemic proportions, spreading from the most severely affected regions, sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, to all corners of the world, and leaving an unprecedented path of death and devastation.
>
> (2) According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), more than 65,000,000 individuals worldwide have been

infected with HIV since the epidemic began, more than 25,000,000 of these individuals have lost their lives to the disease, and more than 14,000,000 children have been orphaned by the disease. HIV/AIDS is the fourth highest cause of death in the world.

(3)(A) At the end of 2002, an estimated 42,000,000 individuals were infected with HIV or living with AIDS, of which more than 75 percent live in Africa or the Caribbean. Of these individuals, more than 3,200,000 were children under the age of 15 and more than 19,200,000 were women.

(B) Women are four times more vulnerable to infection than are men and are becoming infected at increasingly high rates, in part because many societies do not provide poor women and young girls with the social, legal, and cultural protections against high-risk activities that expose them to HIV/AIDS.

(C) Women and children who are refugees or are internally displaced persons are especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence, thereby increasing the possibility of HIV infection.

(4) As the leading cause of death in sub-Saharan Africa, AIDS has killed more than 19,400,000 individuals (more than 3 times the number of AIDS deaths in the rest of the world) and will claim the lives of one-quarter of the population, mostly adults, in the next decade.

While the act may begin in agreement with Adam Levin's claim that the world has AIDS, there is no "finding" on the gay deaths at home, arguably still the most prominent association with the suffering from HIV/AIDS in the US in 2003. In its synoptic logic, the act partly removed the US from the world, ignoring the vulnerability of racial and sexual minorities in the US in the more than 65 million individuals who have been infected with the HI virus over the last twenty years. We are in some of the domestic costs of US exceptionalism here. Plus, given the then US regime's resistance to meeting its financial obligations to the United Nations, the reliance on United Nations numbers slides between irony and hypocrisy.[33]

PEPFAR's reliance on the figuration of the body count cannot pass unnoticed here. What feelings might the affective flatness of these tabulations invoke in a reader? Does providing the huge number of people affected overwhelm or facilitate a speedy passage through the text? An irresponsible anecdote to shorthand a supplementary reading here: Sometime in the early 1970s, my sister is refusing to eat her dinner, a common occurrence. My mother attempts to shame her into doing so by invoking the "millions of starving children in Biafra." My sister, who was and remains sharp, responds, "Name three." Of course, the act cannot name all 25 million people who have died of AIDS, because it is not interested in them as individuals and the act

would still be being read in Congress years later. Though I do not know how exactly long it would take to list and read 25 million names, there are public representations for which numbers will not do. War memorials, for example, have at least two strategies: one literal—list the names of every dead soldier; one achingly poetic—the genre of the tomb of the unknown soldier, whose anonymity is paradoxically the ground for his representativity. These war memorials do the *post facto* work of memorializing and mourning.[34]

The act under discussion here cannot really broach how its author—the "United States" or the "world"—could or even should mourn these 25 million dead. The great public memorial project of the first wave of the pandemic among gay men in the US, the AIDS quilt, invests movingly in the singularity of each death as it expands and reworks a gendered, sentimental national craft—quilting. I do not think a mandated global quilt could do the same work—and we are right to be wary of governments that tell people how to express their feelings, and the form and meaning of a quilt are hardly universal. (The contrast between the AIDS quilt and the COVID memorial on the national mall is the subject of my coda to this book.) In the genre of the war memorial, the causes of death—the enemy combatants/regimes—oscillate in their significance in the face of shared human mortality.

Similarly, in the case of HIV-related deaths, questions of blame or responsibility in a document like the one under discussion are relentlessly politicizable, but recede under the moral imperative of ameliorative action, or more simply President Bush's claim of "a plague of nature." This problem can be parsed as follows: becoming involved in working out who and/or what can be blamed for these deaths gets in the way of action. Simultaneously, without a narrative and analysis of causation, how can one imagine remediation? The initiative, at least in the moment of its findings, with the attendant focus on identifying those most vulnerable, will dodge this dilemma through a chivalric construction of women, children, and refugees as worthy victims.[35]

What distinguishing characteristics are given to the dead and the future dead here? The past dead may enter the act only as a rationale for urgency; they stand as warnings of future death if nothing is done. And we can argue whether that characterization works to humanize them or not. In terms of the living, the important characteristics are geography, gender, age, and refugee or internally displaced status. Occupational status appears not to matter, though later soldiers and agricultural workers will be mentioned. Geography may appear as a euphemism for race, though the rising rates of infection in the Russian Federation are seen as a problem. Victimology

along a sentimental vector of innocence appears the most consistent rubric for understanding those the pandemic most affects. And innocence has an identitarian character. The earlier history of the US's own pandemic similarly reified categories of victimage—the four H's—Haitians, homosexuals, hemophiliacs, and heroin addicts—with varying degrees of the imagining of responsibility within the desire to suggest that if you were not one of these four H's, you were okay. The necessity of establishing those who are victims versus those who are agents of their own infection is an important distinction in the policing of sympathy and identification, and thus, worthiness of help. One could perhaps inhabit these identities in subversive ways, for example, by claiming that migrant laborers are internally displaced people or refugees, but mostly these expanded categories of victims—women, children, refugees, internally displaced people—are given minimal history—the historical processes under which these identities became vulnerable is underexplored—because of fear of complicity between the ostensible benefactors and larger agents of the same vulnerability, but PEPFAR never imagines this. The line between helpers and helped must hold in the no man's land where no one is responsible for the suffering endured.

The question of accountability is most cogently and incoherently begged in President Bush's claim of HIV/AIDs as a "plague of nature." No tabulations have been made for a body count of American AIDS-related deaths for US inaction during the 1980s and 1990s, and I am not sure what forms of actuarial practice could do this. In the case of South Africa, Pride Chigwedere and others claim the death toll from Thabo Mbeki's AIDS denialism as 330,000 preventable deaths between 2000 and 2005.[36] The tracking of causation in these calculations feels impossible to me, as the relation between structural vulnerability and policy failure are hopelessly overdetermined, and this tabulation of preventable deaths and the attachment of them to a South African president indicates the "naming and shaming" strategy of human rights more than anything else.[37] I could not produce a number of deaths for, let's say, the AUM programs of PEPFAR, and my general hunch is that we need much more expansive imaginings of accountability and justice than isolating political leaders in a world that has AIDS. The problem of counting and discounting is central to my final chapter.

While PEPFAR cannot really imagine accountability beyond "a plague of nature," its imagination of effective policy, alongside its implicit distinctions between innocent and guilty "victims," reveals deep commitments to classed and "civilizational" intimate sexual and family forms, investments

partially shared by the 2004 film *Yesterday*, discussed in chapter 3. Most obviously, the act holds up Uganda as the African nation state exemplifying what can be shorthanded as best practices—a term extensively critiqued in chapter 5:

> (A) Uganda has experienced the most significant decline in HIV rates of any country in Africa, including a decrease among pregnant women from 20.6 percent in 1991 to 7.9 percent in 2000.
>
> (B) Uganda made this remarkable turnaround because President Yoweri Museveni spoke out early, breaking longstanding cultural taboos, and changed widespread perceptions about the disease. His leadership stands as a model for ways political leaders in Africa and other developing countries can mobilize their nations, including civic organizations, professional associations, religious institutions, business and labor to combat HIV/AIDS.
>
> (C) Uganda's successful AIDS treatment and prevention program is referred to as the ABC model: "Abstain, Be faithful, use Condoms", in order of priority. Jamaica, Zambia, Ethiopia and Senegal have also successfully used the ABC model. Beginning in 1986, Uganda brought about a fundamental change in sexual behavior by developing a low-cost program with the message: "Stop having multiple partners. Be faithful. Teenagers, wait until you are married before you begin sex."
>
> (D) By 1995, 95 percent of Ugandans were reporting either one or zero sexual partners in the past year, and the proportion of sexually active youth declined significantly from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s. The greatest percentage decline in HIV infections and the greatest degree of behavioral change occurred in those 15 to 19 years old. Uganda's success shows that behavior change, through the use of the ABC model, is a very successful way to prevent the spread of HIV.

In moments such as these, the poetics of PEPFAR appear to collapse into ideology, and thus invite contestation and demystifying. Conveniently ignoring the fact that the Uganda statistics are disputed, largely along the lines that the 1995 statistics do not have figures for large parts of the country, the act holds up the so-called ABC plan. This acronym implies a pedagogy and a poetics of pedagogy, and an insulting one at that. The best strategy to fight AIDS is likened to learning the first three letters of the English alphabet. We are not told how this acronym translates into African languages. It is so simple any child can do it. During a time when neoliberal economic policies mitigate against public education in highly indebted poor countries like Uganda, the use of learning the alphabet in English—a metaphor for literacy perhaps—as the strategy for social marketing as a "very successful way to prevent the spread of HIV" can only be read as irony. Moreover, this imaginary

of sex in Uganda is produced by spectacular condensation and displacement. ABC did not work only cognitively in the way that PEPFAR imagined it. It also generated a range of phobic, graphic, demonic, and demonizing imaginaries. For a sampling of the sexual representations of the longer life of ABC, readers with strong stomachs and an appetite for the absurd are encouraged to google charismatic Ugandan pastor Martin Ssempa, who runs with ABC to engender in images and languages of scandal, disgust, and terror a particularly wild pornographic configuration of family values and "normal" sexual behavior. The long life of ABC includes the showing of gay rimming and fisting pornography in churches with injunctions not to "eat the poo poo," and the bringing of phallic fruit and vegetables—cucumbers, carrots, and bananas—to daytime television talk shows to demonstrate the dangers of sodomy. I do not want to rehearse the "homosexuality or homophobia is the decadent western import debate here," but need to note that the incitement to behavioral change often also works along the lines of shock and awe, to borrow a slogan, as much as rational assent. The film *Miss HIV* (2008) discussed in chapter 1 is at least honest enough to assert that people needed to be made to feel very afraid. The appropriate literary term for this Ugandan moment in PEPFAR is most likely euphemism.

In terms of the moralizing, rather than the moral, imagination of PEPFAR, what became known as the "anti-prostitution pledge" (APP) or the "anti-prostitution loyalty oath" (APLO) marks obviously ideological intrusions in the neoliberal imperial benevolence of PEPFAR and reveals the continuities between older colonial forms of "helping" and newer de-territorialized ones.

> No funds . . . may be used to promote or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution or sex trafficking.
>
> No funds . . . may be used to provide assistance to any group or organization that does not have a policy explicitly opposing prostitution and sex trafficking.
>
> Nothing in the anti-prostitution clause "shall be construed to preclude" services to prostitutes, including testing, care, and prevention services, including condoms.[38]

These injunctions forget the overriding rationale of PEPFAR as an act/ion to alleviate suffering through the improvement of health outcomes. PEPFAR imagines the APP or APLO as a prophylactic against any figuration of sex work as a labor rather than a moral issue and wishes to exclude an obvious key constituency in HIV prevention and treatment from access to the political. The third clause will, however, grant access to the minimally medical.

It is difficult to argue against "health," even if it is both well-known and obvious that the term and the practices that have been held under it contain a multitude of normative assumptions and judgments and that population health is one of the most powerful sites of biopolitics and more subjective and affectively saturated versions of "the good life." Sex workers can receive "testing, care, and prevention services, including condoms," but not dignity or any form of support that might help them organize to improve their lives, and thus appear as both deserving and undeserving "victims of AIDS" and as figurations where the contradictions in the document between aid and policing emerge. The anti-prostitution clauses are fought from the outset through several successful legal challenges in the United States, and their implementation has been uneven, though the chilling effects have been extensive.[39]

With these caveats around ABC, and sex workers, somewhat surprisingly I find the plan less riddled with irony and ideology than the motivation or the findings. It sets out to collaborate with many stakeholders in the rollout of antiretrovirals, and while initially the proviso allowing only brand-name drugs could be used to make accusations of a shell-game kickback to pharmaceuticals, the implementation of the plan fairly soon allows for generics—after testing—a necessary step given the history of third-world drug dumping and the scandals of substandard generics.[40] PEPFAR does not imagine intervening in standard protocols of testing, despite contemporaneous work on the difficulties of testing in sub-Saharan Africa. Edwin Cameron has called for routine if not mandatory testing, which flies in the face of deeply held assumptions that testing must be voluntary and confidential. Cameron argues that such testing will facilitate treatment, if and when treatment is readily available, and will do much to reduce stigma, given that circumstances particularly in rural areas make confidentiality almost impossible.[41] Jonny Steinberg's *Sizwe's Test: A Young Man's Journey through Africa's AIDS Epidemic* (2008) dramatizes through a singular story the immense psychological difficulties around testing. Steinberg's book, with its sustained attention to the interactions, achieved and avoided, between an individual and the kind of public health initiatives PEPFAR would want to support, offers insights that PEPFAR, perhaps due to the generic limitations (as a piece of legislation) imposed on its moral imagination, fails to consider. And still Sizwe refused to test.

Over its now twenty years, PEPFAR funds have enabled access to life-saving pills for millions of people. Ungenerously, I note how the antiretroviral rollout can also begin to look something like an alibi. Laurier Decoteau

makes the important point "that when the shift to governing health through biomedical citizenship is centered on the squatter camp, it can be understood as a form of exclusionary inclusion. By doling out pills without providing sustainable living conditions, the post-apartheid state has abandoned the poor."[42] However, that accusation should not only be leveled at the post-apartheid state. The same accusation can be reworked in terms of the international range and reach of PEPFAR. By doling out pills through a newish network of public and private partnership—biomedical citizenship in the PEPFARian imagination is, oddly, partly denationalized—the US government performs ostensibly benign neoliberal governance as a way of not acknowledging the causal role of neoliberal economics in the production of health vulnerability in the populations it says it wants to help.[43] While this critique holds, it can also be abused, most obviously in the way that it underlay the AIDS denialism of former South African president Thabo Mbeki and his health ministry.

Moving from the act's imagining of the helped and the help to that of the helpers, as President George W. Bush proclaimed in his 2003 State of the Union address: "Ladies and gentlemen, seldom has history offered a greater opportunity to do so much for so many. . . . The United States should lead the world in sparing *innocent* people from a plague of nature" (italics mine).[44] There are multiple layers of irony here, and the demand for purity of motive seems facile in the double-edgedness of imperial benevolence. We are, at least, in an idea of a shareable history, albeit in the self-aggrandizing language of opportunity rather than responsibility. It might be possible to make a reading of presidential self-staging as an Aristotelian tragic hero—an embattled president embroiled in an increasingly difficult, unjustified, and unpopular war (five months before he declares "mission accomplished" for a conflict that lasted officially another twenty years, with the fallout for the people of Iraq and Afghanistan continuing and no end in sight). Instead, here President Bush—the younger—seeks a humanitarian legacy, blinded by hubris, but, at least, promising to make a valiant effort to address what many have called the greatest humanitarian crisis of our times. Even so, this version of the pandemic appears as the equivalent of a moral bargain—to do so much for so many—requiring minimal sacrifice on the part of the doers.

The rhetorical echoes of another famous speech by a leader of the so-called free world cannot go unnoticed. Here is a line from arguably the most-quoted wartime speech of Winston Churchill about the efforts of RAF fighter pilots: "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed

by so many to so few." Reading across anachronistic temporal frames—something a focus on imaginative reconstruction may permit—George W. Bush may at least have had an antifascist unconscious before antifascism gets shorthanded into ANTIFA and becomes a salvo in a rearticulation of the culture wars as an enemy of patriotism rather than its ground. An imagining of Bush as a fighter pilot may not only have occurred during his notorious Top Gun photo op in the same year, if one remembers who the "so few" refers to in Churchill's speech.[45] Toymakers capitalize and/or satirize this national imagining of militarized masculine leadership when they make a George W. Bush "Top Gun" action doll in time for Christmas later the same year.[46] The archive of what Lauren Berlant called "national sentimentality" dredges all kinds of flotsam and jetsam. (I am trying hard not to make a 2023 "Barbieheimer" joke here.)

The prevalence of military metaphors in virology and in the "fight against AIDS" more broadly would form part of an extended imaginative context for this reading.[47] In the historical movement from yellow ribbons to red ribbons to pink ribbons as symbols of public awareness/consciousness-raising, the trace of military symbols/metaphors becomes visible in the ameliorative efforts that may claim that the suffering from illness is comparable to war trauma, and reworked and displaced imperial nationalism emerges as the buried concept-metaphor of humanitarian care.

The idea of the pandemic as a moral opportunity without military metaphors is invoked by South African judge Edwin Cameron in the close of his memoir, *Witness to AIDS* (2005):

> We cannot escape our grief or the losses we have experienced or the suffering that has been. But we can act to minimize those occurring now, to prevent further deaths, to open our hearts and hold in them those who, now, are afflicted with illness and its isolation. Our grief is there, continent wide—pandemic. But we cannot allow our grief and our bereavement to inflict a further loss upon us: the loss of our own full humanity, our capacity to feel and respond and support. We must incorporate our grief into our everyday living, by turning it into energy for living, by exerting ourselves as never before.
>
> AIDS is above all a remediable adversity. Our living and life-forces are stronger, our capacity for wholeness as humans is larger than the individual effects of the virus. Africa seeks healing. That healing lies within the power of our own actions. In inviting us to deal with the losses it has already inflicted, and, more importantly, in enjoining us to avoid future losses that our own capacity to action make unnecessary AIDS beckons us to the fullness and power of our own humanity. It is not an invitation that we should avoid or refuse.[48]

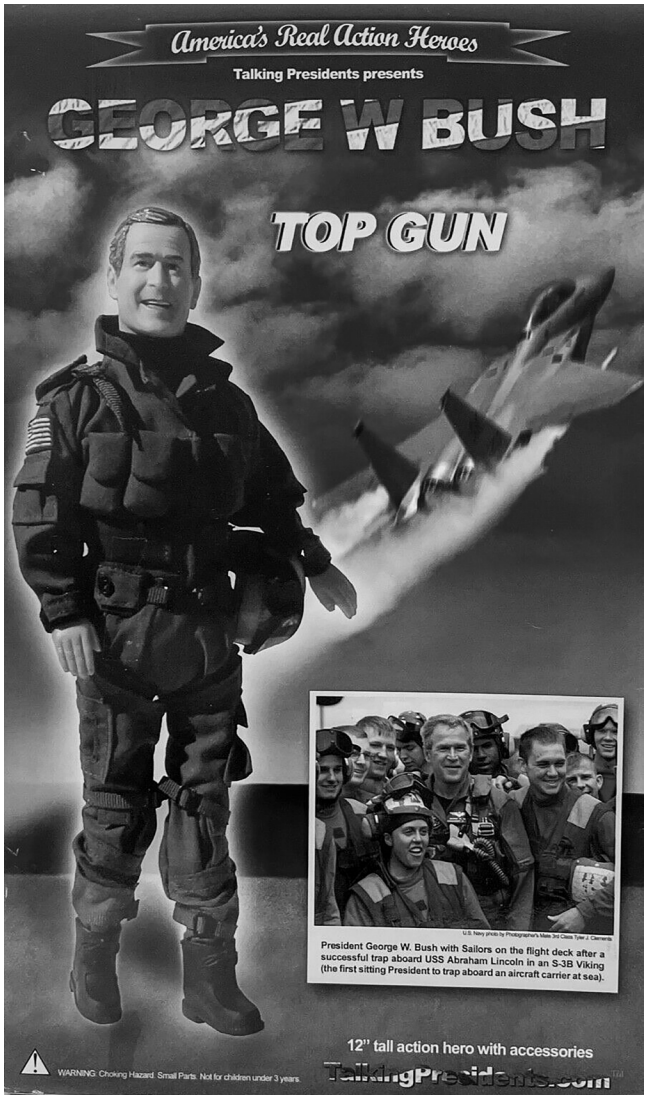

FIGURE 1. George W. Bush Top-Gun Doll (2003). Talking Presidents. "George W. Bush Top Gun Doll with Accessories, Limited Edition, Action Figure A1." Photograph courtesy of the George W. Bush Presidential Library.

We, and like Cameron's "we," this plural pronoun must remain open, are in an imagination of a collective subject almost saturated with agency, in the concept-metaphor of invitation rather than opportunity. Cameron insists on a liberal humanism that, even though it shares a history with President Bush's imperial benevolence, also differs from it in the insistence

of the work of mourning—the sublimation of grief into exertion. Grief too is pandemic, continent wide. *Witness to AIDS* offers an invitation, but "we" need a plan.

PEPFAR, the anonymous reworking of Sam Nzima's iconic photograph, Fassin's story of Puleng, and passages from two South African AIDS memoirs show us how to imagine how the world is in HIV/AIDS, and how "the world has Aids," and indicates what a reading for the imagination may look like. The book that follows this introduction investigates *how* more formally sublimated aesthetic representations and performances supplemented ethnographic, journalistic, national, and international legal and policy accounts. The book samples and analyzes the archive of cultural production—novels, poems, films, a beauty pageant—around the pandemic in very different national contexts, namely Botswana, Kenya, South Africa. While national difference in the kinds of cultural responses to the pandemic mattered, I argue that the iterative traces of colonial notions of the sexuality of Blackness—perverse and normative—were central to many imaginative accounts of African encounters with HIV/AIDS for readers literate in English, alongside the hangover from the earlier gay North Atlantic incarnation of the pandemic.

Moreover, novels, poems, and films frequently represented the pandemic in the terms of the "tradition/modernity" dyad as the macro-explanation of African subjective experience. Throughout the book, I demonstrate how these genres—old and new—are prompted by the immediate circumstances of local and national instantiations of the pandemic and how their representational strategies draw on much deeper and wider discourses of race, sex, and power. My analysis of these cultural products moves from the difficulties posed by a certain kind of reality testing—can they be seen as historically representative?—to the question of how and why they imagined HIV/AIDS in the ways that they did and what can be learned, and for who, from these imaginings. In short, when is the subject of HIV/AIDs imagined as a universal collective and when is it particularized, stigmatized, or granted immunity?

The cultural archive of the pandemic was vast, growing, and continually in search of new forms—I think here of the memory book phenomenon, or the integrated (in terms of genre, such as comic books, newspapers, billboards) multimedia campaigns growing out of South African television soap operas.[49] The linguistic competence and multiple disciplinary training needed to read that archive, like the archive itself, is overwhelming. Therefore, evidence of strategic sampling is apparent in the chapter outlines

that follow. While it would be tempting to present the chapters as case studies, they need to remain more dialectical to produce the concepts, feelings, experiences, and discourses of the cases studied.[50]

The book makes one central argument: the long historical *imaginaries* of race and empire (in all their extractive and humanitarian guises), and sex in its full panoply of incoherence, underwrote (or overwrote) all attempts to bring the pandemic into public representation, and that attention to genres which stage themselves as imaginary may at least forecast possibilities for new imaginaries.

Early on in the epidemic in the North Atlantic world, Paula Treichler offered an analysis of HIV/AIDS as "an epidemic of signification"—a powerfully contested site of meanings around political economy, disease, stigma, sexuality, race, and medicine.[51] Cindy Patton produced a still startlingly resonant account of the construction of African AIDS in the west in 1990, but the speed of the progression of the pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa and the spectacular failures of both the postcolonial African state and the major institutions of the international public sphere to make any serious inroads in the spread of the disease induced what could paradoxically be termed a paralysis of pragmatism, and the insights of Treichler and Patton struggled to move beyond the North American academy.[52]

The idea of HIV/AIDS as also a problem of signification, representation, and hermeneutics became discredited as somehow an immoral response to the specter of so much premature (and increasingly, apparently unnecessary) death. The former South African president Thabo Mbeki's couching of his so-called "denialism" in precisely the terms of the historical construction of the disease did not help.[53] The HIV/AIDS pandemic appeared in the public spheres of "the developed world" as part of the deeply phobic ongoing histories of colonialism, or as "the wages of sin," or as a major humanitarian crisis. Emma Guest's *Children of AIDS* (1989, updated and reprinted in 2004) and Stephanie Nolen's *28: Stories of AIDS in Africa* (2007) bookend the journalistic engagement with a documentary, testimonial desire to turn the encounter with Africans living with HIV into what Lauren Berlant has termed "an empathetic event."[54] Some fascinating travel-writing resulted, including Dervla Murphy's *The Ukimwi Road* (1993).[55] Ruth Whitney's novel *Slim* (2003), set in Uganda, gave fictional form to the empathetic event.[56] In the 1990s, African writers like Alexander Kanengoni and Vivienne Kernohan were already writing back.[57] In 2000, Meja Mwangi published *The Last Plague*, and in 2001, Phaswane Mpe published *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*.[58]

In 2008, Sindiwe Magona's *Beauty's Gift* appeared.[59] These texts perform translation work for local and global English readers in negotiating the slide between the familiar and the exotic—the difficulty in making the claim that Africans affected by HIV are just like you and then not; how ideas of cultural difference intersect with analyses of emerging globalization in the reporting of the human face of the pandemic.

The first part of this introduction offered a series of snapshots or fragments from the diverse and diffuse archive of imaginings of HIV/AIDS in intersecting national and transnational contexts to set up the often singular cultural representations that follow. These cultural representations sometimes concur with and sometimes dispute other significant attempts to shift HIV/AIDS imaginaries: Both Paul Farmer and Dennis Altman powerfully recast HIV/AIDS as a consequence/symptom of global political economy, revealing the complicities between uneven development and the spread of HIV evident in the imaginings of PEPFAR.[60] Uzodinma Iweala's *Our Kind of People: A Continent's Challenge, A Country's Hope* (2012), along with the aforementioned Didier Fassin book, show weaving personal testimony into broader sociological explanations can shift both epidemiological and sociological accounts.[61]

PLAN OF THE BOOK

Chapter 1 sets the stage by analyzing the figure of Miss HIV as a form of subcultural or vernacular storytelling and pedagogy, as the imagined center of the pandemic shifts from the North Atlantic gay world of the 1980s to sub-Saharan Africa, and as a protagonist in a global culture war around issues of sexuality. The Miss HIV Stigma Free Beauty Pageant, first held in Botswana in 2003, marked the use from below of a beauty pageant—a hegemonic form often understood by a globalizing western feminism and specific nativisms/nationalisms as oppressive, along sexism and cultural imperialism lines, respectively. The pageant was sponsored by the multinational pharmaceutical Merck, a local NGO (The Center for Youth and Hope), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and De Beers (the South African diamond monopoly).[62] Reading the pageant at the level of production makes it clear that the "African" HIV/AIDS pandemic and the responses to it can never be adequately described by the designation "African." The contestants were sometimes trained on how to be a beauty queen by the reigning Miss

Botswana. In key ways, the pageant works by specularizing the reclaiming of normative gender fantasies by stigmatized subjects. Miss HIV Stigma Free was, however, not the first Miss HIV. As far as I can track her, Miss HIV makes her debut in John Greyson's extraordinary 1993 AIDS musical *Zero Patience*, and stars as the villain of Ethnographic Media's documentary about the Botswana pageant *Miss HIV* (2008).[63]

By the early 2000s, the gay male AIDS memoir was a recognizable international literary genre from Herve Guibert in France to Reinaldo Arenas (Cuba/US), Paul Monette, David Feinberg, and David Wojnarowicz (US), and Adam Mars-Jones (UK), to name just a few of the most famous.[64] Essex Hemphill and Joseph Beam's anthology *Brother to Brother* offers a significantly more political take on these biographical lineaments along the vector of race.[65] Chapter 2 explores Adam Levin's *Aidsafari* (2005) as a gay, white South African memoir that inevitably inhabits the histories shorthanded in those broad identitarian categories, about the time when HIV/AIDS shifts in the global imagination from a gay disease to an African one.[66] The Levin memoir is about the experience of a kind of sexual outlaw, a hedonistic party boy laid low and then halfway redeemed by his eponymous neologism—Aidsafari—one word—a kind of bourgeois David Wojnarowicz with a potentially happy ending. Levin's memoir makes and resists high humanist claims around universalist moral imperatives in relation to the pandemic but also reveals how its pains and burdens are borne with massive differentials within a distinctly personal, perhaps even singular account.

Chapter 3 analyzes Darrell Roodt's *Yesterday* (2004) as the first isiZulu-language feature film and the first South African feature film to make a person living with HIV its central protagonist.[67] *Yesterday* retells the oldest South African story: a family destroyed by migrant labor, though the temporality of this family form is clearly a palimpsest whose history is oddly out of place. The narrative unfolds in hauntingly familiar ways with AIDS as a new wrinkle in the drama of the affective and subjective forms of colonial modernity in what could be termed the South African liberal imaginary. I argue that the phantasmatic nuclear family ripped asunder by AIDS is imagined as a necessary point of identification for viewers in order to have sympathy with the eponymous Yesterday's predicament, and that it thus obscures rather than reveals the intimate lives it hopes to create sympathy for.

Thinking about the role of affect in public life, chapter 4 refutes Habermasian notions of communicative rationality that have historically struggled both to engage and theorize "political feeling." I engage key

feminist and queer scholars Lauren Berlant, Ann Cvetkovich, Audre Lorde, and Douglas Crimp—mostly based in the United States—and their ideas, respectively, of a "corresponding publicness to the intimate," "public feelings," "poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought," and connections between ideas and practices of mourning and militancy. I work with these thinkers to reconfigure hegemonic liberal ideologies around the public/private split in the context of the South African HIV/AIDS pandemic, focused on poems about HIV/AIDS.[68]

The chapter analyzes the relation between illness as a profoundly subjective, embodied experience and a public one, deeply mediated by social discourses of shame and stigma, the historical forces of racialization and the market, new forms of governmentality in relation to the ir/rationalities of public health policy, and beyond. That these representations are poems, and thus bound up with performances of formal protocols and ideas of aesthetic sublimation, adds a corresponding wrinkle to the question of what kinds of public knowledge and subjective experience they may contain. Contextually, many of the major questions that the rubric of public feelings wishes to address are evident in an event like the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, where narrative testimony was imagined as having emotionally reparative force in a wider project of nation-building.[69] Borrowing from Muriel Rukeyser's idea that "poetry extends the document," and Audre Lorde's "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," I turn to poetry as a way of interrupting what could be called neoliberal uses of testimony, documentary realism, and memoirs as the privileged archive for thinking about the role of affect in public life.[70] My hope is that the poems can stand in supplementary rather than substitutive relation to these other forms and genres.[71]

Many of the texts published about HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa in English at the turn of this millennium conform to the narrative rules and prose styles of what is often termed fiction for "young adults" and operate within the framework of the confessional with the apparent intention of warning/educating HIV negative people and/or promoting tolerance of those who are already HIV-positive. Chapter 5 will focus on Carolyne Adalla's *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* (Kenya, 1993) and Lutz van Dijk's *Stronger Than the Storm* (South Africa, 2000).[72] Both novels reveal a fatalism difficult to recoup for political agency, relying on a sensational moralism to do the work of imagining survival and social reproduction in the face of the pandemic. In *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, the first-person narrator of what is essentially one half of an epistolary novel represents herself

and her infection as the result of bad personal choices. The young people in *Stronger Than the Storm* are clearly victimized by more than themselves. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is revealed as both a new crisis for the reproduction of social life and as a continuation and intensification of preexisting colonial and postcolonial biographies. In the perceived urgency of their pedagogical imperatives, both novels chart swerving courses between figurations of agency and victimage. Both novels engage their historical contexts through an allegiance to realism and by inviting national allegorical readings, but also need to produce more universally identifiable protagonists.

Kgebetli Moele's *The Book of the Dead* (2009) provides the single-most elaborated fictional attempt to imagine the HI virus as an authorial agent.[73] HIV is presented as the actual author of the second half of the book. Chapter 6 reads Moele's novel as an attempt to understand the historical agency of HIV/AIDS in post-apartheid black South African biographies by making HIV an author, and further considers the oblique references to other possible books, authors, and genres for the writing of these biographies. Death by AIDS can be read in the novel as punishment for the racial betrayal of the national liberation struggle by Black elites for forgetting the historical injustices of settler-colonialism and apartheid, even as the sociological descriptions in the novel refuse to name apartheid explicitly. The eponymous book of the dead rewrites the notorious documentary forms and practices of the apartheid state in an often almost literal counting and discounting of Black life and death.

The coda to this book deals with "African AIDS" in the time of COVID. The top brass of the United States wanted to ignore HIV/AIDS in the 1980s—Ronald Reagan notoriously managed to serve seven of his eight years as president without mentioning the word AIDS publicly. That was not the case with Donald Trump and COVID-19. Trump produced a series of spectacularly incoherent pronouncements, sometimes with the intention of minimizing the risks of this new coronavirus, but also using the virus to stir the mix of xenophobia and economic protectionism central to the populist tenor of his presidency generally. Since the threat of COVID was perceived as universal and less containable to marginal populations, ignoring the disease was not an option for Trump as it was for Reagan. The cultural and symbolic differences between a disease whose mode of transmission is mostly airborne and one which is mostly sexually transmitted are at play here, particularly in terms of the moral logics of guilt and innocence. In relation to the two very different pandemics, and in terms of an ill-defined

phenomenon named denialism, Trump, on occasion, began to look more like an earlier South African president, Thabo Mbeki, whom he could not resemble less stylistically or temperamentally. This coda resituates the central arguments of the book in the era of another global pandemic.

This book will be the first single-authored monograph to analyze the literary and cultural production of and about the "African" HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is in dialogue with *Blood on the Page* (2010), Lizzy Attree's collection of interviews with African writers, who have written about HIV/AIDS, as well as Ellen Grünkemeier's *Breaking the Silence: South African Representations of HIV/AIDS* (2013), though my book will suggest that there was more noise than silence in this representational scene.[74] I use the extraordinary ethnographic insights of Jonny Steinberg's *Three Letter Plague/Sizwe's Test* (2008) to both ground and expand upon the readings of the cultural archive of the pandemic.[75]

This book continues and partly revises for an African set of texts and audience the now long tradition of cultural analyses of HIV/AIDS arguably inaugurated by the Paula Treichler essay mentioned above, given defining impetus by the anthology *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism* (1988) edited by Douglas Crimp, and hopes to join the resurgence of works on HIV/AIDS such as Joseph Osmundon's wonderful *Virology: Essays for the Living, the Dead and the Small Things In Between* (2022), Steven Thrasher's *The Viral Underclass: The Human Toll When Inequality and Disease Collide* (2022), Marika Cifor's *Viral Cultures: Activist Archiving in the Age of AIDS* (2022), Laura Stamm's *The Queer Biopic in the AIDS Era* (2021), and Ally Day's *The Political Economy of Stigma: HIV, Memoir, Medicine and Crip Positionalities* (2021), as well as the edited anthologies: *AIDS and the Distribution of Crises* (2020) and *Literary and Visual Representations of AIDS: Forty Years Later* (2020).[76] *Pandemic Genres* adds a selected African archive to these inquiries and offers a more global contextualization to their predominantly national framings to understand better what Jean Comaroff has called the "savage cosmopolitanism" of the pandemic, which implicates us all.[77]

Over the many years that I have been working and not working on this book, I have been asked about its main "takeaways"—mostly by well-intentioned people. That is a question that makes me both defensive and irritated. "Takeaways," besides being the non-American English word for fast food takeout, can seem part of the ensemble of neoliberal governance discourses—the vulgar lazy sibling of "best practices"—that I critique in chapter 5: easy, portable, resistant to accountability, reductive. Instead of

writing a book, I guess I could have made a bumper sticker, or refrigerator magnet, or even better yet a piece of kitchen verbal art, along the lines of "Live, Laugh, Love" that said "read, think, imagine, care." The political, moral, and aesthetic imperatives contained by those words are immensely difficult and would obviously not be the same for all readers and their experiences and imaginings of a worldly "African" HIV/AIDS pandemic.

ONE

Beauty Pageants

FIGURING OUT MISS HIV

> Poetic knowledge is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge.
>
> AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

> We want the creative faculty to imagine that which we know.
>
> PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

THE QUESTION OF THE FIGURE

AS SHOWN IN THE INTRODUCTION, there is an overwhelming amount of published material in a staggering array of genres and venues with an equally overwhelming set of political allegiances on the HIV/AIDS crisis over the course of its now four-decade-long public history.[1] While the paleonymy of the term "figure" lurks, the focus of this book is elsewhere. I am interested in how the pandemic and those most affected by it have been imagined, and particularly how the pandemic has been imagined in terms of embodiment. Many have attempted to give the pandemic a human face, from the innocent child victims—Ryan White in the United States and Nkosi Johnson in South Africa—to the phobic spectacles of the dying and emaciated bodies of first the gay man and then the African AIDS patient, which have circulated widely in local, national, and international media.[2] The celebrity HIV-positive person offers another figuration of the problem of creating a face for the pandemic; Magic Johnson and Rock Hudson in very different ways are exemplary for the US and Fana Khaba (aka Khabzela) for South Africa.[3]

A welter of documentary and testimonial practices has tried to give the person living with AIDS a face and a voice. Stephanie Nolen's *28*, twenty-eight short biographies of people living with AIDS (PWAs) in Africa, has the representational aspiration that each story will represent a million

stories: twenty-eight stories for the estimated 28 million people, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, living with HIV in its year of publication, 2007.[4] These documentary attempts do powerful cultural work.

In this chapter, I am interested in another kind of figurational attempt—one that uses fantasy to supplement the testimonial realism of these more documentary projects—to bring those affected by the pandemic into representation. "Figure" is a tricky word, with a proliferation of cognate meanings from drawing to number to feminine embodiment inter alia. The figure under discussion in this chapter is "Miss HIV." Miss HIV is a figure in that she is a complex representation that is required frequently to be both a representation and a representative. This figure, differentially embodied in the examples to follow, works as a *prosopopoiea* of sorts—a speaking in the guise of another. Thus, the person with HIV, or the imagining of HIV as a person, as a beauty queen or drag queen, is suggestive of new conditions of suffering, pedagogy, identificatory possibility, and historical agency in the multiply ironized and contested field of representations that constitute imaginative meanings of the pandemic in an era of globalization.

BEAUTY PAGEANTS ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

The figure of a Miss HIV relies on the imagined almost universal intelligibility of the beauty pageant in the mode of campy irony in my first case, the mode of sincerity in the second, and the form of a polemic in the third. In the popular parlance of the cyberworld, beauty pageants have "gone viral."[5] The form and event of a beauty competition is useful for a diversity of political causes, norms of sociality, and economic possibilities. Recent decades have seen a proliferation of these competitions in many contexts, from US agricultural festivals to drag queen pageants in the Philippines alongside the longer-running national and international beauty pageants. The durable international popularity of the television show *RuPaul's Drag Race* provides further evidence. A Miss Landmine competition was held in Angola in 2008, and a Miss Landmine competition was cancelled in Cambodia in July 2009.[6] The first-ever Miss Beautiful Morals pageant was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2009.[7] Although the basic form of the competition is clearly transnational, and the nature of the beauty pageant as a spectacle of sorts usually means that its audience is always potentially expanding, the meanings of individual pageants are often singular and local.

Two pageants with global aspirations, the UK-based Miss World and the US-based Miss Universe, can accurately be understood as entrepreneurial opportunism in an era of neoliberalism. These two pageants are international—national contestants compete for each title—in their understanding of representation, though transnational in the ways they are organized and financed.[8] They also initially fit a model of globalization as cultural homogenization. But recent histories of the pageant form suggest a more complex relationship of local, national, and global public spheres. Miss HIV figures unevenly on this terrain.

Beauty pageants often expose the contradictions they wish to manage with explosive consequences. The Miss World pageant scheduled for Kaduna, Nigeria, in 2002 is exemplary. The pageant was moved to London after riots that resulted in two hundred fatalities. A Christian journalist, Isioma Daniel, in the Lagos daily *This Day*, had written that Muhammad would probably have chosen a wife from one of the contestants. This comment exacerbated regional, national, and international tensions over the imposition of the death penalty for adultery by a *shari'a* court on Amina Lawal in Katsina in 2002.[9] An international feminist call for a boycott resulted. Yet the local authority, in this case *shari'a*, represented yet another globalizing force, namely Islamism. The pageant revealed preexisting political tensions within Nigeria between the predominantly Muslim north and the predominantly Christian and oil-rich south. These tensions go back at least as far as the Nigerian civil war of 1967–70, and beyond that, to the contested inheritances of colonial rule.[10]

The significant work of beauty pageants—the staging of group representation in the flesh—is not only visible in pageants with obvious global reach. The idea of the beauty competition has a deep history. In the Hellenistic tradition—through which a very long and convoluted project, which could be called western civilization, imagines its origin—Paris's adjudication of the beauty of the goddesses Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite unleashes the Trojan War. (I mention this for those of you who might think beauty pageants are too lowbrow to warrant serious attention. No beauty competition, no *Iliad*, no *Odyssey*.) In the arguably less mythic time of the present, the typical title of the winners of such pageants is invariably Miss _____ (fill in the blank), revealing an interesting tension between the exalted idea of a queen and the democratic, egalitarian, almost dismissive title "Miss." A queen is a powerfully illiberal figure of sovereignty suggesting an excess of agency and no shortfall of fabulosity, and consequently a fantasy figure of unbridled freedom.[11] The "Miss" reins her in.

This chapter, however, will investigate three incarnations of a newish figuring of the beauty queen and her pageants, Miss HIV, in diverging national and international spaces, with different purposes, constituencies, and outcomes.

The first appearance of a Miss HIV that I have found is in Canadian filmmaker John Greyson's extraordinary 1993 AIDS musical, *Zero Patience*.[12] My second case study is an actual pageant called Miss HIV Stigma Free, first held in Botswana in 2003. The third incarnation under discussion will be the 2008 documentary film, somewhat disingenuously titled *Miss HIV*, in which the Botswana pageant serves as a foil for the promotion and/or resurrection of the Ugandan "Abstain, Be Faithful, Use a Condom" HIV prevention campaign of the 1990s, commonly known as ABC.[13] Flirting with what Lauren Berlant has called "the romance of the incommensurate," I will argue that the figure of a Miss HIV beauty or drag queen does very different kinds of representational work in these respective contexts, and suggest that the incarnations of this figure share an investment in making the pandemic intelligible for their imagined audiences in ways that engage and contest a range of epidemiological and policy arguments.[14] These versions of Miss HIV are irreducibly local and simultaneously important in the creation of expanded global awareness about the pandemic and in revealing the political and affective stakes in the task of representing HIV/AIDS.

ZERO PATIENCE: THE DEBUT OF MISS HIV

Zero Patience is a film containing a difficult-to-summarize narrative intertextuality and spectrum of historical reference.[15] It is first and foremost a full-frontal attack on popular media and scientific representations of the HIV/AIDS crisis in North America just prior to the widespread availability of antiretrovirals and more effective triple-combination drug therapies in the early 1990s, as well as a concerted effort to combat the stigmatizing and demonizing of the HIV-positive gay man, indicatively but not exclusively white.[16] Issues of race and multicultural national belonging appear in the struggles of the character, George (Richardo Keens Douglas), to reconcile his job, medical care, and activism, and any depiction of Sir Richard Francis Burton (called Dick in the film) inevitably invokes histories of race and empire. That said, the romance between Dick and Zero—the two white men at the core of the movie—affectively centers whiteness.

Miss HIV is a minor but key character, who appears toward the end of the film as the ghost of Gaetan Dugas (Zero) peers at his bloodstream through a microscope. In what is now the history of the history of the pandemic, Dugas appeared as the demonized hyper-sexual cause of the pandemic in the North Atlantic world in accounts inaugurated by journalist Randy Shilts's best-selling 1987 history of the AIDS pandemic, *And the Band Played On*.[17] Dugas was seen as patient zero in the North American pandemic. The title of Greyson's film *Zero Patience* reworks this putative prime cause into the urgency of activism. The film debunks this dominant historiography.[18] The film's choice to confront the moniker "Zero" by having all characters in the film refer to him as such heightens a sense of the dehumanization of Dugas in the accounts of Shilts et al.[19] As Zero, Dugas is literally the cipher upon which a range of toxic social attitudes have been projected.

In order to make sense of the triple functions of Miss HIV in this film as a mourning and memorializing storyteller, as an activist/pedagogue on emergent practices of safer sex as powerful HIV prevention strategy, and as the re/writer of the history of the pandemic, it is necessary to mention the web of associations around Miss HIV and the informing narrative context of her appearance.[20] The film begins with the subplot. A teacher, George, listens as one of his young students ponders *A Thousand and One Nights*, prefiguring the song "Scheherazade" that Michael Callen as Miss HIV will sing. Over the course of the film, we learn that George is slowly going blind from HIV-related cytomegalovirus (CMV), that he is a member of the local chapter of AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), and that ACT UP is protesting the drug company that manufactures the only drug that might help him. From the realism of the subplot, we move to the fanciful main plot. Sir Richard Francis Burton (John Robinson), Victorian explorer, translator, and sexologist, is now 170 years old (due to an "unfortunate encounter" with the Fountain of Youth in 1892) and living in Toronto, Canada. The presence of Burton as a central character allows for a critique of the deep colonial history of the phobic connections between race and sex that continue to underwrite configurations of the pandemic. Burton, now the chief taxidermist at the Toronto Museum of Natural History, is working on an exhibition called the "Hall of Contagion," and decides to include Gaetan Dugas. Burton and Zero/Dugas embark on a torrid romance as the latter attempts to enlist Burton in the project of clearing his name and rewriting his place in the history of AIDS, under the guidance of Miss HIV.

In the scene where Miss HIV appears and gets to speak (and sing) for herself, she arrives floating in Dugas's bloodstream. Through a microscope, Dugas sees his bloodstream in the visual terrain of camp. The bloodstream appears as a degraded Esther Williams water-ballet, with a strong undercurrent of *The Fantastic Voyage*, the 1966 film about a shrunken submarine entering the bloodstream of a dying scientist to fight a blood clot; said clot was produced as part of an assassination attempt. That film won the Academy Award for special visual effects in 1966. These visual references take viewers into the genre of science fiction and into the epistemology of camp as a subcultural way of knowing and teaching, and, as the scene unfolds, as a powerful fantasy of healing and redemption.[21] Moreover, the scene is structured like a parody of a beauty pageant. The swimming pool scene of the action introduces the pathogen contestants in a bizarre version of the common (but not universal) swimsuit competition. Zero and then Burton conduct interviews with Untreated Tertiary Syphilis, CMV, and Miss HIV herself. That Miss HIV feebly beats up the other pathogens with her umbrella represents the campy fantasy of the competitiveness of beauty queens and the falsity of the niceness of their decorum.

Miss HIV arrives as a grumpy but surprisingly benign blonde drag queen in tawdry wig and tiara, legs crossed, in black dress and hose, floating on what looks like an archery target, shot from above so that she glares up at the camera from underneath her umbrella. The dissident opinions of 1991 are then rehearsed by the other floating viruses. That Miss HIV as a drag queen is played by Michael Callen, a singer and important early North American AIDS activist, is significant here. Callen dies a mere three months after the film's release in 1993.[22] In 1992, at the Alternative AIDS conference in Amsterdam, Callen disputed the causal primacy of HIV: "The HIV paradigm has produced nothing of value for my life and I actually believe that treatments based on the arrogant belief that HIV has proven to be the sole and sufficient cause of AIDS has hastened the deaths of many of my friends."[23] But as Miss HIV in the film, he refuses to dance the co-factorial conga and, with the umbrella emblazoned with letters "HIV," pushes away the other pathogens wishing to claim credit.

Burton then asks Miss HIV about "the whole safer-sex business," in a parody of the beauty pageant's interview section. Miss HIV insists on the necessity of safe-sex practices and then debunks the notion that Dugas was "Patient Zero" and thus responsible for the spread of AIDS in North America: "For better or for worse, that famous flawed cluster soap opera you started back in 1982 convinced everyone that safe sex was crucial."

FIGURE 2. Michael Callen as Miss HIV. John Greyson, dir., *Zero Patience* (1993; Ontario, Canada: Wallace Studios, 1994), DVD. © Triptych Media

Miss HIV absolves Dugas of blame for the spread of HIV. After Zero/Dugas frets, "That story proves that I brought AIDS to North America," Miss HIV reassures him, "That data merely documents that you slept with some men who slept with some men etc., etc., but it takes much longer than that, sometimes as long as twenty years, to manifest chronic symptoms." She then tells Zero/Dugas that some of those men may have even infected him and then concludes, "Most importantly, why should it matter who was the first?"

Then as Burton and Dugas watch, Miss HIV breaks into song in a version of the beauty pageant's talent competition:

> Tell a story of a virus,
> Of greed, ambition, and fraud,
> A case of science gone bad.
> Tell a tale of friends we miss,
> A tale that's cruel and sad.
> Weep for me, Scheherazade,
> Scheherazade.[24]

As the song crescendos, fluid spurts from the microscope into Zero's eyes, making him suddenly visible to Burton's ever-present camcorder, and he announces that he is alive and innocent.[25]

Why does it matter that the virus is figured as a speaking, lip-synching drag queen? Drag queens have been useful for thinking about gender for

a range of theorists, from Parker Tyler on Mae West, to the accusations of unavoidable misogyny by Sheila Jeffreys, to Judith Butler's careful celebration of drag's subversive possibilities.[26] Greyson's Miss HIV emblematizes similar contradictions. On the one hand, she offers the seductive promise of the virus finally speaking for itself. Her umbrella slap of the other viruses wanting to do the co-factorial conga dismisses many dissident claims. The film clearly wants viewers to identify with her didactic proclaiming of safe-sex messages. Her absolution of Dugas appears authoritative and is explicitly endorsed in his becoming alive and innocent (again?) for both Burton and Greyson's camera. The recognition of the pedagogical value and role of Michael Callen as Miss HIV feels particularly important, some thirty years after the first appearance of *Zero Patience*, as drag performers are under attack in many state legislatures in the United States. The attacks mostly take the familiar form of a moral panic about the corruption of children. The film subverts the previous form of this moral panic by showing gay George as a responsible teacher of young children.[27]

Whether the figure of the drag queen exposes gay male misogyny or subversive gender-fuck is immaterial here. What is undeniable is that the film uses gay subcultural figures and sites—the swimming pool of the bloodstream is a strong visual echo of the key hot tub bathhouse scenes earlier in the film—to reimagine the protagonists and audience for the story of HIV. In terms of ethical questions, the film imagines itself as speaking to and from HIV-positive people and potentially HIV-positive people and against the pseudoscience of Burton's Hall of Contagion exhibit. Miss HIV refuses the authority of the "scientific" experts, suggesting that idioms from other institutions—the drag show, the bathhouse—can be more effective in imagining and combating the pandemic. Representing the virus as a drag queen turns a pathogen into a teacher and a narrator in a loved and ironized sensory terrain of buttholes, bathhouses, drag shows, and musicals—objects, venues, and genres of a gay subculture under threat from the disease and from homophobic responses to it.[28] The closing of gay bathhouses as health hazards in many North American cities is the occasion for lively debate about the pleasures and dangers of gay male culture.

The Scheherazade reference explodes the film's contemporaneous frame. It provides a small meta-commentary on Sir Richard Francis Burton's role in the film. Burton is, after all, a famous Victorian translator of *A Thousand and One Nights* and the writer of a notorious appendix to his translation of the *Nights* entitled "The Sotadic Zone"—intended to explain the prevalence of

homoerotic elements in the tales, largely in terms of geography: "Within the Sotadic Zone, the Vice is popular and endemic, held at the worst to be a mere peccadillo, whilst the races to the North and South of the limits here defined practise it only sporadically amid the opprobrium of their fellows who, as a rule, are physically incapable of performing the operation and look upon it with the liveliest disgust."[29]

The first English words spoken in the film, by a young boy in George's classroom, are: "In *The Arabian Nights*, Scheherazade is sentenced to death." The figure of Scheherazade is thus associated with George, the teacher of this classroom, who is going blind from CMV, and prior to the advent of antiretrovirals in the early 1990s, an HIV-positive diagnosis was frequently viewed as a death sentence of sorts. The structuring premise of the frame tale of *A Thousand and One Nights* provides a powerful metaphoric container for the film. King Shahryar kills a woman each night after having sex with her, until he is seduced and redeemed by Scheherazade's storytelling. The film wishes to use the *Nights* to tell a different story about the relationship between sex and death than the one that has been told about "Patient Zero." In doing so, the film inhabits and critiques the orientalism of its central protagonist, Richard Burton. The film further plays with the historical rumors of Burton's sexuality. He and Zero become lovers.[30] Burton's presence reminds us of the perverse origins of sexology as an emergent science in the late nineteenth century, that the line between science and sexual practice was once blurred, and that there may be interesting possibilities in blurring it once again in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as the emergence of safe-sex practices in the laboratory of the bathhouse indicates.

The final injunction of Miss HIV's song is "Weep for me, Scheherazade," and the long operatic repetition of the name of the famous narrator of *A Thousand and One Nights* not only positions both Zero and Burton as Scheherazade, but also, and more importantly, us, the viewers. Miss HIV tells us to tell two kinds of tales—"Tell a story of a virus / Of greed, ambition, and fraud / A case of science gone bad," and "Tell a tale of friends we miss / A tale that's cruel and sad."

The first story is one of political and sociological critique; that is, the ongoing story of blunders, callousness, and failures of the attempts both to address and ignore the AIDS crisis. The second is the tale of friends we miss and points to the mourning and memorializing work that Miss HIV believes is necessary. We are not too far from the psychoanalytically inflected arguments in art critic Douglas Crimp's roughly contemporaneous essay

"Mourning and Militancy."[31] And Miss HIV is exhorting viewers to be at least like Scheherazade, spinner of a thousand tales, who puts her own life at risk in order to save others like her and to teach the agent of death—in her case, her lover and king—that sex and death need not be inevitably connected, that the genres and tonalities of sex, sexuality, and gender need not be tragic.

Michael Callen and Richard Berkowitz's "How to Have Sex in an Epidemic" is widely credited as the inaugural text of safe-sex practices.[32] *Zero Patience* works to turn Zero from villain to a key figure in the invention of safe-sex practices, from scapegoat to person. The agent of this transformation is a singing drag queen in Zero's own blood. Miss HIV is figured as the voice of historical correction, redemption, and pedagogy, but she does not weep for herself. Instead, the work of mourning and memorialization is handed over to the legendary Scheherazade and to the viewers. The anthropomorphizing of the virus makes an ethical claim around the unruliness of the body. The scene makes it clear that Zero has no control over the pathogens in his bloodstream. They literally have lives of their own. Miss HIV is tragically not amenable to Zero's will.

Telling another story about Zero, a new one, cannot really make him alive again, but it can allow him to speak for long enough to clear his name and reevaluate his place in the imagined histories of the pandemic. It is not insignificant that Michael Callen's Miss HIV is the agent of this transformation. In the slightly macabre and campy parody of a beauty pageant in Zero's bloodstream, Miss HIV literally beats out the other contenders—untreated tertiary-stage syphilis, CMV (cytomegalovirus), among others—for the dubious implied title of Miss Immune System Wrecker. In being played by Michael Callen, Miss HIV simultaneously emerges as an activist and the agent of the redemption of the memory of Zero, if not Zero himself. She both lays the dead to rest, and, through her strong advocacy of safe-sex practices, she can prevent future deaths. With the ache of hindsight, viewers now can also mourn Michael Callen and his generation of AIDS activists.

Imaginative meaning is not made only in the imaginations of producers and consumers but in the equally complicated realms of institutions and economies. In terms of the funding of its production, *Zero Patience* marks a moment in the North Atlantic AIDS crisis when public funding became available for cultural productions. The film script was initially developed through a grant from the Canadian Film Centre, and the production was funded by a consortium of parastatal organizations—the Canada Council,

Telefilm Canada, and the Ontario Film Development Corporation in Canada—and Channel 4, a commercially self-funded but publicly owned broadcasting channel in the United Kingdom.[33] This Miss HIV is enabled by institutions that recognize both aesthetic innovation and HIV prevention to be public goods, marking a moment in the palimpsestic history of the modern welfare state that can be usefully contrasted to subsequent state, international, and NGO attempts to tackle the pandemic.

Zero Patience's Miss HIV is thus a figure who instructs in a contemporaneous gay vernacular of those the film imagines as most affected by the pandemic, while being played by an HIV-positive activist. She works as a safe-sex advocate and activist as well as a historian rewriting dominant and phobic accounts of the ostensible origin of the pandemic in North America and exhorts Zero/Dugas and Burton and the viewers to tell other kinds of stories about the pandemic.

"STIGMA FREE": MISS HIV AS THE GIRL NEXT DOOR

At first blush, it would appear that Botswana's Miss HIV Stigma Free has very little in common with Greyson and Callen's figure of a Miss HIV.[34] Despite the elements of a competition between Miss HIV and the female figures representing syphilis, CMV, and others, Greyson's *Zero Patience* only parodies a beauty pageant, and the femininity performed by Michael Callen as Miss HIV is hyperbolic rather than quotidian, as one expects from most drag queens. The Miss HIV Stigma Free pageant, first held in Botswana in 2003, has not much in common with a pageant like the Miss World beyond adherence to the basic generic form of a pageant itself, yet it is very much not a parody. Contestants in Miss HIV Stigma Free, like contestants in Miss World, appear in evening wear and are interviewed by judges. They also appear in traditional Tswana feminine attire. In 2005, an audience of five hundred people watched the pageant live. The rules for contestants' eligibility are not that they represent a country or region—like in the big national or international pageants—nor a disease in Zero's campily rendered bloodstream, but rather that they are either HIV-positive themselves or that they have a close relative who is. Katherine Curtiss notes: "To change Bostwana's regional misconceptions about HIV, Kesego Basha-Mupeli founded the Miss HIV Stigma Free pageant. A pageant designed for women who are currently receiving health and wellness counseling and HIV antiretroviral treatment

to come out to their friends and family as being HIV-positive."[35] Given the very high prevalence rates in Botswana in the first decade of the twenty-first century, there would be no shortage of eligible contestants.

Conditions for entry thus starkly differ between an insurgent pageant like Miss HIV Stigma Free and an international spectacle like Miss World or Miss Universe. That said, like in Miss World, a contestants' interview makes up 50 percent of her final score, though the interview questions gauge the contestants' knowledge about HIV—its transmission, symptoms, prevention, and treatment. Most of the contestants are already HIV/AIDS counselors. The contestants of Miss HIV Stigma Free in 2005 were trained in contestant deportment by the 2004 Miss Botswana, Juby Peacock, who expressed the hope that the country would soon see an openly HIV-positive Miss Botswana. In terms of personnel, there is some overlap within the pageant world. Miss HIV Stigma Free is thus understood as a "real" beauty queen, or adjacent to one, rather than as a parody, because to do her restorative pedagogical work she must invoke forms of embodiment and cultural vernaculars that speak to the experiences of Botswana in 2003, by appearing as "normal" as possible.[36]

The material context of HIV prevention and treatment options in Botswana in that moment are central to the kind of interventions Miss HIV Stigma Free can imagine making. In his *Three Letter Plague* (2008), published in the US as *Sizwe's Test*, South African writer Jonny Steinberg begins with the problem of why, despite then having the only free antiretroviral rollout program on the continent, the HIV-positive population of Botswana had been reluctant to take advantage of life-saving medicines.

> Knowing that up to a third of its population had HIV or AIDS, and that about one hundred thousand people were in urgent need of drugs, the government of Botswana announced in 2001 that it would offer free antiretroviral treatment to every citizen with AIDS. It was a dramatic declaration of intent, unprecedented in sub-Saharan Africa. By the time the drugs had hit the shelves and health personnel were ready to administer treatment, just about every soul in Botswana knew of it.
>
> And yet, on the last day of 2003, more than two years after the launch of the program, only about fifteen thousand people had come forward for treatment. The rest—over eighty-five thousand people—had stayed at home. The majority would now be dead.
>
> Why did they not go to get the drugs?
>
> When people die en masse within walking distance of treatment, my inclination is to believe that there must be a mistake somewhere, a miscalibration between institutions and people.[37]

One could argue that this is the national terrain in which the Miss HIV Stigma Free pageant makes sense: How to help people access the life-saving treatment they need, and to overcome the forces of shame and stigma that are understood as the most significant impediments to accessing treatment.[38] One can read the pageant as an attempt to address this "miscalibration between institutions and people."

Whereas Miss HIV in *Zero Patience* attempts to give a human face to the virus itself, Miss HIV Stigma Free works to humanize and normalize the person living with HIV. I would argue that one of the most powerful aspirations of insurgent or (arguably) subaltern beauty pageants is their attempt to capture normative gender power for stigmatized and marginalized groups, who have been expelled from it. Although beauty pageants, with their investment in competition and potential commodification of bodies, can from some perspectives look like allegories of capitalism, patriarchy, and western cultural imperialism, the event of the pageant has proved seductive to resource-poor communities. To hold a beauty pageant, all you need is a space, contestants, judges, a theme, and community buy-in, but Miss HIV Stigma Free, in terms of its organization and funding, does not quite or only come from below.

The Miss HIV Stigma Free pageant, at the level of organization and funding, emerges through the glass darkly of corporate benevolence. We have a partnership between a local nongovernmental organization (Centre for Youth and Hope), Merck (the multinational pharmaceutical), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and De Beers (the South African diamond monopoly). At the level of the economic, even if only in the simplest "follow the money" way, Miss HIV Stigma Free is clearly a globalized cultural event and was inaugurated in the same year as PEPFAR (discussed in the introduction to this book). PEPFAR produced a massively influential and contested shift in the funding and programming of HIV-related health initiatives, with significant global reach. This pageant represents a neoliberal—at the level of funding and organization—"best practice" to supplement a massive postcolonial state public health initiative. There was not initial state funding for the pageant itself.

At the level of consumption, its primary sites are national and local. The winner of the pageant is charged with touring Botswana, promoting HIV testing, and advocating for antiretroviral treatment. In an interview, Miss HIV Stigma Free 2005, Cynthia Leshomo, admits to feeling and looking a little tired because "I have just come from a launch of a nutritional supplement at Game City and after this will be heading to the National Stadium to register for a

Christian Crusade that is coming to town."[39] These are the local and national sites of circulation of a Miss HIV Stigma Free. Simultaneously, the pageant increasingly has an international audience, being the subject of a play produced in Warsaw, Poland, in 2005, and the ruse for a 2008 film that lops the "Stigma Free" off her title, as well as graduate student studies in Vienna, and cameo appearances in national and international HIV magazines.[40]

Nevertheless, it is tempting to read this pageant as the local hijacking of a form from below, to take the popularity of beauty pageants and make the form do other cultural work than the prompting of commodified normative gender fantasy: that is, to make that prompting restorative.[41] It appears that what personally consoles and is seen as having transforming political power is precisely a reentry into the possibilities of the normative. Cynthia Leshomo, the winner in 2005, told reporters, "I want them to see that even if you are HIV-positive, you can look sharp. You can look beautiful." Anna Ratotsisi, one of the contestants, asked the crowd, "Look at me. I'm attractive. I'm HIV-positive. What's the big deal?"[42] We are in the imagined healing power of normative sexual allure as an encouragement to getting tested and treated. Ratotsisi asserts that being HIV-positive and knowing and proclaiming that status does not make one ugly or remove you from the powers and pleasures of being sexually desirable, fit, and potentially reproductive.[43] The film discussed in the next section will turn this claim into an accusation of "sexualizing the disease," and thus furthering the spread of the pandemic.

The pageant, however, can also be read as a marker of a significant national resistance to the encroachment of globalization in terms of the universalizing neoliberal economic orthodoxies espoused by the international monetary institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, even as its own funding depends on such networks, policies, and ideologies. We are, after all, at the height of the era of structural adjustment, with its attempted privatization of public goods and services as the pageant takes the stage. Economist Ingeborg Klepper and marketing professor Marylouise Caldwell identify the pageant's participation in the transnational development discourses of "embodied health movement activism" and "Positive Living"—"best practices" often at odds with local lifeworlds—but I argue the pageant is not entirely assimilable to the forces of globalization.[44]

In contrast to these wider global economic and ideological drivers, Botswana was able to use its diamond wealth in concert with its relatively small population to offer the first state-funded antiretroviral rollout to its citizens on the continent. This rollout is remarkable in that global moment

when many states in sub-Saharan Africa saw debt service as the leading priority on national budgets alongside the opening up of national markets in the name of structural adjustment, as well as the aforementioned privatization and/or NGOization of healthcare.[45] Miss HIV Stigma Free, while not an employee of the Botswana government, can advocate for antiretroviral treatment because she lives in a country where such treatment is both available and free, even if her stipend, free beauty treatments, and her very title come from the neoliberal collaborations that produce the pageant as an event.

What literally enables Miss HIV Stigma Free as a national public event is an enormously complicated set of transnational exchanges, precisely connected at the level of the economic to the global histories and their libidinal economies that have allowed the entrenchment of the pandemic in the first place: De Beers and Merck—the former, part of the prime corporate agent of the mineral revolution that drove the incorporation of Southern African societies into the world capitalist system, and the latter, one of the diversified pharmaceutical conglomerates that have the saving medicines to sell. (The character of George's ambivalence about protesting the drug company that produces the drug that may save his eyesight in *Zero Patience* registers a similar historical irony.) The spectacle of Miss HIV Stigma Free, a title that itself confronts a history of commodified gender normativity, performs important pedagogical work in a national public sphere, but she can never quite reveal the conditions of her possibility.

Miss HIV Stigma Free imagines herself as a role model despite, and not because of, her HIV-positive status. The 2003 Miss HIV Stigma Free, Kgalalelo Ntsepe, cowrote a pamphlet with Glynis Clacherty called *I'm Positive: Botswana's Beauty Queen*.[46] Published by Heinemann as part of its Junior African Writers Series (JAWS) HIV/AIDS series, the pamphlet articulates its aim "to install the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable our children to confront the pandemic that is sweeping through our world." Rhetoric scholar Daniel C. Brower argues that "in the narrative of Kgalalelo Ntsepe, one can discern the operation of material politics at global and national levels in a specific body dramatized in the format of a glamorous cultural production." Those large-scale material politics are undoubtedly at play, but "glamorous cultural production" seems more means than end to Ntsepe.[47] The pamphlet concludes:

> I now live my life to work to stop stigma against people with HIV. I am planning to go all over Africa telling people my story and teaching them about

FIGURE 3. Kgalalelo Ntsepe, the first Miss HIV Stigma Free (2003). William Rankin, Sean Brennan, Ellen Schell, Jones Laviwa, and Sally Rankin, "The Stigma of Being HIV-Positive in Africa," *PLoS Medicine* 2, no. 8 (2005): e247, 10.1371/journal.pmed.0020247. © Sönke C. Weiss

> HIV. Then I am going to buy goats and some cows. I have some goats and three cows already. They are at home. I am planning to go back home and be a farmer later. I have a future! I have a future even with HIV.[48]

The final image of the pamphlet is one of Miss HIV Stigma Free in a T-shirt and baseball cap talking to four young children. This pamphlet tells us clearly what a Miss HIV Stigma Free thinks of herself. For Ntsepe, winning the title looks most like a psychologically restorative event. Unlike the exceptionality conferred on the winners of many beauty pageants, winning Miss HIV Stigma Free offers her the opportunity simply to be normal again—to go back home. This Miss HIV wishes to reenter the genre of living that could be called the "peasant pastoral"—the world of social reproduction inhabited by children, goats, and cows, to not be eternally marked by her encounters with the traumas of colonial and postcolonial modernity. This restorative fantasy is in many ways a feature of insurgent or even subaltern beauty pageants.

Thinking about this pageant in terms of the socially transformative work it hopes to accomplish, and how it imagines this work and the historical ironies of its funding and organization, I find myself struggling to imagine the kinds of knowledges that would need to be yoked together to write a

political economy of sentimentality. The aching pathos of this restorative ethos infused in a pageant like Miss HIV Stigma Free is rendered appallingly clear in the Miss Landmine pageants referenced at the opening of this chapter. The winner of a Miss Landmine pageant wins not only a title, a sash, and a tiara, but also the prosthetic limb that will substitute for the one she lost. This literalization of restoration exposes the limitations, perhaps deliberately, of the beauty pageant's imagining of restoration or redress: All contestants need prostheses, but only the winner wins one! We are in the shaming strategy of human rights discourse here.[49] A single person's return to normative personhood stands in as a goad for a victimized group, whether HIV-positive people or landmine victims. Where Miss HIV Stigma Free differs from a Miss Landmine is that Botswana is a country that offers free antiretroviral treatment to all its citizens who need it, and, more problematically, want it. In Miss Landmine, only the winner wins the prosthesis; Miss HIV Stigma Free works to encourage everyone to be tested and for all HIV-positive people to get and take their antiretrovirals.

MISS HIV: MISS HIV AS FEMME FATALE

EthnoGraphic Media's 2008 documentary, *Miss HIV*, makes the figure of Miss HIV a partisan combatant in an ideological war around global HIV/AIDS policy, particularly as it pertains to sub-Saharan Africa, which itself is part of the export of western–based ongoing culture wars fought on the terrain of gender and sexuality, now of long duration. The sites and issues of these skirmishes are continually shifting. Homosexuality is a decadent western import. No, homophobia is the decadent western import. Binary gender was the colonial imposition. No, now it is gender diversity that is neocolonial.[50] I will argue that *Miss HIV*'s representation of the Miss HIV Stigma Free pageant suggests that the pageant represents western imperialism, performs a dangerous sexualization of the pandemic, and is a site where the interests of HIV-negative people stand in sharp distinction to the interests of HIV-positive people.

In the film *Miss HIV*, the Miss HIV Stigma Free pageant is made to represent Botswana as one inter/national model—massive treatment rollout, a focus on safer sex rather than monogamy or abstinence campaigns—for combating the spread of HIV. The contestants in the pageant are primarily represented in the film as outspoken femmes fatales who use their sexual allure to

confound the men attracted to them. Sex with an HIV-positive woman is seen as the powerful and risky route to normalizing HIV-positive people and the most effective way of countering the stigma of HIV. This argument is made explicitly through interviews with a contestant in the pageant.

When viewers first meet Gaelebale Thabang, she tells the story of the death of her sister and how this death occurred in a climate of stigma, silence, shame, and denial. The next time she appears in the film, she is staged as a pained but incorrigible flirt, focused primarily on men's responses to her beauty: "'How can a beautiful lady like you be HIV-positive?' . . . [M]en, they say no, we want to love you—we love you. We want you to be—one say, my girlfriend—one say, to be my wife. They don't know what I am going to say. I'll dance. I'll do everything to attract them. Every day when I go to the kitchen for breakfast, lunch, or supper, about six men . . . say 'Baby, come here, can you give me your number please?'"[51]

This representation of a Miss HIV Stigma Free contestant is nothing like the representations found in *I'm Positive: Botswana's Beauty Queen*. Kgalalelo Ntsepe describes her winning of the title: "When I came onto the stage everyone was shouting for me. They know I am a big joker and that I speak about things so they wanted to hear me. I was nervous but I knew my dress was beautiful. And I spoke about how we need to accept people with HIV. . . . I thought I would not win because I was not beautiful, but I think the judges were looking for the beauty of courage and openness . . . Winning has given me the courage to do this work."[52]

We are in the language of sentimental interiority here—the beauty of courage and openness rather than the beauty of sexual allure. The film *Miss HIV* cannot portray this way that a Miss HIV might feel about herself. In *Far and Beyon'*, a young adult novel by Unity Dow published in 2001, a mere two years before the first Miss HIV Stigma Free pageant, a High Court justice in Botswana risks reproducing the tradition/modernity dyad as the crucible of African gendered subjectivity, but also movingly works against the idea of modernity as sexualization and chastity as tradition and imagines African women beyond these strictures.[53]

The polemic of the documentary *Miss HIV* goes beyond merely sustaining accusations that the pageant sexualizes the disease; the film intercuts a scene of the contestants in the pageant dancing with shots of open graves. And the ebullient and charismatic Ugandan pastor, Dr. Martin Ssempa, makes the accusation that the pageant is sexualizing the disease loudly

and clearly. Ssempa achieved a degree of notoriety for burning condoms at Makerere University in Kampala in 2004, but the film makes no mention of this, nor of the fact that Ssempa has been a major supporter of the death penalty for homosexuality in Uganda.[54]

Not surprisingly, given the film's commitment to ventriloquizing African voices, the most damning attack on this version of Miss HIV Stigma Free, the ideological pole that the film requires the figure of a Miss HIV to embody, comes from a contestant's brother. When the young man is interviewed in the film, he is first heard making the claim that HIV-positive people are as deserving of sexual attention as HIV-negative people, and that they should not be discriminated against sexually but that condoms should be used. Later in the film he recants, saying, "Ah I have never had sex. Okay, I have been having so many girlfriends, but I have never had sex with them. Some even pressurize me to have sex with them, but I feel I am not ready. I don't want to be HIV-positive—at all. That's the best reason I don't want to have sex, I don't want to get HIV."

Late in the film, this young man from Botswana is shown to have worked out by himself what the ABC campaign in Uganda knew all along, and the film, which mostly gives equal airtime to the ideological positions it constructs as deadly adversaries, definitively reveals its preference for the putative success of Uganda against Botswana. The Ugandan success story is a reassuring one, but not only have its statistical successes come under increased critical scrutiny, the film's claims that it is an indigenous African solution is also highly dubious. A focus on abstinence and fidelity has been a feature of many Christian responses to HIV/AIDS policy in other spaces and times than Uganda in the 1990s.

Miss HIV makes the argument that stigma, fear, and fear of stigma can be powerful allies in prevention campaigns, and Uganda is presented as exemplary. Former Harvard professor Edward C. Green, ignoring the key fact that ARVs were neither available nor free in the Uganda of the ABC campaign years, pronounces in the film: "People have to be made afraid of getting the disease. We can't make it seem like . . . as long as you use our antiretroviral drugs, you can lead a happy life, a normal life. The strategy of Uganda was to make people afraid of AIDS, to cut through the denial, to believe that AIDS was really a killer disease, and it was really in Uganda and people were getting it." In short, making people very afraid as the prevention strategy par excellence. How does that help the third of the Botswana population living with

HIV? The Botswana case makes it clear that stigma, fear, and fear of stigma are equally powerful deterrents when it comes to testing and treatment.

But the film wishes to construct an ideological opposition between Uganda and Botswana, claiming that Uganda institutes an arguably successful, authentically African set of policies for addressing HIV/AIDS and that Botswana reveals an allegiance to a sex-positive western set of policies that were overdetermined by the first "gay" wave of the pandemic, the people living with HIV in Botswana too terrified to get tested or treatment, the quotidian aspirations of Miss HIV Stigma Free be damned.

Who/what is EthnoGraphic Media, and how did this documentary on Miss HIV Stigma Free come to be made?[55] EthnoGraphic Media (EGM) is an educational nonprofit 501(c)3 community of artists and filmmakers that appears to no longer be in business, though the director of *Miss HIV*, Jim Hanon, continues to make films. EGM's web presence is shadowy at best. Its Facebook page has not been updated since 2014. Its website now offers real estate tips.[56] Its LinkedIn page describes it as follows: "EGM IS EthnoGraphic Media, a revolutionary film and new media group exploring the critical issues of our time. We are writers, artists and filmmakers backed by a worldwide community believing in local solutions to global problems. We believe the actions encouraged by scripture are inherently relevant to every life and every culture. Our films blend the insight of documentary story telling with animation, design and styling similar to graphic novels. We strive to be catalysts—entry points to social change—through film and grassroot programs."[57] I have been unable to ascertain how the film was funded, but its ideological commitments are of a piece with the huge investments of US-based evangelicals in shoring up so-called traditional values in Uganda.[58]

Its religious leanings frankly disclosed on that page are nowhere declared in the actual film, so it may be fair to conclude that what is presented as policy is more like theology, and the specificities of Botswana in the early 2000s must be rendered identical to those of Uganda in the early 1990s. The phrase "every life, every culture" effectively flattens out any notion of African specificity—affective, historical, cultural, epidemiological—that the film pretends to defend. More importantly, the ensemble of strategies to eliminate the stigma against people, and particularly women living with HIV, in which Miss HIV Stigma Free was a key player, is working. In 2022 Botswana, mother to child transmission is close to being eliminated and the prevalence rate has more than halved.[59]

To frame the central problems with Hanon's film in terms of the figure of Miss HIV, his version of Miss HIV Stigma Free must silence the powerfully quotidian voice of the first Miss HIV Stigma Free, Kgalalelo Ntsepe, paradoxically in the name of African authenticity. Instead, the figure of Miss HIV must appear as a glamorous and lethal ghoul, using her beauty to spread infection. To construct this ideological opposition, the film needs to forget an intra-African set of historical concerns. Miss HIV Stigma Free is responding to the needs of a country that had a purported prevalence rate of 32 percent in 2001 and a democratic government that was willing and able to provide an antiretroviral rollout.[60] Uganda in 1991 had a purported prevalence rate of 16 percent, antiretroviral treatment was in its infancy, with no viable treatment options. Under the dictatorship of Yoweri Museveni, Uganda was divided by a protracted and ugly civil war. An ABC campaign made sense then and there. It would not necessarily make the same kind of sense or have similar outcomes in Botswana in 2003. In imagining ABC as a one-size-fits-all success story, the film ironically accomplishes what it accuses Miss HIV Stigma Free of doing: imposing its ideological baggage with no concern for African specificities.

Although the Miss HIV Stigma Free pageant may be a neoliberal performance at the level of production, it proleptically critiques EthnoGraphic Media's *Miss HIV* by insisting on forms of African feminine agency outside the networks of the film's representation of her. EthnoGraphic Media's visual remonstrations invoke a colonial anthropology dressed in an anticolonial guise. EthnoGraphic Media's presentation of Miss HIV Stigma Free pageant argues that African agency is being eroded by western cultural productions and ideologies about sex, gender, and AIDS, without any acknowledgment that it is itself precisely such a cultural production. The film unwittingly shows how projects that portend to be anticolonial foment and consolidate coloniality. Miss HIV in the film is presented as a hypersexualized westernized vamp, almost a deracinated figure though still risking a colonial hypersexualizing of Blackness. Miss HIV Stigma Free in the long-running pageant wishes to be a regular African woman. She is robbed of the Stigma Free part of her title and thus her pedagogical agency and place in an African national community. *Zero Patience* avoids the blackening of the subject of HIV by having the primary figure of Miss HIV embodied by a white male—Michael Callen, but that may make more sense for that film's imagined audience and

sites of intervention. George, the racialized subject of HIV in *Zero Patience*, appears as more like Miss HIV Stigma Free than EthnoGraphic Media's *Miss HIV*, and while the film guards against the universalizing whiteness of queerness, in its figuration of a Miss HIV, that risk appears.

Moreover, the Miss HIV Stigma Free pageant imagines itself as both a treatment and prevention campaign. The figure of Miss HIV Stigma Free must work on both fronts simultaneously. By restoring quotidian dignity to the HIV-positive person, she fights the stigma of getting tested and treated. By telling her story and teaching about the transmission and prevention of HIV, she hopes to embody the pedagogical work of prevention. For the film *Miss HIV*, prevention must always trump treatment, and we are left in the ethically untenable position of the interests of HIV-positive people and HIV-negative people appearing as a zero-sum game.

Zero Patience's Miss HIV, Botswana's Miss HIV Stigma Free, and the eponymous Miss HIV of EthnoGraphic Media's *Miss HIV* stand in complicated geographic, historical, political, and ethical relation to each other, as they work the figure of the beauty queen as drag activist/teacher, ordinary woman, and lethal warning. Michael Callen as Miss HIV has historically circumscribed options: preaching safe-sex and exhorting viewers to both contest the hegemonic stories circulating about AIDS and to remember the friends "we miss." This incarnation of a Miss HIV is enabled by a transnational collaboration between developed nation-states with public investments in both healthcare and broadcasting. Miss HIV Stigma Free wishes to balance treatment and prevention as a neoliberal (produced by NGO and corporate responsibility collaboration) attempt to supplement a huge state public health initiative, and to restore agency and dignity to HIV-positive African women. The figure of Miss HIV in *Miss HIV* embodies an ideological position in the global fight against the pandemic as the dangerous enemy in the imagining of authentic African agency, and as the unwitting agent of western, liberal cultural imperialism. Here she is a femme fatale deadly to innocent menfolk blinded by her sexual allure. She appears to be enabled by the export of US-based culture wars. All three figures stand and fall in the uneven global imaginary of the beauty pageant as a site of pedagogy, restoration, and betrayal.

TWO

Memoir

GETTING PERSONAL

An Elegy for Adam Levin

Experience, contrary to common belief, is mostly imagination.

RUTH BENEDICT

Personal experience is a most vicious and limited circle.

OSCAR WILDE

THIS CHAPTER ENGAGES ADAM LEVIN'S 2005 *Aidsafari* in what Lauren Berlant has called the genre of the personal.[1] It explores the adaptation of what is by then a recognizable international genre—the gay AIDS memoir—to the subjective experiences of the South African context in the waning years of then president Thabo Mbeki's AIDS dissidence or denialism. Levin deploys a range of discursive frameworks, narrative strategies, and imaginings of the self and the social in making sense of these "personal" experiences. I try to follow his lead. Levin powerfully and ambivalently invokes family, community, drag, and fabulousness as key resources in his self-described "journey" with HIV/AIDS.[2] Simultaneously, his memoir dramatizes generalizable and historically specific difficulties around identification, empathy, and the public and political valences of "feeling" in a time of pandemic.

I met Adam Levin a few times in Johannesburg in the late 1980s. I first read his extraordinary memoir *Aidsafari* when it was published in 2005. I have it with me in Maui when I find out about his death on May 31, 2019, from a mutual friend's Facebook post. I am in Hawaii on vacation, either looking for my life or escaping it. I have brought Levin's memoir because I am writing a chapter about it, but this global circulation of readers and writers and their memories is constitutive of the meanings and impact of Levin's memoir.

As I read the post, I am overwhelmed with memories of loss and laughter, not just about Adam. I feel a small sadness that he will never read (and make

fun of) what I write about *Aidsafari*, a memoir which does important cultural work not just in bridging two of the most significant incarnations and geographic spaces of the pandemic—the pre-antiretroviral North Atlantic gay world and the more generalized pandemic of Southern Africa—even as the memoir resists that connection. The sadness moves in and across concentric circles of connection: sadness for the people I know who were close to him; an uncanny sense of cultural loss, like his very different close contemporary South African writers Phaswane Mpe and K. Sello Duiker, gone too soon; which segues into something like a mourning for an epistemological loss: a singular voice and talent who renders South Africa in a time of democratic transition and global gayness mutually intelligible and interesting. Simultaneously, *Aidsafari* is a book of the best kind of sentimental education, and while obviously centrally concerned with AIDS, it is also about so much more.[3]

First, that Levin's book is able to straddle the geographies of the gay North Atlantic world (and the ways in which that world was also *in* South Africa) and the emergent South African articulation of the pandemic is testament not only to his significant talent and imagination as a writer but also to his world-straddling biography and the deeply determining positions of a certain white South African gayness that was smart enough to plumb the contradictions tending to the impossibilities—moral, political, aesthetic—of those positions.[4]

I did not know Adam well. It is possible that he might not remember me. Our social circles overlapped some but not extensively. I think I first met him in an organic cosmetics shop in the Firs mall in Rosebank, Johannesburg, in the late 1980s—maybe 1988. I would have been twenty-two, Adam nineteen. I can shorthand the milieu. It was called the Bodycare Shoppe. It was the era of the anti-apartheid cultural boycott, and so a socially conscious global franchise like the Body Shop would not be caught dead in an upscale mall in the overwhelmingly white, overwhelmingly affluent northern suburbs of Johannesburg, but the appearance-conscious part of that constituency, i.e., nearly all of us, still needed beeswax lip-balm—locally sourced (though locally sourced was not yet a term in 1988)—and rosemary/olive oil eye cream. White privilege was not yet a term then either, but we had it. The Bodycare Shoppe was owned and run by a beautiful, horse-jumping, former model Dutchwoman called Babiche. There was usually a crew of glamorous youth lounging around the store, not really buying anything because our parents, and not all our parents, were the ones who could afford to buy anything.

I want to be tender to those young people, but not in the mode of producing alibi. We were vaguely political, some of us would be more so in the years ahead. We all hated the government, abjured apartheid, joined the protest marches on campus, regularly got tear-gassed, very occasionally bitten by a police dog or whipped by a sjambok. But I don't think I am being unkind when I say we were thoroughly, if not irredeemably, complicit. Black women washed and ironed our clothes, cooked our food, looked after our ailing grandparents, and often loved us. We were too young, too callow, too sheltered to fully register how we were beneficiaries of deep and ongoing historical injustice. We were what my current students might describe as "fake woke." To our credit, we recognized the uselessness of white liberal guilt as a coping moral ruse, so instead we went "nightclubbing," to use the title of an immortal Grace Jones song that was pervasive in that time and space.

And the nightclubs we went to in those nights of what could later be seen as the dying days of apartheid were weird dreamscapes. On occasion, I would go with one of the models from the Bodycare Shoppe to a doctor in downtown Johannesburg who was either crooked, stupid, or entirely indifferent. We would put rocks in her pockets, and she would get on the scale and weep and wail that there was no way she could find work at this weight, until he gave her an Obex prescription, so we had good quality amphetamine-adjacents to go dancing all night. If you had told me in 1988 that Nelson Mandela would be released in two years, that the ANC would be unbanned, and the democratic elections were only six years away, I would have laughed at you, and said something like "I'll have some of what you are smoking." I could go on, but hope that the telling detail, rather than the exhaustive account, can give some sense of a prehistory of the memoir that I could not shake. I do not wish to romanticize drug use, but the notorious Grobler Commission of 1971 claimed that drug use by white youth was "a form of terrorism that is more dangerous than the armed terrorism we are familiar with on our country's borders."[5]

While *Aidsafari* is mostly oddly silent on music, the soundtrack, and the contexts of that soundtrack, of the memoir's prehistory feel significant for this reader, so indulge this auditory digression. It was an era of pirated cassette tapes. You could go to a music store like "Beat Street" and rent an LP for a few rand for a few days and illegally tape it. We listened and danced to British New Romantics and danced live to white Afropop bands like Evoid and Via Afrika—Rene Veldsman with the amazing biceps and snarling vocals—and the beginnings of South African sampling. One song stands out: Via Afrika's 1984 "Caprivi Strip." "If you find a man in uniform by the

side of the road, please pick him up" was a kind of public service announcement on a radio program where white conscripts in an apartheid army could request songs to be played, called "Forces Favourites." This announcement by Esme Euvrad/Patt Carr urged motorists to give army conscripts a ride home—"please pick him up." In Veldsman's ironic and manic repetition of it, it meant something else entirely. I am listening to Via Afrika's "Caprivi Strip," the song where that sampling occurs, as I write this very far away in my study in Austin, Texas. The Caprivi Strip is the part of Namibia (I almost want to write Nambia, though that painful joke comes much later) that reaches across the top of Botswana to touch the western border of Zimbabwe; it was the site of the launching of many forays in South Africa's illegal war in Angola in the late 1980s and also home to the notorious Koevoet covert operations, and rumors were rife that Koevoet was now/then fomenting the waves of violence in the "townships" around Johannesburg in what we can retrospectively see as the run-up to democracy.[6]

The strip in Caprivi Strip did not just invoke that notorious military territory, but also Glenda Kemp, the possibly even more infamous South African stripper of the 1970s, with her python, Oupa (Afrikaans for "grandfather").[7] Veldsman owed something of her style to the iconic Kemp, who was a scourge of the South African censor board, and triggered every anxiety about sexualized white womanhood for long after she stopped performing. The club, the Bodycare Shoppe, the pop stars, and the strippers provide another archive of feelings—to borrow Ann Cvetkovich's redolent phrase—for the making sense of the heady mix of race, politics, and sex in Levin's South African AIDs memoir.

We, young white "alternative" boys, lived in terror of conscription: two years in the South African Defense Force, which could be deferred for tertiary education. I was briefly a member of the End Conscription Campaign.[8] Some particularly brave young men chose to go to jail for six years rather than serve in the army. I did not. I just kept studying. When I got to New York in 1991 to go to graduate school, I mailed the South African Defense Force (SADF) a gay pornographic postcard with the message: "They are coming, but I am not. Love and kisses 8252882." The fact that some thirty years later, I think I can still remember that number suggests something of the depth of the imprint of conscription. The experience of the army or the experience of avoiding the army was in many ways a defining generational one. For white gay men, the army offered the sexual opportunities of gender segregation at close quarters for some, but there was also aversion therapy,

rampant and abusive homophobia, and attendant trauma. Carl Andre Van der Merwe's *Moffie* (the derogatory Afrikaans word of uncertain etymology—perhaps short for *hermafrodiet*—the English *faggot* would be closest) chronicles these experiences in their full panoply of contradictions.[9] Adam was three years younger than me. Conscription was abolished in 1993, and its enforcement had become increasingly lax. Years later, I remember being told at a gay party in Pretoria that the military police (the MPs, as they were known) had a five-year backlog of men who had simply not shown up, but, even then, the specter of conscription must too have haunted Adam. It was not exactly avoidable. No wonder US Vietnam–era culture was so fascinating to us, even though its participants were closer in age to our parents than we were: how to be draft dodgers in a manifestly unjust war. I saw *Apocalypse Now* four times.

"Caprivi Strip" is a brilliant song that condenses that public and personal history, and while some thirty years later it sounds a little tinny and underproduced, I still want to get up and dance. I need to be clear this was not the great music of the struggle. Via Afrika were no Hugh Masekela, and Veldsman went on to have a successful career writing advertising jingles. Instead, it is the joyful, anarchic music of white alienation aching for solidarity in its borrowed African rhythms, and some call and response yelling. Via Afrika risked accusations of cultural appropriation in terms of their sound, their styling and choreography, the latter Africanesque without the fidelity and skill of a Johnny Clegg, but they were more than an element in the soundtrack of the times. They managed to embody and perform a discovery of the exotic at home, in a kind of post-punk "fuck it all" tonality. There was a clear ethics of refusal of racial segregation, even if the politics were murkier than the other great white music of that moment: the brilliantly morose dirges of Johannes Kerkorrel and the explicit satire of a band like The Cherry-Faced Lurchers. The latter's lead singer James Phillips's "Hou my vas corporaal" (Hold me tight, corporal) is arguably the song that best captures a critical take on white male trouble with conscription. The song was released under the pseudonym "Bernoldus Niemand," because Phillips himself was hiding in plain sight from military conscription. Niemand is Afrikaans for no one or nobody. "Caprivi Strip" refuses the pathos of that parodic plea in a similar sense of the absurdity of the militarization of South African society in the 1980s.

Paul Gilroy's extraordinary article in *Critical Times*, worked up from his remarks at a memorial conference for Hugh Masekela, elaborates

compellingly how we may think politically and experientially about music. I quote at length:

> Music as organized sound confronts Critical Theory as a test of the limits and character of representation. It manifests the will of its creators, and as I have already said, it has supplied a means to summon our utopias, as Bloch and Said would have it, to bring the elusive "not yet" nearer so we can sample it and see whether it is, after all, what we desire. Organized sound has also supplied ways to create and share social, aesthetic, and somatic experience outside of the habits conventionally associated with merely political and material life. A younger generation of activists and writers has been more focused on how music sounds and makes them feel in political settings rather than on any discursive readings of musical texts and performances.[10]

There are clear parallels between Gilroy's invocation of Bloch and Said in the attempt "to summon our utopias" and José Esteban Muñoz's theorizing of queerness in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*: "Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain."[11] One could express similar sentiments about equality and democracy in South Africa. Levin's memoir reaches to that horizon imbued with possibility, and in the memoir's emphasis on the consoling power of memories of fabulousness shares the temporal complexity of Muñoz's formulation. Levin is further willing to embrace pain, irritation, and occasionally disgust as he transfigures his travels with AIDS.

In thinking about Via Afrika as more than a supplemental soundtrack to the prehistory of *Aidsafari*, I hope to invoke the sounds and feelings of that music not just in explicitly political settings and to provide a discursive reading of their musical texts and performances, as well as to show how Via Afrika registered to me as a brush with queer futurity." My high school fascination with Rene Veldsman's biceps should have alerted me to something. While—primarily, I'm assuming, for largely cynical and commercial purposes—Via Afrika would have loved to be part of the musical Black Atlantic, they were not.

Adam Levin in *Aidsafari* never tells us exactly what music he danced to in the many nightlife scenes in his memoir, but I strongly suspect that they were the songs of global gayness, and African pop music, but not necessarily the music of the Black Atlantic. I cannot imagine Paul Gilroy loving disco,

let alone Via Afrika. They were too ephemeral, trivial even, but Levin's memoir finds a redemptive place for the trivial in his struggle with HIV/AIDS. In his *Aidsafari*, there may be a sparking connection with the campiness of the white Afropop of a band like Via Afrika that combines both critique and utopia, and their oscillations in the language of feeling.

In her immensely generative *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (2003), Ann Cvetkovich writes, "an archive of feelings, an exploration of cultural texts as repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception. . . . In the absence of institutionalized documentation or in opposition to official histories, memory becomes a valuable historical resource, and ephemeral and personal collections of objects stand alongside the documents of the dominant culture in order to offer alternative modes of knowledge."[12]

In conversation with Andie Miller of the *Mail & Guardian* in 2006, Levin talks about music in relation to walking rather than dancing:

> When it comes to walking, rhythm, he reckons, is key: "In New York everyone has an iPod, or a Discman, because you're alone, on the subway or whatever. So there we all sit with our separate rhythms beating, and walking to our separate rhythms. I defined three kinds of rhythms—the one of all our memories, all our songs that have carried us so far; what we currently listen to; and then what will take us forward. I've always got to have an anthem of the moment, that I play to death." Currently his anthem is Lord Raise Me Up by the "reggae rapping rabbi," Matisyahu. "At first I thought it sounded like a gimmick," he says, "but his songs are wonderful."[13]

Such songs, underscoring a return to health and mobility after the paralysis from neuropathy in Levin's life post-memoir, also constitute an "archive of feeling"—but back to nightclubbing. These clubs, gay, straight, who could tell, and the memories of them encapsulated both in Levin's memoir and in my somewhat addled memory of them, were still mostly but not exclusively white in terms of their clientele, but the patterns of segregation in Johannesburg were changing fast. After a series of declarations of states of emergencies starting in 1985, the country was becoming ungovernable, and for privileged white youth who were hungry for anything other than what we knew, it felt like there were not really any rules, though of course there were.[14] I remember quite vividly a young Steven Cohen, on the cusp of his global performance artist stardom, bopping away at Zipp's, before it became Mrs. Henderson's on Kruis Street, bedecked and bejeweled in swaddling cloths.

Adam and Steven were part of a kind of global club kid phenomenon, but we did not know that at the time. The description of the improvised memorial for Henry Heels in *Aidsafari* nearly twenty years later is of a piece.[15]

The 1980s in Johannesburg were millenarian. You don't have to believe my anecdotal accounts; there are brilliant and respectable sociological studies.[16] The press, where we knew some of the journalists, was extensively censored, and revealed that censorship by publishing the censored sections of articles with obliterating black ink where the text had been censored. One knew when Soweto was burning because you could see the pall of smoke to the southwest, and you would see tanks or buffels or casspirs rolling down the highway. We liked to say that Johannesburg in the 1980s was like Berlin in the 1930s. I don't think any of us knew much about Berlin in the 1930s, but we had all seen *Cabaret* a few times. We probably realized we were in historically momentous times, and we would have liked to be at the center of them, but we did not really know how, and/or suspected that the cost might be too high. Simultaneously, there was a pervasive and contradictory sense that life, real life, destiny even, was elsewhere, in places like London, Paris, New York, or God forbid, Sydney—places many of us ended up, permanently or on a sojourn. While Adam spent a year or so in New York, it was the African continent and particularly its visual cultural production that really grabbed and held his attention.[17]

I remember meeting Adam in that store and thinking he was tall, smart, and good-looking, and he was, but I did not really remember seeing him out and about. I would sometimes run into his best friend Roy at Champions—a sports bar that had become a gay bar (this was well before the era of the gay sports bar) across the road from the railway station in Braamfontein. Champions was there a decade or so before the attempt to create a gay nightlife strip in Braamfontein called "The Heartland," modeled after such areas in North America and Europe as another sign of South Africa's joining the world after the isolation of sanctions and the cultural boycott, but more on that later. Roy had a fleeting crush on my ex-boyfriend's best friend. I thought Roy was hot. There is now a burgeoning academic literature on clubbing, sexual networks, and their concatenation.[18] While all readers, writers, and texts are historically situated, and much academic work begins with the premise that you need to get out of your way or, in a gayer idiom, to "get over yourself" to read properly, that was not possible, and actually felt counterproductive for this reader of *Aidsafari*. I knew/know and loved in a kind of pre-critical way the milieu of much of *Aidsafari*.

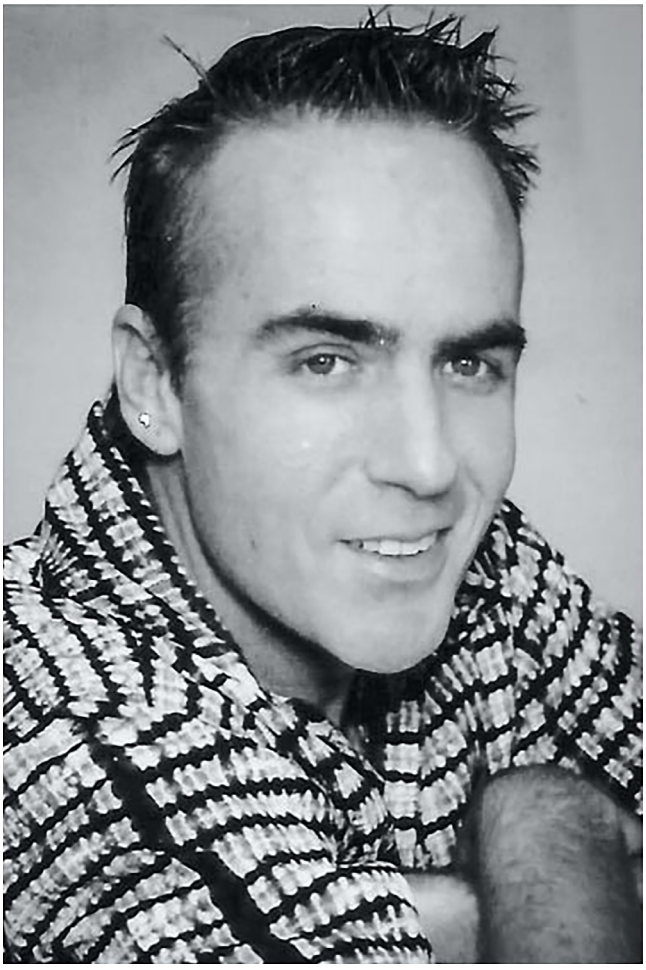

FIGURE 4. Adam Levin. Andrew Chandler, "Celebration: In Remembrance of Adam," Mamba Online, June 19, 2019. https://www.mambaonline.com/2019/06/19/celebration-in-remembrance-of-adam-levin/

I could riff pretentiously on queer kinship. A distinctly unacademic kind of knowledge inevitably informs my reading of the book. At some point in his memoir when he is starting to feel better, Levin orders a cab and says: "4th and Main," I know exactly where he is going—Oh's—a gay bar in Melville, for a while *the* gay bar in the early 2000s in the longish moment when Melville succeeded Braamfontein as center of Johannesburg (white) gay life. The bar scenes in *Aidsafari* were particularly evocative for me. Other people have memories of Adam in the club. Here is Andrew Chandler

in his 2019 Mambaoline obituary: "But, despite his serious condition, that broad-mouthed smile did not leave his face. In fact, a few weeks later there he was—on the legendary dancefloor of Therapy—in his wheelchair. I remember the scenario—one of the killer deep house tracks being played at the time—some demented queen practically spitting out the words 'the Drama Starts Here.' A club full of sweating gay men—being whipped up into a frenzy by Adam gyrating his torso from the waist up."[19] Even when he could not walk, Adam would dance.

This cauldron of a nightlife world and its afterlives is one of the worlds that *Aidsafari* brings into representation. In many ways there was not much in those intersecting demimondes to prepare Adam for AIDS, subsequent wheelchair dancing notwithstanding, though the mobilization of roughly equivalent milieus in some US cities was essential for the invention of life-saving safer-sex practices and the club could be both a site for community formation and community activism, as well as of danger, alienation, and trauma—what could be called the grimness of fun.[20]

I began with the claim that the memoir under discussion here bridges the North Atlantic gay AIDS memoir and the South African one. This is a claim that Levin in his memoir appears to dispute:

> When I first got sick, I looked for books that might prepare me for the journey ahead for me. I looked in the bookstores, I surfed Amazon, yet I found nothing. In its own insidious way, the conspiracy to keep this disease walled in silence had triumphed. If this book helps chip away at a single block of that immense wall of silence, I will be greatly honoured. If my story can be of any solace or assistance to anyone battling the rigours of this disease, or to any of the people close to him or her, it will be privilege to offer that.[21]

I find this passage strange, almost implausible. As early as 1987, Paula Treichler's essay "AIDS, Homophobia and Biomedical Discourse: An Epidemic of Signification" showed how AIDS was as much "an epidemic of signification" as anything else—granted, most representations were phobic in the extreme—but by 2004 the AIDS memoir was a recognizable genre in multiple languages.[22] Exclusive Books—the largest South African bookstore chain—responded to the 1996 constitutional clause prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and to global bookstore trends with a "Gay and Lesbian" section of its flagship store in Hyde Park, a venue in the social and geographic orbit of *Aidsafari*. I struggle to believe that in the early 2000s, Paul Monette's AIDS trilogy, the AIDS writing of

British filmmaker Derek Jarman, the memoirs of Cuban/American Reinaldo Arenas, French Herve Guibert, and others were unknown and unavailable in Johannesburg.[23] David Wojnarowicz's *Close to the Knives* is the memoir that shares the brutal anarchic honesty of *Aidsafari*, though Wojnarowicz's biography is very different from that of Levin's.[24] Closer to home, there was Phaswane Mpe's brilliant *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, published in 2001.[25]

The point here is not the absurdity of providing Adam Levin with a posthumous reading list, though there were literary resources and possible companions. None of my examples above would have been entirely germane. The year 2005 sees the publication of the first two gay South African AIDS memoirs, Levin's *Aidsafari* and Edwin Cameron's *Witness to AIDS*.[26] If Levin is unable to access the bibliotherapeutic resources of experiences from elsewhere—the cultural productions of the places from which a kind of global gayness may be seen to emanate—he does discuss the perils and possibilities of the memories of more embodied experiences of both the global and local queer community.

QUEER COMMUNITY

> This book is for all of you who were there. Without you, it would not have had an author.
>
> ADAM LEVIN

The memoir is presented in the form of a diary, the form doing the work of both claiming to being subjective and anchoring its contexts in specific time and places, contributing to its truth effects, while insisting on its subjective nature. The diary form is deployed to different effect in Kgebetli Moele's *The Book of the Dead* in my final chapter. The important thing is being "there," and *Aidsafari* takes us there. The second entry is a flashback to April 6, 2003, on the gay section of Ipanema beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Readers are in the milieu of a certain kind of easily recognizable classed and raced global gayness, to which our protagonist both belongs and feels uncomfortable being a part of:

> There is a bunch of British tourists sitting nearby. Their conversation is upsetting me. One particular queen with a ponytail, Jackie O shades and a paunch is speaking far too loudly: "What a gaw-juss boy that was last night. He really

likes you, I think. Oooh yes. Has he called you? Never mind, luv, we'll see him at the club tonight."

Oh Margaret, I groan under my breath. Why do you have to be here? Why the leathery middle-aged fags on a package tour, hunting for young brown boys who'll fuck'em for a couple of hundred rials? Am I envious? Or—shudder—am I as pathetic as they are? Uggh. I don't want anyone. I'll just watch. Don't touch me. Don't come over and speak to me. And please shut up, Margaret.[27]

Who is Margaret? And why is his name Margaret? What subcultural compendium of identification and disavowal is "Adam" working through here with Margaret? With "a ponytail, Jackie O shades and a paunch," Margaret is clearly a figure of derision: stylistically, physically, follically, and morally. To play native informant here, it was not uncommon for gay men to use women's names and pronouns to refer to each other derisively, though this derision is multivocal. Since homophobia and misogyny are cognate social affects, and gay men are immune from neither, a quick diagnosis of self-loathing is possible here, but the act of calling a (fellow) gay man "Margaret" firmly places one in the community of Margarets. In a South African context, the linguistic codes of Gayle or Gaylene add another dimension. Gay/lene is a coded subcultural gay argot, related to cockney rhyming slang, though it works alliteratively rather than through rhyme. Many, mostly English words (and some Afrikaans ones) that are central to important imaginings of "Gay Life" are given an alliterative woman's name. Some of my favorite examples include "Beulah" for beautiful and "Hilda" for hideous ("Hilda deluxe" for very hideous), "Monica" for money, "Dora" for alcoholic drink, "Vera" for vomit, "Cilla" for cigarette, "Betty Blue" or "Betty Bangle" or "Priscilla" for the police, and so on. Gay/lene is also unsurprising and resolutely racialized—"Clora, Natalie/Natalia, Wendy/Lily and Zelda." You can work those ones out. I could not find an entry for Margaret in Ken Cage's *Gayle: The Language of Kinks and Queens*, which freezes this ever-adapting argot in 2003, so of a time with *Aidsafari*. The closest I could find was Marge—"a gay man who has a reputation for being easy to get into bed [from margarine which spreads easily]."[28] I think Levin deploys "Margaret" to get at "Margaret"'s age and nationality rather than specifically impugning his/her virtue.

What might a sex-positive critique, or even just a non-sex-phobic critique of gay sex tourism look like is a question that emerges in the context of a global HIV/AIDS pandemic.[29] Levin is briefly willing to consider that

he might be "as pathetic" as the Margarets, and in terms of race and class, measured by ease of travel, he is objectively more like the Margarets of this world than "young brown boys who'll fuck'em for a couple of hundred rials." Nevertheless, it appears that he is more sympathetic with the latter, or, at least, less dismissive of them. His response to the quandary of where to identify in this scene is to (temporarily) renounce desire and the possibilities of community altogether: "Uggh. I don't want anyone. I'll just watch. Don't touch me. Don't come over and speak to me."

So, leaving the Margarets on the beach in Rio, let's imagine now going clubbing with the recently diagnosed Adam in Johannesburg. How does he imagine the problems of disclosure after his positive test for HIV? What sources of support can he envisage? Or will he stick with "Uggh. I don't want anyone. I'll just watch. Don't touch me. Don't come over and speak to me"?

> Who am I going to tell about this? No one needs to know, do they? My grandparents certainly don't. They'll panic. They won't get it. And my cousins? No not my cousins. And not my uncles and aunts. And what about the queens? Oh God! I can hear them bitching at the club already. Oh, she deserves it. We saw her picking up guys and fucking around. Now she's Aida, doll! So thin ! So *uggh*! *They* don't need to know. I owe them nothing. I'll tell the people who mean something to me. The people I love and I will tell them now.[30]

This frightened projection, which only partly comes to pass, when Adam ventures back—albeit briefly—into the world of the club, can be usefully contrasted with a sense of shared responsibility in a sexually networked world, particularly on the question of blame.

> "Do you know who gave it to you?"
>
> "Really, I haven't got a clue. There are various times it could have happened. It doesn't matter."
>
> "Aren't you angry?"
>
> "No, I'm not interested in seeking revenge on anyone. It was my responsibility to protect myself and I didn't. It doesn't matter" I repeated. "I guess what frightens more is the thought that I could have infected other people."
>
> Oh God! To be responsible for anyone else's suffering or death! And yet, if I infected, I did so unknowingly—or unsuspectingly, at least. But then again, wasn't denial as much of a crime as intent? Well, fuck it. Either way, protection was their responsibility as much as mine. (17)

"We are family," as another song would have it, but the family is all in his head. First, Levin imagines not being able to tell his grandparents ("they'll

panic"), his aunts or uncles, or his cousins. Kinship beyond the nuclear family holds no promise of support or solace. Then he shifts to imagining his (fellow?) queens: "Oh God! I can hear them bitching at the club already." The account here skips the difficulty of telling them to the horror of them already knowing in a projection of their judgment and hostility. There is no anticipation of a supportive community here: "They don't need to know. I owe them nothing." Yet this internal monologue concludes with a recognition of some sense of shared responsibility even if just in the breach of it: "Either way, protection was their responsibility as much as mine." There is notably a refusal of any question of blaming someone else for his infection. Each infection becomes a failure of shared responsibility rather than a poor individual decision.

Once he is sick, club life is remembered in much less frightening and more life-affirming ways:

> On the weekend before I left for New York, we partied like Trojans. By Sunday morning, Bone and Andrew had closed up their club, and Bone and I sat on the kitchen floor in the dawn light, sniffing slivers of cocaine. It was a blurry but intimate moment. All my life, I had held the greatest respect for those brave individuals who did not give a tin of paint what people said, but celebrated life and their own freakishness with gusto. Bone was one such warrior. Brave, original and demented. And later, long after I had lost touch with this barbaric crew, as I lay curled up in the foetal position on my bed, praying for my recovery, it was precious memories like these that I turned to for solace. (98)

From the isolation of his sick bed, Levin recalls the camaraderie of part of the gay world, calling them "precious memories . . . that I turned to for solace." Turned in on himself, "curled up in the foetal position," memories of clubbing and community allow for something like "queer optimism." Levin continues:

> I missed this life. I missed being part of a gang and being mischievous. Socially inept as it was, it was actually one of my better behavioural patterns, for within this crew, everything was up front. Our lives were all so closely woven together, there was little space to be sneaking around. It was a naughty existence, but I felt whole. (98–99)

Thus, the club and the people there can be both a scene of anticipated terror and recollected consolation. The community—"the barbaric crew" that Adam has lost touch with—is one of what Elspeth Probyn has termed

"outside belonging."[31] Later, Levin recalls his New York club schedule, noting, "I was insatiable. I was out there, looking for someone or something. Finding them. Losing them. Losing it. Collecting memories, perhaps in preparation for the immense transformation that lay ahead of me."[32] The memory of these experiences gets explicitly reinterpreted as a resource for the transformation that lies ahead. In the memoir, the Margarets and the undifferentiated queens of earlier become individuated in recollection: Bone and Andrew. Bone is Sharon Bone, who was a feature of Johannesburg queer nightlife in the late 1990s into the 2000s. I concur with Levin's description of "brave, original and demented," but it is community as much as individual artistic genius that allows memory to console.

Some six years after the publication of *Aidsafari*, Adam Levin will write an obituary for Sharon Bone partly in the intimacy of the second person. The obituary appeared on Mambaonline on March 23, 2011, with the following editorial framing: "The last two months have seen the deaths of two legends of Joburg's gay nightclub scene; house music pioneer DJ Patrick Talmadge and the underground drag performer Sharon Bone. Sadly, they died paupers. Few seemed to notice their passing, but many will remember being touched by their talents and personas."[33]

Levin rewrites the above scene from *Aidsafari* for the obituary, entitled "Rest in Pearls Sharon Bone," keeping the kitchen floor but leaving out the cocaine and attributing the cause of Bone's death to a seizure, and we are moved past the convention of "Rest in Peace," bypassing a "Rest in Power" to a "Rest in Pearls."

> I will always remember the one Tuesday morning, after the Easter Weekend of April 1999, when I'd found myself and Ms. Bone, alone on the kitchen floor at the New Moon Cafe with the club's doors locked. I was moving to New York in a week or so, and it had been one hell of a final blast—dancing at Therapy across the street and hopping to the New Moon and back. We didn't say very much as we sat there. We just chilled and exchanged the odd laugh. We didn't need to say much because we'd been there. And So there. So out there too. It's my strongest memory of Peter. Caring. Smart. And long before we'd imagined the cracks in the pavement might be quite so perilous.

We learn more about Sharon/Peter in the obituary—brief, identifying features of life beyond the performing persona of Sharon. "Brave, original and demented" has become "caring" and "smart." The wild night ends with a companionable silence. Adam does not mention his earlier recollection of the

night and how "as I lay curled up in the foetal position on my bed, praying for my recovery, it was precious memories like these that I turned to for solace." The obituary continues:

> And this is the thing, Ms. Bone (Cos I have no doubt you've charmed someone into reading you this final obituary wherever y'are): all the theory or gossiping in the world can't explain what it's like to have been there, in the middle of the floor when a night takes off. To dance so hard you forget yourself, you lose track of time and you feel that the music, the weird, motley crowd and the gutted building somewhere in Braamfontein have all became one living organism of which you and a few hard-core Jozi jollers were a very special part. I am tearier than I'd expected bok. So I'd best not waste 'em. I'm going to look for some mascara to smudge in your honour. After all, perhaps in the end, all it really comes down to is that feeling. We did it because it was fun. And many of us had the time of our lives. I, and many others, will miss you.[34]

What Sharon Bone cocreated was the experience of being in the middle of the dance floor when the night takes off, and the transcendent ecstasy of becoming part of a living organism felt through the synthesis of "the music, the weird, motley crowd and the gutted building somewhere in Braamfontein."[35] Of course, that phenomenological experience has often quite crass material determinants in the forms of business investors, zoning laws, liquor and other licenses, paid and unpaid labor, and as "the gutted building somewhere in Braamfontein" makes clear—historical and geographic palimpsests. "The Heartland," where Therapy was located, was created as a gay nightlife zone—a collection of clubs in the streets of Braamfontein just south of the University of the Witwatersrand in the early 2000s.[36] Why there and not in the adjacent neighborhood of Hillbrow, which had been more of a historical center of gay nightlife in the preceding years? Easier to create secure parking for revelers from the white wealthy northern suburbs who had become afraid of the changing demographics of Hillbrow? Proximity to the largest English-language university in the city because students could be imagined as reliable customers and attractive patrons? While the relationship of gayborhoods to gentrification has been extensively written about elsewhere, "The Heartland" fails as an engine of urban development/renewal, and after a checkered history of closings and reopenings, a few because of zoning violations, the venues nearly all shut down in August of 2006.

There are many ways in which this story is a Johannesburg story, but gay nightlife around the world faced and faces similar challenges due to a generalizable privatization of sexual sociality due to the advent of sex/dating apps,

the imagined need for less explicitly and exclusively queer spaces due to greater societal tolerance, real and/or imagined, and the rampant gentrification of many previously queer neighborhoods, and now we can add the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. Too many locales and research projects cluster around the question of the political economy of queer spaces, desires, and practices, some more interesting than others. I can imagine a few irresponsible ones: I have a strong hunch that Johannesburg drag queens help keep the charity thrift stores like TOC-H in Johannesburg in business, along with other workers in the city's largely migrant informal sector. (We will get to Adam's disco mirrored shoe shortly.) Performers like Sharon Bone cobbled together livelihoods in the informal economy removed, like street traders, from the labor protections guaranteed by the South African Constitution and labor law, and part of an undifferentiated lumpen proletariat that left political economic thought positions as only reaction, distraction, and abasement. Michael Warner some thirty years ago noted: "Gay Culture in its most visible mode is anything but external to advanced capitalism and to precisely those features of advanced capitalism that many on the left are most eager to disavow. Post Stonewall urban gay men reek of the commodity. We give off the smell of capitalism in rut."[37] How might we think more cogently about the precarious life of performers like Sharon Bone in terms of labor? I suspect she was too anarchic to visit an organization like the Casual Workers Advice Office and make common ground with the thousands of informal workers in and around Johannesburg cobbling together a livelihood. I laugh at myself a little as I imagine organizing drag queens, but the injection of NGO cash often in the form of HIV/AIDS prevention funds has seen some successful mobilization of similarly precarious sex-workers, though more so in Cape Town than Johannesburg. The work of SWEAT (Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce) has been particularly important on this terrain.[38]

Nostalgia colors Levin's memories both in his memoir and in his obituary for Sharon Bone, but these memories appear as comfort, if not quite healing, in *Aidsafari*, and as a kind of collective mourning in the obituary: "I, and many others, will miss you." In the memoir, Levin calls his memory of that night with Sharon Bone "a blurry but intimate moment." This blurry intimacy is echoed in the obituary: "I am tearier than I'd expected bok. So I'd best not waste 'em. I'm going to look for some mascara to smudge in your honour." You seem to need mascara for a good cry, and I will foolishly try to translate "bok" here: literally "buck" in Afrikaans, but with resonances of *buddy* and *hottie*—the English "hot to trot" could be read as an R-rated

version of the Afrikaans "bok te fok." "Bok" is at least partially ironic here—a way of defending against the unexpected tears—as well as a marker of the shared argot of a blurred and blurry intimacy.

I researched this part of the chapter by asking friends and friends of friends of their recollections of Sharon Bone, who was the kind of legend that made it only unevenly into the public record. I received the following succinct Facebook message from another denizen of the aptly or ironically named Therapy—the nightclub in Braamfontein where Sharon hung out just adjacent to her own club—Full Moon Café—after it moved from Orange Grove to The Heartland: "Sharon and her partner Andrew hit hard times and their heroin addiction took over. They had a fire where they lived and they landed up on the street although managed to find a room somewhere. Andrew was begging in the traffic in Braam and got arrested. When he got out, he got back to where they stayed and found Sharon had died, presumably from withdrawal. Andrew is still on the street."

I read this missive as a cautionary tale against a facile celebration of transgressive queerness, but also as indicative of the costs and limits of the kinds of community Levin invokes as sources of fear and stigma as well as comfort and healing. Jeremy Atherton Lin's brilliant and delicious *Gay Bar: Why We Went Out* (2021) covers this historical period for cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and London, but regrettably he never made it to Johannesburg. Levin's memoir, while excellent on the sexually and affectively saturated experience of such spaces, is not focused on their material determinants and histories. It does, however, center HIV, which is a surprising lacuna in Atherton Lin's wonderful book. Sharon Bone and her "barbaric crew" were one of the reasons one went out in Johannesburg during the last fin de siècle.

What's in the name "Sharon Bone"? Sharon is a homonym of "sharing"—the same first name as Sharon Needles, winner of the fourth season of *RuPaul's Drag Race* in 2012. Sharing bone is a name of sexual generosity, if it is Bone's bone being shared, or a multiply ironic marker of a community defined by shared sexual practices, and having to explain the name puts one almost outside such a community. Also, men are dogs. It is not just memories that Levin turns to in his safari with AIDS, but to aesthetic objects and the making of them in the constitution of community:

> Then possessed by some throbbing disco urge, I rushed home and chipped a handful of squares off a tatty mirror ball that I had stolen once from a drag

> queen who owed me money. I glued the squares in place one by one, covering the entire surface of the shoe, and finishing off the edges with a strand of fake pearls. I placed my mosaic icon proudly on a side table. A glittering little homage to drag. I thought, but—more than that—a desperate hope that the sheer glamour of an object might help me find something I was looking for. That beauty alone might somehow erase some gloom or relieve some of the pain. And it did.[39]

We are in the recycling, informal economy of camp aesthetics here—the revaluation of devalued objects in the service of beauty, and beauty as a therapeutic route. We are given the most immediate provenance of the mirror squares—chipped off "a tatty mirror ball that I stole once from a drag queen who owed me money." Where did that drag queen get the mirror ball? What was it like before it got tatty? Where was it? Who owned it? And when is theft just the settling of a debt, or informal distribution? These are the stories and questions begged in its latest transformation.

Here is the provenance of the shoe from the previous paragraph: "Then one day, I woke up burning with a somewhat unlikely desire. I asked Mary to drive me to the charity shop, where I dug through a mountain of long-forgotten stilettos, cork-wedges and court shoes. After much haggling over price and style, I settled on a lone, weathered navy blue pump, with a bad red and yellow toe detail, which I hustled down to an acceptable R5."

The shoe is useless as a shoe. And ugly to boot—secondhand trash, and it is the ugliness and the trashiness that makes it desirable as well as the pleasure of the rummage and the bargaining. In the reconstitution of the stolen glitter ball as a glittering single shoe, what is being mourned and what is being celebrated? The shoe first and foremost has a poetics—the objective correlative of a self and a set of defining feelings lost but open to aesthetic recreation. What is in a *single*, abandoned ugly shoe? When struggling to find a title for his memoir, Adam tells us: "I had been stuck on '2" for a while, my miserable rock bottom cell count when I first tested positive. . . . '2' also evoked the idea of a second chance and a new beginning, but as my darling friend Alex so astutely observed, '2' seemed glaringly inappropriate for a journey that had been so distinctly solo."[40]

A solo shoe implies the lack of its partner, and given our protagonist's painful struggle with neuropathy in his feet over the course of the memoir, wearing heels too is often not an option, but the shoe—like the self—can be aesthetically reconstituted as "a glittering little homage to drag." And a solo shoe is sufficient for these purposes. On the opening page of his dazzling

Fabulous: The Rise of the Beautiful Eccentric (2018), Madison Moore disarticulates queer fabulousness from Thorstein Veblen's notion of conspicuous consumption: "This bedazzled version of Veblen is about how fashion, glitter and sequins, things I can't get enough of, are not only shiny, conspicuous and look great on Instagram, but they underscore the pleasure and power of creativity for queer and marginalized people and other social outcasts. The story I am telling is about fabulousness as a queer aesthetic, an essence that allows marginalized people and social outcasts to regain their humanity and creativity."[41]

Although writing in different times and places and from very different locales and social positions, Levin and Moore share an understanding of glitter and disco balls as both trivial and transforming, and while I wonder where that shoe is now, it does not matter as it did the work of fabulousness in the moment it needed to.[42]

It is not only with family and friends and found/made/stolen objects that Adam Levin must evaluate and appreciate and reappreciate his sense of self in the world and his intimate relationships, but also with the pills that initially poison him and then save his life.

SIDE-AFFECTS

In the magnificently detailed and careful rendition of a case of an HIV test, which could not really be much more different than what happens to Adam Levin, Jonny Steinberg, in *Sizwe's Test*, writes about a young Xhosa man in a village near Lusikisiki in the Eastern Cape. Steinberg calls the young man Sizwe. Sizwe is a common South African first name, but in isiXhosa, it means nation. While Steinberg is scrupulously attentive to the specificities of a place like Lusikisiki, the choice to give his central protagonist the name Sizwe implies that the nation itself is at stake in this story. Sizwe is singular but emblematic. Mostly, Sizwe and Adam inhabit different worlds within the same national space.[43] One would have to be at a far end of the rainbow (nation) to claim Adam Levin as a representative South African living with AIDS, though he is undoubtedly South African, but there is in one instance an extraordinary resonance between the two accounts.[44] Steinberg writes: "If people are to administer their own lifelong treatment, they must have a lively relationship with their medicines, a relationship at once emotional and cognitive. They must know the name of each pill, its shape, its color, its

nickname, all its potential side-effects. They are stuck with these tablets for their lives. Their relationship to them will at times be hateful and fraught and unhappy. The tablets will perhaps make them sick, fail to stop them from getting sick, change the shape of their bodies. Best to develop a language with which to speak to them."[45]

As if on cue, here is Levin's description of his cognitive and emotional relationship to what Steinberg terms the "magic pills":

> Ten o'clock. I can sit upright now. Time for my morning's anti-retrovirals. I am very good with these. In the past eight months, I have never missed a dose. The trick is, you gotta take them at the same time every day. Otherwise you die. Once I threw up and had to swallow the same bunch again. I should really eat before I take them, so I force down some fruit. Three big orange pills first—the plastic rugby ball ones. Then the white oval—hate the oval, it always sticks. Now the other lot—the yellow one with its weird vanilla flavour. Uggh, the blues. The green oval one. Then the five little blues and yellows—they're the easiest, so I leave them till last. Done. I deserve another cigarette. Better lie down again. Feet aren't ready yet.[46]

Levin has found a workable pill regimen and has developed "a language with which to speak to them." He has been compliant for a full eight months. As befitting a fashionista, the pills are primarily identified by color and shape. It appears as if he starts with the worst ones—"Three big orange pills first—the plastic rugby ball ones." They are hard to swallow and are aesthetically repulsive and I detect a bit of the indoor gay boy hatred of team sports in the description of them as rugby balls. (Levin ends a letter written to his father on the latter's sixtieth birthday with "fuck soccer.")[47] The pill-taking has become a daily ritual, rewarded with a cigarette as he waits for them to kick in—one of the pills must be for the pain of the neuropathy in his feet, but the pills are not identified by function. How you take your pills for both Levin and Steinberg's imagined national constituency must become personally meaningful. For Levin, the relationship has become aesthetic, and later pedagogical. In the Fred de Vries interview mentioned earlier, he describes visiting HIV-positive people who are skeptical of the life-saving medication: "I show them pictures of how I was and say: look, I took those stupid pills and I'm okay."[48]

While Levin primarily mobilizes the extraordinary love and support of his parents and friends alongside memories of queer community in all their ambivalences and the cognate queer aesthetic of the fabulous, there are difficult and painful moments when he attempts to imagine HIV/AIDS along

the vectors of South Africa's history of racial capitalism and the intimate forms it blocked and engendered.

SYMPATHY/EMPATHY/SOLIDARITY

Aidsafari opens with the dedication: "For Mom and Dad, How on earth did I find you?" In the opening paragraph of the memoir, Levin writes: "I have no idea how long I have been HIV-positive, maybe five years, maybe less, maybe more, but I have had Aids for the past two years. When I disclosed my status to my parents, they assured me that I would not have to worry about the cost of treatment and they would remain at my side on the journey that lay ahead. Few people are so blessed.

Even so, he concludes the paragraph: "If you had asked me, in the beginning, if I'd be able to handle the degree of suffering and uncertainty that lay ahead of me, I wouldn't have hesitated in my response. 'No, it's far too much,' I'd have said. 'Hand me the revolver.'"[49] Levin embraces his relatively good fortune with gratitude and without guilt, but how does he work out his relationships with those suffering from HIV/AIDS who are less fortunate than himself? There are key moments in the memoir when Adam imagines his shared and divergent trajectories with personalized and depersonalized figurations of other South Africans living and dying with HIV. Let us begin with the personal and proximate:

> Over the past few months, my parents' domestic worker, Elsie, has been losing weight. Now, she has started coughing. They have beseeched her to see a doctor, but she says it's not necessary. Eventually the coughing gets so bad, Mom bundles her in the car and takes her to our GP, who tests her for tuberculosis. The tests are positive. Elsie must start a course of medication, but she doesn't want to. There is nothing wrong with her, she says. Privately, the doctor tells Mom he's sure Elsie has Aids, and should be tested immediately. But Elsie refuses. She also refuses to take the TB medicine.

We see that AIDS denialism is not only a political/policy position but also a deeply personal lived one—and it is the gaps and convergences between those positions where the work of the imagination becomes most vital. In *Sizwe's Test*, Steinberg writes: "There is a surfeit of shame and envy and destruction within us, quite enough to go around. But it seems to me what becomes of this darkness is not a matter of fate but of politics."[50]

In Levin's account of Elsie, who is very different from Sizwe, though her reasons for refusing to test may be comparable, there is a ghastly condensation of apartheid and post-apartheid racialized and gendered divisions of labor—the necropolitics of centuries of racial capitalism in South Africa in the figure of the domestic worker with AIDS—a trope that also figures prominently in Edwin Cameron's memoir. Cameron recounts the story of his Zimbabwean gardener, who disappears when he gets sick. Protective of this man's privacy, even in death, Cameron chooses to give him the name—Gladwell—"Gladwell (as I shall call him)." I think this is more a gesture of a powerful fantasy of healing than gallows irony here. Gladwell is obviously neither glad nor well, but retroactively Cameron deeply he wishes that he was, and that Cameron himself could have helped Gladwell to be so.

> Did Gladwell die of AIDS? Probably. We cannot know. Gladwell did not want us to know, yet, as I look back, I see things with greater clarity. I see that I failed Gladwell. My notions of autonomy and respect so vital in principle, were misapplied in the lee of the jet-fuel fires of fear and stigma and internal disentitlement that were consuming Gladwell's life. Although I thought that I was offering him help, and thereby the choice of living, in Gladwell's mind he had no choice. The stigma associated with AIDS left him no choice. Like those at the top of the WTC towers who chose the horror of jumping 100 storeys to death, rather than the horror of being consumed by jet-fuel flame, Gladwell chose to refuse our offers of assistance. He "chose" to return to Zimbabwe to die, rather than let us help him deal with AIDS.[51]

Cameron's sustained invocation of the events of September 11, 2001, in New York, both directly and through the parallel metaphor of the jet fuel uses the single death of Gladwell to suggest something of the drama and scale of the pandemic—though if the then current figure of six hundred AIDS-related deaths a day in South Africa was correct, there was something like the World Trade Center death toll every four and a half days. However, Cameron does not use his analogy to play victimage sweepstakes, but rather to highlight the kinds of social death that fear and stigma produce. Death by AIDS and death by stigma are both likened to jet-fuel fires. What might it mean to say that notions of autonomy and respect are misapplied? Principle fails in the burning wake of "fear, stigma and internal disentitlement."[52]

There is/was way more than one misapplication, but like the child Thapelo in the Moele novel of the final chapter, I want, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, to keep political faith with Cameron here, even as

I watch, with Levin, Elsie go "home" to die. "Eventually, she moves to her sister's house in the township, so she can be taken care of. She still says there is nothing wrong with her. Mom calls the township. Elsie is doing okay, they report. Slim and sexy, like me." And then: "I know what a checkup means—an Aids test, and there's no way I am having that. My parents are just being overly cautious because of Elsie. But I'm not Elsie."[53]

There are almost too many emotionally saturated histories for me to track here. This report is recognizable to me as a kind of vernacular of my childhood. "Mom calls the township." The persistence of apartheid-era spatial configurations is apparent, as is the persistence of the feelings attachable to them. How does one call a township, except in that a township is an undifferentiated place, full of racial others, a place one knows about but does not go to, a place to which Black workers return to after they have served their purpose in white areas.

"I'm not Elsie" but then in multiple layers of irony—"Elsie is doing okay" "Slim and sexy like me." Later in the memoir, we are told of Elsie's death: "We had tried to contact Elsie a few times, but without success. Sophie [Elsie's daughter] had said that Elsie coughed more and more, but they had got her some herbs from the sangoma, which helped a little. But she just kept getting thinner and she couldn't get out of bed. Her mother had been poisoned, Sophie said, so there was not any point in going to the clinic. . . . Sometime in November, they'd lost her. It was a blessing, Sophie said. She had been suffering. And what can you do if someone has poisoned you" (75).

The juxtaposition of the sangoma and the clinic here as treatment alternatives cannot pass without notice, as well as the poisoning allegations, as readers face the very different circumstances and worldviews of the subject of the memoir and other South Africans dying from HIV/AIDS. Almost in passing, the passage's typical use of free indirect speech—the absence of quotation marks around Sophie's utterances—might be suggestive, at the level of form and grammar of a kind of internalization or appropriation of Sophie's speech into the writerly voice. Empathy or appropriation through internalization? You decide.

The following paragraph elaborates on the possibilities of commonality and difference between Adam and Elsie and the deeply enmeshed but sharply diverging worlds they inhabit:

> I remembered our little trip to the bus stop, Elsie and I, twinned in our denial. Yes, I'd finally had the courage to challenge mine, but I'd also had a whole

> lot of information and support that allowed me to do so. Elsie had none of that. And, even if she had felt a sufficient sense of urgency to finally resort to Western medicine, what were her chances of survival? Aids never strikes in isolation. It strikes in a context of economics and infrastructure and belief systems. And most often it is that context rather than the disease itself that determines one's chance of survival. It was Elsie's misfortune to have been born in a context of poverty and ignorance. And that had killed her. And that, as I was beginning to grasp, was the poison. (76)

The passage brings us to a series of pivotal questions: What twins Adam and Elsie? What separates them? What is medicine? What is poison? The poison, Levin suggests, is not witchcraft, but history and politics. For Levin, "denialism" can be scaled up and down from the sociopolitical to the personal. While Cameron at the end of his memoir imagines AIDS as a call to universal humanity, Levin oscillates between a profound sense of the loneliness of his life with HIV and a similar call for collective understandings if not responses: "It was 1 December, World Aids Day. A coupled of people SMSed me to mark its importance, but I still did not feel part of the big wide world of Aids. From the beginning I had lived in my own tiny world of this disease" (137).

Adam and Elsie, linked through the Levin household, emblematize radically diverging South African biographies along the great cleavages of race, class, gender, and the myriad possibilities for living (and dying) they enable and block.

> It was creepy living in South Africa, I had grown used to the images I'd seen on TV—emaciated black people, dying alone of Aids in dark, forgotten huts in the countryside. Shivering under threadbare blankets with huge hollow eyes. I knew the horrifying statistics. Four to five million South Africans were HIV-positive. Eight hundred people were dying of Aids each day. I knew this as well as anyone else who followed the news. . . . Only now I was part of that statistic. (44)

> To ease the pain in my tummy, I'd raise and cross my legs, leaving me staring in the yellow hospital light, at my bony hope of a shin, coated in areas with a waxy dermatitis—another result of not being able to absorb any nutrients. With my twiggy arms, sunken ribcage and big bloated belly, if I'd had the courage to look in the mirror, my once ample figure probably would not have looked that different from those African kwashiorkor kids they show on the news sometimes, but I didn't. (125)

Adam tells us he did not look in the mirror to see himself that way, but there is one image—two pages at the end of part 1 of the book—a centerfold,

if you like—and the only image in the book, where we see him almost as such: shirtless, both emaciated and bloated, looking away from the camera with what look like Zanzibari doors behind him. He painfully, hilariously, impossibly calls this "Jesus Drag," mocking an idea of his martyrdom, inviting and repudiating the readers' voyeurism, and suggesting the complexity of the imagined political work of the spectacle of suffering that so many representations of Africans and "African AIDS" believe to be efficacious.

THREE

Film

MOVING INTIMACY

Darrell Roodt's 2004 film *Yesterday* bills itself as the first isiZulu-language feature film.[1] It is also something like an AIDS pastoral, a film set mostly in rural KwaZulu, strangely out of time in a number of ways from the post-apartheid, or what Loren Kruger calls the post anti-apartheid moment of its ostensible setting.[2] While the major aspiration of this chapter is to track the temporal structure of the film as fantasy, I subject its representations to anecdotal and anthropological forms of reality testing.[3] The driving question is how to read the dynamics of affect for (1) the protagonists (and those they are intended to represent) and (2) the viewers that the film imagines as its audience. *Yesterday* is an emotionally powerful film, inviting viewers to invest themselves in and distance themselves from scenes of suffering and alienation.[4] I wish to understand how *Yesterday* moves us, to work a sense of the failure of feeling against feelings of failure in the face of the pandemic.[5] That formulation is both too neat and overly ambitious, but is produced by a sense that the social organization, or construction, if you like, of affect is profoundly historical and that the phenomenological experience of affect cannot hold this constraint if it is to remain in the domain of feeling.

This chapter proceeds from the claim of significant historical and geographical diversity of intimate norms and forms that the intimate forms of modernity struggle to organize.[6] It understands monogamous, companionate heterosexual marriage as the privileged normative form of sexual intimacy under modernity, with modernity understood as an extremely uneven historical periodization.[7] While there is neither the space nor the erudition in this chapter to argue that general claim into being, in the part of South Africa that *Yesterday* ostensibly brings into representation, the marriage between Yesterday and John cannot be held up as either the empirically prevalent form or the normative one over the course of the last two hundred years. It is the institution of marriage with its legal, economic, sexual, intimate, and

familial ramifications that I somewhat riskily claim as evidence of a globalizing neoliberal structure of feeling.[8] Viewers of the film feel themselves as feeling at least partially through the affective recognition of this structure, and the critical acclaim of the film as "a universal story" depends on this recognition. In the Zululand that *Yesterday* brings into filmic representation, this structure of feeling is phantasmatic. Given the fact that HIV/AIDS is mostly a sexually transmitted disease, the question of normative forms of sexual intimacy acquires considerable political urgency.

In the case of *Yesterday*, John and Yesterday have an ahistorical marriage—and a viewer's cathexis of this spatially and temporally displaced companionate marriage may be what facilitates the most emotionally devastating scenes in the film. John and Yesterday must have a recognizably monogamous companionate marriage in order for an imagined global audience to sympathize with Yesterday's predicament, despite the fact that such a marriage is both out of time and place in the rural KwaZulu-Natal the film claims to represent. Yesterday performs the gendered care work of social reproduction alone—removed from the forms of kinship that would have made it possible. The end of the film, which shows Yesterday, by herself, building a shack for John to die in gestures to these histories of gendered social reproduction but privatizes their marriage to the couple form. *Yesterday* is paradoxically a family values film that astutely and painfully recognizes the material impossibility of being a family values family for its protagonists.

NARRATIVE

Yesterday tells the oldest South African story from a number of angles. It is a story of family destroyed by migrant labor, though the temporality of this family form is clearly a palimpsest whose history is oddly out of place. The narrative unfolds in hauntingly familiar ways with AIDS as a new wrinkle in the drama of the affective and subjective forms of colonial modernity in what could be termed the South African liberal imaginary.

A young mother called Yesterday living in a rural village called Rooihoek falls ill, discovers she is HIV positive, goes to the mines in Johannesburg to confront her husband, who beats her up.[9] The husband soon is too sick to work and returns to the village where Yesterday nurses him until he dies. The villagers do not want such pestilence in their village, so Yesterday must build her dying husband a shack. Yesterday tells her white doctor in a

neighboring village that she wants to live until her daughter Beauty can go to school. The film ends on Beauty's first day of school and with Yesterday taking a sledgehammer to the shack she had built as a private hospital for her husband. The film does not broach what will happen to Beauty when both her parents have died.[10]

The husband's name is John Khumalo, making the echoes of Alan Paton's 1948 classic *Cry, the Beloved Country* at least self-conscious (even though Khumalo is a common Zulu last name and the lead actress in the film is Leleti Khumalo, this appears stronger than coincidence). In that novel, a Reverend Stephen Khumalo went to Johannesburg to rescue his sister and discovers that his son has become a murderer. Es'kia Mphahlele called the novel "Paton's sermon" for its biblical language, moralizing tone, and sentimental outcome.[11] The novel concludes with the son of the murdered man visiting the village and the promise of a new cross-racial patriarchal stewardship of the land. *Yesterday* locates its sentimentality elsewhere and is a fascinatingly secular film. Social distinctions between Christians and animists, a feature of rural life in Zululand for at least a century, are not shown in *Yesterday*.[12]

The reworking of the land as a central protagonist is apparent from the opening credits—the bifurcation of the land this time is not in terms of the rich green hills belonging to white farmers and the barren valleys as home to the Zulus. Here is Paton's famous description: "Where you stand the grass is rich and matted, you cannot see the soil. But the rich green hills break down. They fall to the valley below, and falling change their nature. For they grow red and bare; they cannot hold the rain and mist, and the streams are dry in the kloofs. Too many cattle feed upon the grass, and too many fires have burned it."[13]

Instead, *Yesterday* opens with a long tracking shot across a broken, dry terrain with a barbed wire fence separating *dongas* (steep ravines, often produced by soil erosion) and the green hills explicitly in the background. A massive storm breaks out when Yesterday first collapses from her illness, and the film cuts to a plastic bag clinging to the barbed wire fence. The natural world risks the trope of pathetic fallacy here, but the tragedy of *Yesterday* is more personal, less open to allegorizing than its literary progenitor, and inscribes the scene of national fantasy in a more privatized way as nostalgia for a purity that never was. Paton can hold the fertility of the land as a ground for a better yesterday. *Yesterday*'s yesterday was apartheid, which the film refuses to see as any kind of nostalgic grounding. I am interested in the iconic force of this plastic bag as at once a symbol of the pollution of commodified culture

and its circuits of social reproduction, but also as a resource in a resource-scarce community. In 2003, the South African parliament passed legislation to require that supermarkets charge for plastic bags as part of a wider anti-littering national campaign—which satirically rendered the plastic bag as the national flower of South Africa. The opening shot, however, clearly resists a sentimentalizing of an African landscape—so often the defining feature of filmic representations of Africa—think *Out of Africa* (1985) as the classic case.[14] The landscape is desolate without grandeur, and the green rolling hills of Paton's pastoral seem outside of *Yesterday*'s purview.[15]

The journey to Johannesburg no longer takes place on a train but instead in a minibus-taxi, in which, entirely implausibly, Yesterday is the only passenger, indicating perhaps unwittingly her status as a singular, if fantastic, representative subject caught in a set of private relationships, only explicitly brought into the network of exchanges through city and countryside, and the state and intimate life through the vector of disease coming from the city. Thomas Blom Hansen has recently written on the minibus-taxi as the agent and symbol of new social velocities in South Africa, the township no longer "a site of quasi-domestic stability, but a properly urban space, marked by unpredictability, difference, and the incessant movement of anonymous bodies and signs."[16] That this might hold not only for the urban ancillary space of the township but also for the ostensibly rural village depicted in *Yesterday* is apparent when watching the film and listening to the director's commentary, as Roodt repeatedly describes the difficulty of blocking out the background noise of people and music in representing the village as a place of rural quiet and isolation.

Robert Sember points to the many omissions in *Yesterday*'s attempt to represent the pandemic in South Africa, interestingly in the mode of a counternarrative as an imagined sequel:

> Perhaps Singh/Roodt will consider making a sequel, one of the more positive possible outcomes of the success the film is now enjoying. "Tomorrow" will show Yesterday working with other women in Okhahlamba and members of the local hospital there to set up an antiretroviral treatment program ahead of the scheduled government roll-out. Which is indeed happening. It will show how not all men in the community are absent, hostile, and sexually violent but actually work to educate the community about the epidemic. Which is indeed happening. And Beauty will participate in theatre productions with other children in which she will be able to voice her experience as a child affected by HIV/AIDS. Which is indeed happening. "Tomorrow" will not

> pay homage to the strength of South African women to deal with suffering but to the history of collective struggle and resistance that have placed South African women at the forefront of social transformation.[17]

Sember notes many of the features of the struggle against the pandemic in Okhahlamba, the real-world equivalent of a place like Rooihoek, that the film leaves out.[18] The accusation of *Yesterday* as "a narrative without a history" is a plausible one, and the political risks of presenting *Yesterday* as a kind of timeless tale of feminine endurance of suffering must mitigate against the interventionist aspirations of the film. The accusation runs roughly as follows: If the film cannot represent reality, how can it change it? However, Sember's imagining of a sequel called "Tomorrow" belies a temporal intractability in bringing the pandemic into representation. The refrain of the previous quote used to highlight the aspects of the epidemic that *Yesterday* does not show is "which is indeed happening." This phrase is repeated three times, but the imagined sequel is not called "Today" but rather "Tomorrow," implying that the mode of politics that Sember sees in the present is at some level still in the future. There may be more at stake in the "untimely" or ahistorical elements of *Yesterday* than representational inaccuracy: that *Yesterday* as a post-apartheid film is still in the aspirational future of the anti-apartheid moment, even as it avoids a discussion of the legacy of apartheid in accounting for that moment in the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

THE FAMILY

The family form in *Yesterday* is both anachronistic and out of place, but not anachronistic in the nostalgic form that the name of the eponymous character would imply. John, Yesterday, and Beauty constitute a version of the white bourgeois nuclear family with an absent father thanks to migrant labor, which is itself anachronistically conceived. A Zulu man working on the mines is a much less typical proposition than it would have been in the 1940s–1960s. Migrant miners in the twenty-first century are much more likely to be from outside the borders of South Africa.[19] The nuclear family has a complicated history on the terrain the film wishes to bring into representation. While Yesterday consults a sangoma, we never see her going to church, not that these activities are at all mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, given nearly two hundred years of missionary activity in KwaZulu-Natal,

the nuclear family is often seen as the Christian family and consequent associations with whiteness and modernity. So there also may be good historical reasons for this representation of a Zulu companionate marriage. The difference between Christian and animist Zuluness is more important in rural areas, and the film's depiction of this form of intimacy may also mark an urban imposition on the rural.

There is no evidence of an extended kinship structure in *Yesterday*—no grannies, no aunts, which makes it difficult to account for why Yesterday would stay in Rooihoek, as well as questioning any realist aspirations the film may have. As Mandisa Mbali and Mark Hunter ask: "Where are the Gogos [grandmothers]—the lifeblood of rural South Africa?"[20] Yesterday appears also to have no paying job, though there are scenes of her hoeing the ground and sowing seed. This is a representation of an earlier economic structure of migrant labor. Historically, migrant labor allowed the mining companies to pay a less than subsistence wage because reproductive labor costs were to be carried by the rural homestead. Rural women are now much more likely to meet these reproductive labor costs through participation in informal economies, but more on that later. Mother, absent father, and child are imagined as constituting the nuclear family, the structure geared toward social reproduction and affective distribution in ways that suggest to this viewer that the time of the family in *Yesterday* is the time when Zulus will have become a kind of idealized white people.[21]

Yesterday is undoubtedly a good housewife. We see her attending to her child, fetching water from the communal pump, washing clothes with Beauty in the river.[22] We have a pastoralized zone of domestic privacy overlaid with a thin patina of romanticized African communalism. The film works hard to preserve this zone of privacy around the married couple. In the scene where Yesterday assumedly tells John that she is HIV positive—we never hear the disclosure—the camera moves behind a barred window and all we see through the bars of the window is John's flailing arms as he beats Yesterday. A flashback montage follows as Yesterday recalls earlier happier moments with John—a series of painfully moving and banal images of married domestic bliss—the embrace after a long absence, eagerly anticipating his return with a sleepy Beauty, John's gift of a food processor called "Le Chef." In James Ferguson's analysis of the wives of Zambian mineworkers, discussed below, the mining companies are the agents of an impossible bourgeois domesticity. In *Yesterday* that bourgeois domesticity is cathected with the power of a man's love. In broad ideological terms, in a range of public debates

about libidinal economies from, for example, polygyny to homosexuality in African cultures, it is possible to argue that in the African context and perhaps also in a more generalized postcolonial one, the bourgeois nuclear family may have been seen as the proper intimate form of modernity, even as its historical existence for people in the countryside was clearly economically unfeasible. In a pointed analysis of domesticity on the Zambian copperbelt, James Ferguson writes of company-run courses for the wives of mineworkers: "A continuation of the paternalistic social welfare policies of the colonial mining industry, these courses were intended to teach mineworkers' wives to be 'good housewives' by giving them instruction in cooking, cleaning, sewing, knitting and so on—all in the name of fostering modern family life in the mine townships."[23]

Ferguson concludes by noting the anachronism of the figure of the 1950s US housewife as a model for African modernity—"Like the Westinghouse kitchen in Tomorrowland, 'the modern housewife,' in mid-1980s Zambia appeared preposterously archaic and somehow poignantly out of place."[24] The bourgeois nuclear family emerges as a phantasm of nostalgia and developmental aspiration at the same time. Yesterday's housewifery is relentlessly naturalized. She needed no instruction in these arts, beyond a then loving husband to give her a food processor. The family form seems to float as an imagined point of normative identification for viewers unencumbered by any acquaintance with ideas and practices of Zulu kinship or colonial and neocolonial economics beyond *Cry, the Beloved Country*, which at least recognizes, through celebration, the imprint of Christianity.

LANGUAGE

My DVD copy of *Yesterday* allows subtitles in French, English, Spanish, and two levels of isiZulu.[25] In having two levels of isiZulu subtitles it appears to have pedagogical aspirations. Granted, I bought it in the US, a place where I struggle to imagine much desire for the learning of isiZulu, but maybe these subtitles imagine other South Africans—largely white, I suspect, as its learning audience, though there are no Afrikaans subtitles. Despite *Yesterday*'s self-conscious staging of itself as the first isiZulu-language feature film, it seems it is made to speak for and about, never to and from, the human subjects it brings into representation. Given the film's reluctance or inability to even gesture toward bringing any imagining of African alterity or details of

contemporary South African history that might break pastoral tonalities into filmic representation, I suspect the language politics of the film are not those of the self-determination rhetoric of nationalism, or even a national or cosmopolitan desire to learn something of a language and culture not quite one's own. Instead, we have the benevolent imperialist versions of the romance of authenticity, the domestication of difference so that *one feels oneself* in the ostensibly Zulu world of *Yesterday*, even though *Yesterday* understands its narrative form as mediated by earlier figurations of Zuluness, and much less self-consciously, its representation of family forms as quite literally fantastic. Roodt drafted the script for the film in English, had the script translated into isiZulu, and started off shooting each scene twice, once in English and once in isiZulu. Ultimately, the English version of the film is junked in favor of the "authenticity" of the isiZulu one. More cynically, the decision to release the film in isiZulu may have also been motivated by a desire to manipulate its international reception. In an interview, Roodt asserts: "When I managed to convince Anant [Singh, who produced the film] to go the Zulu route, I said: 'At the very least, if we make a good film, we've got a shot at best foreign film.'"[26] As Anant Singh notes, Roodt is proved correct: "It's South Africa's first-ever nomination and the first film ever in Zulu."[27]

Nevertheless, the film is made with the financial backing of the Nelson Mandela Foundation and aspires to be used in AIDS education programs—showing it in rural areas and using it to prompt discussion on HIV/AIDS. (The film has indeed been written about extensively in educational contexts.)[28] The film received massive critical acclaim in the South African press, with a few important dissenting opinions, raves from the English language media abroad, and, as mentioned above, was the first South African film ever nominated for a best foreign film Academy Award.[29] Nevertheless, its returns for the South African market were disappointing.[30]

Yesterday is in certain ways the victim of her own name. It, along with the name of her daughter, Beauty, are the only English words we hear repeatedly in the film. From her account of her name, it would appear that the English word "Yesterday" is her isiZulu name. It is the name given to her by her father, sometime in the early 1970s, in the heyday of apartheid, if Yesterday is thirty at the time of the film. The name marks a nostalgia for a time when things were better, but when was that time, or what could it have been?

Yesterday is the most widely distributed filmic representation of South Africa's AIDS pandemic. Its language is isiZulu to keep its specificity and thus distance from its imagined polyglot and international audience. Its familial

and affective structure is bourgeois, white, and putatively universal—even though nothing else in the film fits any of those designations. Sympathy, as an affect, appears to need a dialectic between proximity and distance. I think this is how sympathy gets off the ground in *Yesterday*.[31] Yesterday is a kind of everywoman, involved in the "timeless" difficulties of raising a child and loving a man. The moral outrage and deep pathos of the film arise from the fact that these things are not possible in her situation, despite her heroic effort. The reviewer for the *New York Times* writes: "The film . . . focuses not on the statistics of millions but on the tragedy of one death."[32] In one viewer's response, albeit sanctioned by a powerful newspaper, the linguistic and/or cultural singularity of Zuluness becomes transparent and the singularity of John's death becomes the locus of the film's value. This singularity may mark the ethical work of a fictional representation despite the documentary failures of *Yesterday*, but it is the work of this chapter to argue that feeling this singularity is dependent on an affective recognition of a floating family form, which may undermine the ostensible pedagogical rationale of the film.

TRADITION

Tradition is a risky analytic term in the context of a fictional feature film being generically programmed as modernity in its sites of production and consumption, but *Yesterday*'s relation to the *telos* of modernity needs an Other. The two narrative outcomes of the film mark the film's deep ambivalence about the entry into what, for want of a better shorthand, could be called "modern" subjectivity. The father, corrupted by his encounter with colonial forms of exploited labor and the sexual practices they have encouraged, must die. The daughter must, however, go to school.

It has been Mark Hunter's extraordinary contribution to track the inadequacy of "male migrant labor as vector of infection explanation" for the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in rural Kwa-Zulu over the last decades. He argues persuasively that this explanation is a transposition of discussions of syphilis epidemics in the 1940s that takes into account neither changes in Zulu courtship practices over the last fifty years nor the continuing impoverishment of rural spaces, which has meant that rural women are themselves extraordinarily mobile in the search for work.[33] The pastoral scenes of Yesterday hoeing and sowing are just that: a depiction of the countryside as if it were still a space where subsistence agricultural labor could, no matter how minimally,

meet the costs of familial reproduction. Hunter notes: "Multiple partner relationships, underscored by gifts, are a key informal survival strategy for many women." The folk wisdom is "one man for rent, one man for food, and one man for clothes."[34] The presence of "transactional sex" models of intimacy on the terrain *Yesterday* wishes to bring into representation renders Yesterday and her life trajectory in the film as the site of reinvesting in the fantasy of the privatizing of intimacy, when, as Hunter has shown, poor rural women's intimate feelings also serve a range of subsistence and reproductive purposes, occluded by the film. Obviously, this social and economic character of intimacy is not limited to poor rural women.[35]

In the landscape of feminine support in Rooihoek, Yesterday seeks help from two very different women—a *sangoma* ("traditional healer") and a teacher in the primary school who becomes her friend and will presumably look after Beauty when Yesterday dies. The sangoma is consulted after Yesterday is denied admission to the Tuesdays-only clinic in Kromdraai—a two-hour-plus walk from Rooihoek—for the second time. The sangoma is clearly irritated that Yesterday has not consulted her earlier about the mysterious illness.

The sangoma appears in the film as a kind of mildly malevolent New Age guru—a Zulu Caroline Myss or Deepak Chopra with an attitude problem. According to her diagnosis, Yesterday is sick because, despite her protestations to the contrary, she is too angry. While on the one hand, this is an absurd psychologizing reduction, on the other hand it may contain an unwitting recognition of the growth of certain kinds of spiritual tourism to South Africa. Surgery and Safari was already a big business.[36] *Sangoma* and Safari is beginning. The sangoma's office is spectacularly sanitized for western consumption: there are no lopped-off vulture wings, no dried baboon heads, no brightly colored powders or piles of roots and herbs—some of the tools of the trade. There is no diagnosis of angry ancestors, no calls for ritual animal sacrifice, no accusations that Yesterday is the victim of someone's witchcraft. I suspect that this literally sanitized version is produced in the attempt to avoid criticism of exoticism and racism within the film's prevailing ideological task of producing white sympathy for these people whose humanity must depend on them being as close to some normative "us" as possible. The medicinal smoke offered to Yesterday as medicine makes her cough, alerting viewers, as if we did not know already, that the sangoma is a quack more likely to hurt than help. The bunch of burning herbs Yesterday is instructed to inhale looks like nothing so much as a sage smudge-stick, familiar to me from New

FIGURE 5. Yesterday visits the sangoma. Darrell Roodt, dir., *Yesterday* (2008; Umhlanga Ridge: VideoVision Entertainment, 2008), DVD.

Age appropriations of some generalized rituals of Native American societies. These have undoubtedly gone global. (A friend of a friend in Cape Town makes dreamcatchers out of Guinea Fowl feathers and indigenous semi-precious stones.) Viewers are encouraged to disapprove of the sangoma, but not be horrified by her. Given the secular frame of the film, the ancestors cannot enter the time of modernity through her. The sangoma appears again as the spokesperson for the angry women who want John removed from the village—as part of the reactionary force of prejudice and fear in the face of the pandemic. That this task is undertaken by the sangoma and the women rather than by, let's say, Yesterday's landlord locates the film once again in the "no-time, no-space" of the pastoral.[37] Bheki Kha Mncube offers a particularly scathing review of the depiction of the sangoma: "A *sangoma*, who Yesterday consulted after two attempts to see a doctor at the local clinic had failed, was also suspect. During the consultation she instructed Yesterday: 'Get rid of your anger, then I will heal you.' I've consulted many *sangomas*, and even fake ones don't dish out such hogwash"[38]

The teacher appears early in the film as she walks the country road with a fellow teacher, hoping to find employment in Rooihoek. Both women carry umbrellas, one wears glamorous sunglasses, and together they offer a vision of educated, respectable, and relatively empowered single African womanhood. The teacher seems free of the perils of menfolk. She becomes Yesterday's friend and gives Yesterday the five-rand taxi-fare she needs to avoid the long

walk to the clinic so she can get there before the lines grow too long for the doctor to see her. She thus enables Yesterday's diagnosis, but since Yesterday receives no antiretrovirals from the clinic, the moral victory of westernized medicine over the sangoma is rendered pyrrhic. The film fails to mention antiretrovirals at all.[39]

This brings us to the doctor—a young white woman who speaks fluent isiZulu. Yesterday persists in calling her "madam," even after the doctor requests to be called "doctor," marking the persistence of racial honorifics in a national time frame when race no longer has the legal force it had under apartheid. "Madam" is one of the few English words that are heard in the film. The isiZulu translation of madam would be "inkosikazi," from the isiZulu word for chief, "inkosi." This rings true as most Black South Africans, even those not fluent in English, would use "madam" without bothering to translate it into their mother tongue. The doctor asks Yesterday frank questions about her sex life, establishing the cause of her illness: "Do you use a condom? Do you have sex only with your husband? Does he have other wives?" Yesterday is illiterate. How do protocols of consenting to her treatment work?

Yesterday's brushes with specific histories of the present reveal a continued attachment to the emergence of a gendered individualism as the only viable form of human subjectivity and interiority. John Samuel, CEO of the Nelson Mandela Foundation—one of the sponsors of the film—recognizes this emergence of a universalizing individualism as a ground for sympathy but in the mode of celebration rather than critique: "But when you see the human suffering and tragedy of one person, it speaks to you as another person, and that is its power."[40] In a conversation with the teacher, Yesterday produces what I call "the parable of the woman of Bergville." Yesterday tells the teacher of a young woman who was very clever and that her village saved money to send her to university in Johannesburg, where she acquired HIV, and when the villagers find out, they stone her to death. This references the very public scandal of the murder of Gugu Dlamini, an activist for the Treatment Action Campaign, phrased in the timeless language of village gossip and ignorance. It is a story that shows Yesterday experiencing her helplessness, that the only point of her identification with Dlamini can happen in her death by the forces of some paradoxical "traditionalism" itself invested in the trajectories of individualized upward mobility—they pool their meager resources to send the woman to university. She comes back something else. They kill her. I agree that Beauty must go to school, but then what?

FIGURE 6. Yesterday builds a hut for her dying husband. Darrell Roodt, dir., *Yesterday* (2008; Umhlanga Ridge: VideoVision Entertainment, 2008), DVD.

THE HUT THAT YESTERDAY BUILT, OR A HOSPITAL OF HER OWN

Yesterday building a shack from scrap metal for her dying husband marks the film's strongest critique of the post-apartheid state's failures to meet the needs of its citizens. There is no room at the hospital—the only time viewers see the pandemic as anything other than one family's crisis, but this moment is short-lived. The resilience of the African woman, herself HIV-positive, allows her to build her own.

Yesterday and Beauty forage through the landscape, collecting bits of scrap metal to build the shack where John will die. It is clear that Yesterday needs help in this task. In another revealing moment while watching the film with the audio of the director's commentary on: as Leleti Khumalo, the actress playing Yesterday, lifts an improvised window into a hole in the wall of the shack, Darrell Roodt, the director states, "Of course, she (Yesterday/Leleti Khumalo) couldn't lift that by herself, the crew is outside helping her." The camera is inside the shack. Here the ruse of filmic representation encapsulates the impossibility of Yesterday's predicament and the fictiveness of the solutions it finds for the painful problems it presents. I hope the director's description of the difference between what is shown and how the illusion was enabled can be pushed into an allegory here of the necessary trickery of the film's individualist and *faux* familist understanding of the pandemic.

There is another moment of help—this time on camera rather than behind it. While attempting to extract the rusted hood from an abandoned car by the side of the road, Yesterday and Beauty finally receive some help from a group of women wearing the familiar orange of "a road gang," seen earlier in the film working on the repair of a bridge. None of the village "housewives" helps. Why the informal volunteer labor of women who are strangers? The impersonal goodwill of strangers who do not know of Yesterday's purpose seems the closest thing the film can imagine to a collective response. No politics. No Treatment Action Campaign fighting for adequate treatment.[41] No other civil society organizations. No claim on fellow citizens. Just the kindness of passing strangers.

There are many tragedies in *Yesterday* beyond the palpable suffering of the protagonist. Let me parse, somewhat sentimentally, one that could be called a globalizing neoliberal structure of feeling, or the privatization of affect in the gendered sphere of social reproduction. John and Yesterday love each other, though this love broaches domestic violence in the undomestic setting of the corridor of the mine office.[42] They both love Beauty. When John gets sick, his loving wife will take care of him, but she is now without his wage, formerly her only visible means of support. When he dies, she will smash the work of her fictive labor (the shack), sufficiently grief-stricken not to think that she might need it herself. What will she do when she is dying: rebuild the hut she could not even build herself when healthier without the random kindness of strangers, or the behind-the-scenes work of a film crew?

A reading that supplements the film's representations with accounts of the pandemic attached to historical accuracy can imagine the kinds of massive economic and political resources needed to avoid the tragic outcome—jobs, hospitals, public infrastructures of survival and care. But that reading still begs the question of what kind of affective resources or narratives could mobilize something more than sympathy—active like that of the "road crew," passive like the weeping viewer. Or will those affective resources continually need a recathexis of a family form that never was, that demands love and loyalty as it fails again in order for the dispersed subjects of these affective resources to feel themselves as feeling?

I conclude with this question because the mobilization of global feeling is crucial in the fight against the pandemic. *Yesterday* allows us to feel for a resilient young mother betrayed by a husband, but cannot imagine feeling for and with the many others affected by the pandemic, who stand outside the normative affective institution of companionate marriage, with those

whose forms of sexual intimacy require imaginative extension rather than recognition. As Hunter and Mbali write: "From government indifference to pharmaceutical profiteering, to deepening gendered inequalities, the AIDS pandemic operates on a highly contestable social terrain. *Yesterday* fails to challenge dominant preconceptions about the pandemic or, god forbid, actually stimulate political awareness rather than pity among audiences."[43] While much of the pathos of *Yesterday* resides in the ways in which that unempirical but normative imagining of family provided our protagonist with no protections and equally nonexistent assistance, the film only allows us to feel despair at that failure. I hope that other cultural representations, which will risk representing the various local specificities of life with the pandemic and the collective struggles they have prompted, may prompt us to feel more and differently.

FOUR

Poetry

THREE POEMS AND A PANDEMIC

PUBLIC SPHERE THEORY, with its reliance on Habermasian notions of communicative rationality, has historically struggled both to engage and theorize the role of affect in public life.[1] In recent years, feminist and queer scholars Lauren Berlant, Ann Cvetkovich, Audre Lorde, and Douglas Crimp (mostly based in the United States) have elaborated ideas of a "corresponding publicness to the intimate," "public feelings," "poetry as the revelation or distillation of experience," and connections between ideas and practices of mourning and militancy, respectively, to confound the public/private split seen as central to hegemonic liberal ideologies.[2] This chapter aspires to set these ideas in dialogue with recent representations—singular but perhaps representative—of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa to work out the relation between illness as a profoundly subjective, embodied experience and a public one, deeply mediated by social discourses of shame and stigma, the historical forces of racialization and the market, new forms of governmentality in relation to the ir/rationalities of public health policy, and beyond.

The South African state, as policy shifted from denialism to investing in the world's largest antiretroviral rollout, reimagines at least partially its relationship to its citizens in this moment. That these representations are poems, and thus bound up with performances of formal protocols and ideas of aesthetic sublimation, adds a corresponding wrinkle to the question of what kinds of public knowledge and subjective experience they may contain. At least two significant methodological questions inhere in the move to South African poems. Firstly, there is the hope that public feelings knowledge projects can travel without necessarily invoking imperial edifices of othering and that the work of scholars like Berlant, Cvetkovich, and Crimp, even Lorde, on affect, sexuality, and intimacy could be set in dialectical relation to national contexts outside the US, and, relatedly, that historical lessons

from the earlier pandemic in the North Atlantic world can be transposed without forgetting the salient differences between these times and spaces.[3]

Secondly, many of the major questions that the rubric of public feelings wishes to address are evident in an event like the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), where narrative testimony was imagined as having emotionally reparative force in a wider project of nation-building.[4] Phaswane Mpe, the author of two of the poems under discussion in this chapter, expresses surprise that while the TRC did give impetus to new kinds of literary and cultural production, "HIV/AIDS did not feature so much in the TRC novels."[5] I turn to poetry as a way of interrupting what could be called neoliberal uses of testimony, documentary realism, and memoirs as the privileged archive for thinking about the role of affect in public life.[6] My hope is that the poems can stand in supplementary rather than substitutive relation to these other forms and genres.

A consideration of genres of expressive culture can complicate representational terrains by suggesting the myriad ways shame and stigma, care and neglect, life and death, were lived and imagined: mobilized from below, ignored, refused, embraced? In understanding the pandemic, attention to representations of experience that consider questions of the aesthetic should not—to paraphrase Lorde—be considered a luxury. Much illuminating ethnographic work—Mark Hunter, Catherine Campbell, and Didier Fassin among others—powerfully suggests that careful listening to testimonial narratives of individuals and communities living and dying in the pandemic should affect policy.[7] At their simplest, these texts demonstrate the utility of an oral history archive. All three authors are careful to frame the AIDS crisis in the long history of the global political economy of South Africa. Through careful attention to the life experiences of rural women in terms of their restless mobility in the search for work in an increasingly impoverished countryside, and the importance of transactional sexual intimacies in the struggle to survive, Mark Hunter reveals the idea that the vector of infection moves from migrant men into an imagined pristine countryside as the legacy of concerns about syphilis in the 1940s, and that this thinking about HIV infection is not helpful in directing prevention efforts in the present. Through her work on and with sex workers in a mining town, Catherine Campbell provides multiple scales of analysis for understanding sexual behavior, from the international division of labor to deep personal psychological need, and related temporalities of possible ameliorative interventions—from economic reform and transformed gender relations to STD testing. Didier Fassin frames his ethnography with a moral

argument about why the world should care. The three poems under discussion in this chapter participate in these representational rhetorics and strategies but refuse another significant genre for the emergence of public feelings—that of testimony, already a powerful player in a national public sphere after the Truth and Reconciliation Hearings of the late 1990s—themselves somewhat contentiously another site of an affective public sphere.[8]

As I begin, I remember W. H. Auden's powerful reminder that "poetry makes nothing happen."[9] At the same time, I also remember South African poet Ingrid de Kok's remarks on writing: "On the one hand, verbs can, and on the other, they cannot move mountains."[10] Indeed, the readership for these poems may be demographically insignificant, within the national confines of a reading public in South Africa, never mind within a national public sphere and within the wider English-speaking world. Poetry is not a mass media form at the turn of the twenty-first century, though there is recent exciting work on poetry, and particularly poetry in performance, that has begun to think marginalized non-mass genres as new modes of creating publics, particularly counterpublics.[11] With the acknowledgment that while poetry may make nothing happen, these poems all register with considerable emotional power that something happened, is still happening: the poems can nevertheless do at least two kinds of public work.[12] By giving us subjectively and aesthetically mediated representations of the pandemic, the two Phaswane Mpe poems, which follow soon, can suggest how other forms of public discourse around the pandemic on issues of prevention campaigns and testing are consumed, misread, and contested.[13] While my imagination breaks on the question of the ethical and political uses of despair, and despair is evident in all three poems, the poems invite their readers to a landscape of shared suffering—geopolitically stratified as it must be by the worlding of each reader—and this invitation, to mourn, to memorialize, to be horrified, to speculate, could mark the humble beginnings of individual and collective action; the slow gathering of a sympathy, attuned to the risk of paternalism and the appropriations of too quick an identification.

PREVENTION

First, a love lyric by the late South African poet and novelist Phaswane Mpe. The lyric as a form and genre promises a deep subjective interiority—a private intimacy—which is ultimately where the poem arrives, but it

begins much more publicly. The idea that romantic love and sexual practices are ideologically overdetermined is hardly a new one. Recent decades of feminist and queer reading practices and theory have made this point with poignancy and power. Within the context of the first wave of the pandemic in the gay North Atlantic world, two resonant titles engage the problematic of sex in a time of sexually transmitted death: Michael Callen and Richard Berkowitz's 1983 pamphlet "How to Have Sex in an Epidemic," now understood as an originary text in the invention of community-based safer-sex practices and ideologies, and Douglas Crimp's subsequent liberationist riff—"How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic."[14] The following Mpe poem dramatizes the difficulties of safer-sex campaigns in South Africa. In an era of internally led structural adjustment with its turn to public/private partnership in making public health announcements, the central icon of the poem is appropriately a social marketing billboard. The lyric confounds the billboard in a resistance to a new potentially life-saving normativity through a series of scintillating pronoun shifts.

*love*Life

the only roll-on every woman wants
the billboards say
& we say we are not that woman

now that they say you are positive
bone of my heart
i will write you this *love*Letter

i am waiting for words to run
to the tips of my fingers
but they enjoy the warmth
in the heart of my heart
feeding on the placenta
of my dreams for tomorrow

silence too is love
bone of my heart
let us lie on the green
& bask[15]

The poem is titled *love*Life, an explicit reference to the multimedia HIV/AIDS prevention campaign in South Africa ("loveLife"). The title of the poem echoes the dual meaning of the name of the campaign itself. LoveLife recognizes that HIV is a sexually transmitted disease, and that it must

therefore concern itself with your love life, and then there is the injunction to love life—with the moral imperatives of care for self and others—to avoid the opposite of this alliteration—the specter of death that haunts all discussions of HIV/AIDS. The subject of the address of the poem, "Now that they say you are positive," renders the title and the campaign initially ironic: the campaign fails with each new infection, but the redemptive ending of the poem, "let us lie on the green & bask," marks a kind of triumph of love. The persona will continue to love life and love the lover in the face of death, not just in the desire to avoid it.

Billboards announcing the loveLife campaign are a feature of the contemporary urban South African landscape, borrowing the form and strategies of advertisements that sell commercial products. This appropriation seems to be what the poem satirizes in its opening lines: "the only roll-on every woman wants / the billboards say" mocks an idea that an intervention into the intimate and erotic lives of women can be as simple as selling them deodorant. Though I wonder if *roll-on* also makes a gesture to the sex act itself, or more likely, a reference to a condom. *Roll-on* is further an isiZulu term for a hidden or secret lover. Xoliswa Nduneni-Ngema explains the term better than I can in her memoir: "He could have one 'steady', and then numerous 'roll-ons', as secret lovers were called. Like a roll-on deodorant you use in your armpit, a secret lover was kept underneath, in your armpit. Roll-on. Or umakhwapheni. Even married men had umakhwapheni."[16]

The poem's next move is surprising: "& we say . . . / we are not that woman." There is a perhaps a cross-gendered collective resistance to the billboards' claim of the knowledge of what "every women wants." I say cross-gendered because Mpe is a male poet, and this appears to be a personal poem, though the caveat remains that a poem cannot be read the same way as, for example, a memoir. Poetry may disrupt the presumption of personal and emotional transparency that rules the reception of the memoir and may encourage a more collective reading of the singularity of the poem. What is important is that a "we" answers the billboards and then disavows this collective subject as the object of the billboards' address. One can feel the aching pathos of the failure of public health messages to find their targeted audiences, with its echoes of the so-called denialism that has plagued so much of the South African response to the pandemic across the public sphere: "& we say . . . / we are not that woman." There is, moreover, a moving and ethical claim to the singularity of every love and every woman here. We are not that woman, we might want something else.

The next stanza juxtaposes the poem, "i will write you this *love*Letter," with what the billboards say. Pronouns have shifted from the shared "we" to an othered "they"—and an implicating "you"—"now that they say you are positive." Who can this "they" be? The doctors, or more likely nurses, who have announced the test results, neighborhood gossips? Either way, the poem, as "this *love*Letter," offers itself as a different response. Mpe, who died in 2005, at the age of thirty-four, as a writer, is attached to the second-person mode of address. His extraordinary single novel, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001), is sustainedly addressed to series of yous—all strongly implicating the reader.[17] "Bone of my heart" is a term of endearment frequently found in Mpe's oeuvre and the metaphors of the poem move increasingly into the interior of the body.[18] This *love*Letter, unlike the promptings of the billboards, comes from inside—"the heart of my heart / feeding on the placenta of my dreams for tomorrow." We are in the maternal metaphor of futurity here, but the final stanza of the poem jumps into a sufficient present with strong pastoral overtones—"let us lie on the green / & bask." Paradoxically the poem ends up obeying the injunction to LoveLife, even as it exposes the failure of the campaign to produce the identifications and outcomes it desires.

I read the poem as a remarkably astute and subtle investigation into relations between historically public and private feelings around love and sex as they are reconfigured by the multiple social pressures that coalesce in the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa. The poem offers both the revelation and distillation of experience in Lorde's terms, with experience understood at the interface of ideology—"the billboards"—and interiority—"bone of my heart." The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, a major funder of the loveLife program, offers on its website the following definition of the program: "loveLife, South Africa's national HIV prevention programme for youth, was launched in September 1999, by a consortium of leading South African public health organisations in partnership with a coalition of more than 100 community-based organisations, the South African government, major South African media groups and private foundations."[19] Here is the loveLife website: "loveLife is a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to youth behaviour change that implements, on an unprecedented scale, the international experience of the past 20 years—combining well-established public health techniques with innovative marketing approaches to promote healthy AIDS-free living among South African teenagers."[20]

The program itself thus speaks to significant changes in the possibilities for national and even global public spheres, evident most simply in the

personnel, a partnership among a variety of stakeholders: the South African government, community organizations, media groups, and international philanthropy. In many ways, one could argue that loveLife represents something like a best practice of social intervention under conditions of neoliberalism, where states—and particularly postcolonial states—are hamstrung in providing social services, including, but not limited to, healthcare by debt service and/or the need to keep (or get) favorable credit ratings from the international monetary financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.[21] The neoliberal solution here is social marketing, not, for example, public education. The public sphere around HIV/AIDS in Africa is thus structured not only (if at all) by a Habermasian communicative rationality but by the immensely complicated networks of the global economy. Lest this claim reads like an accusation, a counterpublic, produced and represented by an organization like the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), necessarily participates in the same networks and in certain of its strategies has clearly learned from the insurgent AIDS activism movements in the global North, for example ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power).[22] The TAC has, on occasion, used the guerilla theatrics of earlier AIDS activist groups in the North Atlantic world to apply moral pressure to the South African government, particularly in the AIDS denialism years of the Mbeki administration. In April 2003, six hundred pairs of old shoes were delivered to the South Africa embassy in Washington, DC: one pair for each person who dies in South Africa each day because of lack of access to HIV/AIDS treatment. This action spectacularizes the pandemic—another strategy would be the prevalence of T-shirts with the logo "HIV Positive" emblazoned on them that celebrities from Nelson Mandela to Annie Lennox have donned in solidarity with those who are living with the disease.[23] I wonder, in the poem discussed above, if the line "silence too is love" contains an oblique refutation of the central ACT UP slogan, "silence equals death." Given the ongoing controversies about South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it may be responsible to speculate on the value of the form and practice of testimony to heal the wounds of history, particularly in the context of neoliberal economic determinants gestured to in this brief discussion of loveLife. Meg McLagan writes on the long history of transnational practices of testimony:

> The use of testimony by abolitionists can be seen as an early precursor of the use of testimony by human rights activists in the post–World War II era. Like

> slave narratives, human rights testimonies are important vehicles through which ethical arguments are made. They use symbols, images, and accounts of individual experiences of suffering in such a way as to affectively engage and persuade their audiences of a cause's moral worth. Testimony is premised on the belief that pain is universal, that it crosses all boundaries. . . . Essentially testimony functions as a medium through which identification with a suffering "other" can take place. Through our identification, we become connected to a political project and can be moved to action.[24]

Increasingly, the South African TRC is seen as having exemplary status in relation to the growing global phenomenon of truth commissions as keys institutions in the theory and practice of transitional justice, though the question of the exchange of testimony for amnesty, and the problems of reparation, or lack thereof, have caused some subsequent transitional justice institutions in Peru and Sierra Leone, for example, to supplement truth commissions with special prosecutorial courts and/or reparations.[25] The restorative and redemptive power of testimony is not always seen as sufficient in these contexts. Adam Levin's sentence discussed in my introduction returns as an accusation that reframes the problem of identification as one of care, and caring about a collective, rather than only an individual: "Aids is a riddle. It is invisible and yet is everywhere, all around us, in people we love, in me. It does not matter if you are HIV-positive or negative. The world has Aids. And if you give a shit about the world, you have it too."[26] The sentiment here does not quite make a claim on the universality of pain, but rather emphasizes the shamefulness of not giving a shit. The naming and shaming strategy is within a human rights framework but is a different framing of the problem of care because of imaginative identification with the suffering other.

The Mpe poem refuses testimony and shaming and complicates an easy sense of the political itself. In the face of social marketing, speaking out—speaking truth to power—does not appear to be an option, and there appears to be a retreat into deeply private feeling and an almost defiant sensuous enjoyment in "let us lie on the green / & bask." That the poem itself breaks a silence while insisting "silence too is love" marks a paradox that must invoke an idea of publicness, not just as collective empowerment but also as the site of shame, stigma, and exposure, that there might be something unspeakable about both suffering and love. And I have a strong sense that this silence is not a liberal notion of privacy—the green, in the lyric tradition in which the poem situates itself, is very much a public place. Mpe was an English major at the University of the Witwatersrand. In an interview with Lizzy

Attree, shortly before he died, Mpe notes the range of authors who have influenced him, from Sepedi author Oliver Matsepe through the English literary canon: "I studied English literature, so Charles Dickens and Shakespeare and William Blake form part of my consciousness." The final lines of his poem echo William Blake's "The Echoing Green," from *Songs of Innocence* (1789–90).[27]

I want to risk overreading "the green" here, as a public place with a pastoral overtone, and representative of a utopian political longing for a space and time before the titling and private ownership of land in Blake's time and the neoliberal privatization of previously public goods in Mpe's time. For Blake, the green was the commons. Why would Mpe have his lovers bask there? There is no longing for the privacy of the middle-class marital bed. The green connotes a very different configuration of publicness to that found in the eponymous social marketing billboards of the poem.[28] In the minimalist and almost monosyllabic "let us lie on the green / & bask," I can locate a powerful maximalist political desire for a world beyond productive and reproductive labor, beyond citizenship as the political horizon for affective belonging, and where indices of development and HIV prevalence rates are not all-determining. Perhaps this is what loving life looks like for the poem, rather than a sexual behavior modification. The imagining of intimacy becomes social and defiantly so, rather than sanctified by the new normativities of safer-sex campaigns, which unlike in the case of John Greyson and Michael Callen's Miss HIV in chapter 1, come from outside the worlding of the lovers of *this* poem.[29]

TESTING

As discussed in chapter 1, in his *Three Letter Plague*, published in the US as *Sizwe's Test*, Jonny Steinberg takes up the task of trying to ascertain why people do not come forward to be tested and treated even when testing and treatment is made easily available.

Steinberg's book attempts an answer through the singular story of a young man called Sizwe in Lusikisiki in the Eastern Cape. In Steinberg's account, Sizwe's reactions to testing and treatment become incredibly complex, requiring imaginative entry into the powerfully subjective experiences of post-apartheid modes of economic production and social reproduction, shot through as they are with the ongoing legacies of the apartheid era,

African masculine self-fashioning, intermittently held local religious and cosmological beliefs, community norms, and affective forces around blame, shame, stigma, and resentment. This list of mutually implicated factors is not complete, and it is to Steinberg's credit that his scrupulous rendering of Sizwe's world never forgets the differences between author and subject in the give and take of their sustained exchange. The following Mpe poem broaches the problem of testing again, this time explicitly in the first-person voice, that may or may not be autobiographical, but its terms seem both more personal and political.

Elegy for the Trio

i saw heard things
as i lay in the blanket
of night
my eyes piercing through the roof
watching twinkling stars
i heard the wind howling
jackals too
& the hooting of owls
awakened the night of my heart
echoes of thabo manto mokaba
haunted the hall of my skull
drugs drugged
the west tore nkosi apart
& devoured parks
hiv does not cause aids
but let thy condom come
anyway
the fear the flame contained
my body blackened
like a charred coal
as I lulled myself back into sleep
i heard the echoes scream
i turned cold and grey like ash
no test tomorrow
i said again[30]

An elegy is usually, but not necessarily, a poem of mourning, and as Melissa Zeiger has shown, recent poets in the North Atlantic world, mourning those lost to AIDS and breast cancer, have shifted the gendered dimensions of the genre from what she posits as the Orphean tradition to expanded gendered and sexualized expressions of grief and loss in a living elegiac tradition.[31] Who

is the trio being mourned here? I suspect that there are two trios. The first would be "thabo manto mokaba" referring to former South African president Thabo Mbeki, his one-time health minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, and the late Peter Mokaba, former leader of the ANC youth league.[32] This trio comprised the key players in the public debates around causal connections between the HI virus and AIDS at the turn of the twenty-first century. Much ink has been spilled on the so-called denialist controversies and will not be rehearsed here.[33] I think the second trio is made up of Nkosi Johnson, a child who spoke at the International AIDS Conference in Durban in 2000 and died of AIDS at the age of twelve, emerging as a powerfully iconic figure of innocent victimhood; Parks Mankahlana, the official spokesperson of President Mbeki, who died in October 2000, amidst a swirl of rumors that the cause of death was AIDS-related complications; and perhaps the persona of the poem himself.[34] Five proper names are referenced in the text, so in key ways the identities of the members of the titular trio remain uncertain.

The poem opens with what appears as an admission of synesthetic confusion—"i saw heard things / as i lay in the blanket / of night." There is an indeterminacy between things heard and seen as well as the uncertainty as to the reality of what is heard and seen—do they just exist in the persona's head? The blanket of the night appears to offer insulation, but the persona's eyes can pierce through the roof to see the twinkling stars in an almost clichéd image of imagined self-transcendence, but the howling wind, hooting owls, and braying jackals move us into a perception of threat. These sounds of the night awaken the night of his heart and transform the natural world into the human world inside his head—"echoes of thabo manto mokaba / haunted the hall of my skull." The spatial expansion of a skull into a hall suggests the danger of a kind of self-explosion or the vastness of the persona's interiority, and the wind, owls, and jackals become the pronouncements of three leading public figures on HIV/AIDS.

"Drugs drugged" perhaps suggests the internalization of the claim of the toxicity of antiretrovirals, that what is promised as medicine is poison. Then "the west tore nkosi apart." The extra-textual references shorthanded in this phrase get more complicated. How did the west tear Nkosi apart? Is this a reference to Nkosi Johnson being fostered by a white mother—the uses to which he was put as the public face of the pandemic?[35] The juxtaposition of a massive historical and geographic abstraction—the west—with a singular African child may suggest the ongoing imperial determinants of the suffering of the pandemic—the "savage cosmopolitanism" of both conditions and

ameliorative attempts.[36] The absence of punctuation in the poem creates ambiguities in the attribution of agency here. Are drugs or the west the subject of this part of the run-on sentence that constitutes the poem? This ambiguity brilliantly contains the competing claims in the persona's haunted skull. On the one hand, we can insert punctuation to produce a reading congruent with the echoes of thabo manto mokaba: Drugs drugged the west, tore Nkosi apart, and devoured Parks. On the other hand: Drugs drugged. The west tore Nkosi apart and devoured Parks. What is significantly at stake here is whether western medicine is responsible for these deaths, or the larger political, ethical, and epistemological projects implied in "the west." The verbs "tore" and "devoured" take readers back to the earlier owls and jackals, but what or who do the owls and jackals anticipate: the west, the drugs, the night of his heart, thabo manto mokaba? In the poetic half-logic of condensation, the impossibility of adjudicating dramatizes the self-destabilization and transcendence of an interior hermeneutics of a night terror around the prospect of taking an HIV test. This version of the west can be forcibly contrasted with the helpers envisaged by a legal document like PEPFAR (the Presidential Plan for Emergency AIDS Relief, 2003, 2008)—a tearing apart opposed to a historical opportunity to do so much for so many, or even the MSF clinic in *Sizwe's Test*.[37]

"hiv does not cause aids / but let thy condom come / anyway." Let me assume that these are some of the conflicting echoes in our protagonist's dangerously expanding skull. These two parts of the echoes are in very complicated relation to each other. The claim that HIV does not cause AIDS mitigates the need for a condom. The resonance of "thy condom come" with the Lord's Prayer—"thy kingdom come"—moves us into an ironically rendered religious inevitability—how is a condom like God's kingdom? Will they both save you from death? (We will encounter god-condom in chapter 6.)

The poem ends with the protagonist imagining fear burning up his body "like a charred coal," until he is "cold and grey like ash," and then he decides again not to take the test. Reading the rest of Mpe's short and frequently autobiographical oeuvre allows the claim that "test" is an overdetermined word. While Mpe was a brilliant student at the University of the Witwatersrand in the late 1980s and early 1990s, his experience of education and his teachers often approached the level of trauma. Several instances in Mpe's posthumously published quasi-autobiographical short stories juxtapose the trauma of being mugged and robbed with the experience of being Black in university settings: classroom, faculty office, examination hall.[38] I think the image of the hall of his skull works similarly. The experience of imagining an HIV

test in the terms of educational trauma further emphasizes the crisis, if not impossibility, of social reproduction in both material and imaginary registers, if the promise of upward mobility through education disappears in the face of HIV/AIDs in a time of newly democratic precarious futures. The characters of HIV and Khotso in Kgebetli Moele's *The Book of the Dead*, extensively discussed in chapter 6, will inhabit this private and public failure of normative intimacy, not with dread like the protagonist of this Mpe poem but with a kind of sadistic glee.

The idiosyncrasy of the link between a school test and an HIV test is just that, but also suggestive of the problems of thinking about these things in the aggregate. Moreover, what I think the Mpe poem can teach is the risky necessity of imagining ameliorative efforts as prompting something like terror, that the experience of the pandemic is not just economically and geographically but also affectively stratified—continent-wide too—and this is not to say that these affective responses are not related to those economic and geographic stratifications.

CONTEXT AND CONSEQUENCES

The Head of the Household

is a girl of thirteen
and her children are many

left-overs, moulting gulls
wet unweaned sacks

she carries them under her arms
and on her back

though some must walk beside her
bearing their own bones and mash

when not on the floor
in sickness and distress

rolled up in rows
facing the open stall.

Moon and bone-cold stars
Navigational spoor

For ambulance, hearse
the delivery vans

that will fetch and dispatch
the homeless, the motherless

unclean and dead
and a girl of thirteen,

children in her arms,
house balanced on her head.[39]

In 1990, as far as it can be known, the HIV/AIDS infection rate in South Africa was around 1 percent, about the same as it was in Thailand and a little more than that of the United States. A mere twelve years later, in 2002, the South African infection rate hovered at around 20 percent of the population.[40] I have a problem with numbers, in that they feel endlessly manipulable, provide bedrock for policy, and never really tell what they mean. Eduardo Galeano in "Those Little Numbers and People" makes a more trenchant critique: "Where do people earn the Per Capita Income? More than one poor starving soul would like to know. In our countries numbers live better than people. How many people prosper in times of prosperity? How many people find their lives developed by development?"[41] Numbers as indices of aggregates and averages cannot account for differential experiences within their mode of representation. An HIV diagnosis means very different things in terms of the geographical location, class, race, and gender designation of the person receiving that diagnosis in terms of treatment options, social support, employment, and immigration options, and so on. In this way, the international and national rates of infection are not always indicative of the structural violence that Paul Farmer argues produces global health inequities.[42] On the other hand, by leaving so much to the imagination, numbers might be deeply ethical and potentially democratic, though any imagining of a public imagination must brace itself for categories like prejudice, xenophobia, and stigma. When I hear a number, my first thought is "pick one," but I know there are professions in which being responsible to, with, and for numbers is important. I also know that hidden in those figures are deep and ongoing histories of governmentality and sovereignty, stories of emergent and now hegemonic sciences of demography, epidemiology, the hegemony of the modern state and the glimpses of its shifting role under neoliberalism—I cannot yet say demise. I raise that referential and probably inaccurate statistic to see how we can sit with, and I say sit with, not narrate or analyze, because I wish to fumble my way toward a category, more pointedly a phenomenology, of what could be called political feeling.

The testimonial practices of an institution like the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission partially addresses this problem of numbers as social indices by supplementation with personal narratives of the past, in the context of the historical trauma of apartheid. I cannot imagine a forum of transitional justice addressing the pandemic in its ongoing and painful present. The poems in this chapter can perhaps tell us how the pandemic feels in powerfully political ways. South African doctor Chris Ellis models how the poem enables and resists political feeling for a clinician working in KwaZulu Natal.[43]

Ingrid de Kok is an established figure in the landscape of South African poetry and her poem, reproduced in full at the opening of this section, suggests another representational mode for the tragic history of the South African pandemic, reworking, in its central image of a young girl with a house balanced on her head, the iconicity of African femininity. No stately or stoic peasant woman gracefully carrying a calabash of water on her head from the river, but a surreal image of a young girl overburdened with swarms of dead and dying children, while bearing the house and all its resonances of shelter, home, nation, domestic reproduction, and generational continuity. How could she not stagger?[44]

The temporality of this image of African womanhood extends deeper into the past, a time before AIDS, a fantasy of a time before apartheid, or even colonialism. But the promise of generational continuity will not hold: The titular head of the household is a girl of thirteen.[45] The poem has a spectatorial central conceit. The persona is outside looking in or on, appalled. The title, which is also the first line, contains echoes of a sociological description, if not the bureaucratic language of the census.

There are too many children for the ambulances and hearses, which are rendered as delivery vans for the unclean and dead. The delivery vans have no guides but "moon and bone-cold stars." The failure of the state to respond adequately—to carry some of the weight of the household—is poignantly suggested, as readers too watch powerlessly the emergence of the surreal tableau that is the "head of the household." Child-headed households are nothing new in the South African countryside—a feature of the impoverishment of more than a century of migrant labor, which HIV/AIDS now compounds. The figure of the girl in the poem becomes representative, perhaps emblematic, of the pandemic in ways that narrative accounts or statistical figures cannot be, even as the persona stands outside taking on the painful task of bearing witness. All a reader can do is to refuse to avert their eyes.

In a virtuosic reading of this poem, literary critic Chielozona Eze asserts: "Readers are not allowed the pleasure of a disinterested observer; they are drawn into the conditions of human frailty that are thrust on them in subtle forms, in forms that prod without being overbearing and are deeply moral without being moralistic."[46]

In this way, another response to the pandemic from another position is imagined. We are not in the deep interiority of the Mpe poems, but in the problem of a spectator's response to the spectacle of atrocity. The final line, "house balanced on her head," deeply ironizes, by rendering literal "the head of the household" title. The poem dramatizes a numbed, almost overwhelmed outrage on the part of the spectator. The image of the overwhelmed girl becomes unbearable to watch, but not quite in the same way that the house balanced on her head must be unbearable—yet bear it she does—for the object of the poem's description. Sarah Brophy and Susan Spearey locate a tentative possibility for empathetic modeling in the poem: "As the poem frames it, then, the girl's act of trying to balance her responsibilities is incredibly fragile, and its fragility is exasperated by observers' tendency to conceive their role as only being able to watch, until extreme illness and, finally, death, necessitate official intervention. At the same time, 'the head of the household' anticipates that movement beyond observing might be possible, if observers heeded the call to response-ability that the girl's own actions model."[47]

All three poems present their prevailing feelings—love, terror, horror—as feelings saturated with ethical and political concerns but without the promise of ameliorative action, and in the face of the suffering they express, a demand for the political utility of feeling risks a kind of obscenity, even as each poem gestures toward the political determinations of its representation of feeling. The first Mpe poem imagines agency as an exhortation to "lie on the green & bask." "Elegy for the Trio" imagines agency as not taking a test tomorrow. "The Head of the Household" leaves us staring in horror at the unjust and impossible spectacle of a thirteen-year-old girl, mobbed by dying children, balancing a house on her head.

My desire was for this chapter to have an elegiac poetics, though I wonder about the appropriateness, or even the possibility, of ostensibly academic work performing the work of mourning. I think here of Eve Sedgwick's work on the distinction between what she calls reparative and paranoid modes of reading, but, like Douglas Crimp and others before me, feel that some notion

of mourning and/or melancholia needs to be added to that Sedgwickean binary.[48] There is much to critique in all three poems. The defiance of "*love*Life" in the face of the safer-sex message of the billboards, the refusal of "Elegy for the Trio" to take an HIV test, the risk of voyeurism in "The Head of the Household." Yet all three critiques miss the feeling in the poems by turning the poems into either sociological case studies and/or ethical failures. The problem of reading here becomes one of holding onto critical reading without being reduced to it. Like Mpe, I remain stuck in the position of the refusal or the incapacity to mourn—in the disorientation of melancholia—claiming this as a political feeling. In the context of the South African HIV/AIDS pandemic, reading these poems, critically, reparatively, mournfully, works to reanimate the words of the dead and to keep the spectacle of the dying painfully, shamefully, and politically in us and with us.

FIVE

Young Adult Novels

THE FICTION OF BEST PRACTICES

The Novel and the NGO

PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES, DEBATES, and directives appear unevenly throughout the fiction produced about the "African" HIV/AIDS pandemic in the years from 1993 to 2009. I place "African" in scare quotes because the geographic determinants of both the production and reception of these novels exceed a continental and geographic frame. Achille Mbembe writes: "I wish I could have made it clearer that what is called Africa is first and foremost a geographical accident. It is this accident that we subsequently invest with a multitude of significations, diverse imaginary contents, or even fantasies, which, by force of repetition, end up becoming authoritative narratives. As a consequence of the above, what we call 'Africa' could well be analyzed as a formation of desires, passions and undifferentiated fantasies."[1]

There is a long moment when HIV/AIDS is a key player in this intensive work of the imagination of "Africa" as "a geographical accident." In the face of a growing pandemic, educational publishers—themselves often part of, or in partnership with, NGO consortiums and sometimes state actors—saw the genre of young adult fiction as a potentially useful pedagogical site in prevention and then also treatment campaigns in this "formation of desires, passions and undifferentiated fantasies." This chapter will analyze two such novels, Carolyne Adalla's *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* (Kenya, 1993) and Lutz Van Dijk's *Stronger Than the Storm* (South Africa, 2000). The novels deploy divergent strategies in their representation of the trajectories and life possibilities of HIV-positive characters in ways that are consonant with their place and time of setting and publication. A version of what we call "best practices" is an important driver, though not the only one.[2]

As the discussion of EthnoGraphic Media's *Miss HIV* in my first chapter argues, "best practices" are both space and time bound. A set of practices shorthanded as ABC (Abstain, Be Faithful, Use a Condom), which may

have been effective in Uganda in the early 1990s, would have been disastrous for Botswana ten years later, due to the different nature of the two states—a dictatorship versus a democracy, the availability of antiretroviral drugs, and the much higher rate of prevalence in Botswana, which meant that treatment and prevention could not be disarticulated. In this chapter, the state of play in Kenya in 1993 and South Africa in 2000 each has its own place-bound specificities as well as time-bound moments in international humanitarianism and global HIV/AIDS advocacy and policy. The putative universalism of "best practices," as they traverse the terrain of "African" HIV/AIDS, struggles with both local particularities and the great inequality power cleavages within and between countries.

Political theorist Wendy Brown argues that "best practices" are a feature of neoliberal political rationality: "Emerging from the private sector in the early 1980s, but taken up soon after in the public, nonprofit and NGO worlds, best practices . . . embody a distinctive fusion of business, political and knowledge concerns and an easy translatability across various spheres and 'industries' in generating and applying governance techniques."[3]

The ostensible political neutrality of best practices, their apparent ability to detach from the circumstances that produced them and apply to radically different situations on the ground, has been tricky for efforts to imagine the HIV/AIDS pandemic in diverging national contexts and more so for efforts to combat the pandemic.

I aim in this chapter to use the vaunted singularity of the literary against the flattening-out tendencies of best practices rhetoric, to refuse the dangerous shorthand of "best practices" as both an ameliorative imaginary and implementable strategy, even as the publications of the young adult novels in this chapter emerge from a neoliberal nexus infused with the rhetoric of "best practices," by showing how "best practices" cannot really move from Kenya in 1993 to South Africa in 2000. Even though "best practices" often stage themselves as revisable under the phrase "lessons learned," we are in the intractability of the incommensurate as we move between these times and spaces.[4]

"Best practices" emerge as something like the anti-literary, as a risky and facile shorthand that avoids the difficulty of imagining the specificity of any given condition, and allows for easy portability and the simulation of accountability in the mode of alibi. In many realms "best practices" become the way for experts who seem unconcerned with the life worlds rather than the practices of those they wish to help to create a simulacra of change.[5] The novels

I discuss here are not only complicit with an idea of "best practices" in the enabling material conditions of their publication, but also suggest the necessity for more nuanced attention to both national and historical geopolitical contexts and to the singularities of subjective experience. The first-person narratives of both novels work to foreground such singular subjective experience even as they must render such experiences as typical if the novels' pedagogical aspirations are to be viable.

"Best practices" are of course one feature, practice, or method of neoliberal governance and form an important part of the vocabulary and strategies of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment as well as on many other social and humanitarian concerns. The following selection from a 2000 UNAIDS "Summary Booklet of Best Practices in Africa" can be taken as typical.

> The formal objectives of Best Practices are:
>
> - to strengthen the capacity to identify, document, exchange, promote, use, and adapt Best Practice as lessons learned within a country and between countries as a means to expand the national response to HIV/AIDS
> - to promote the application of the Best Practice process for policy and strategy definition and formulation
> - to collect, produce, disseminate, and promote Best Practice.
>
> UNAIDS attempts to capture details of a range of Best Practices in order to provide useful lessons and offer references for those working in HIV/AIDS-related activities.[6]

A more recent grant to the International AIDS Society by the Gates Foundation in 2020 states its purpose: "To enhance the evidence base and to generate best practices aimed at reducing stigma as a barrier for people living with, and most vulnerable to HIV."[7] The language of best practices is endemic to the global ameliorative aspirations of the NGO world. While bibliotherapy comes with its own set of problems, I propose reading novels as a supplement to "best practices." In response, satires of NGOs have become more prevalent in recent years perhaps both as a cynical response to their prior utopian lionization, and because of their failure to substantively address and/or ameliorate the conditions that prompted their founding and funding.

The delightful Kenyan television series *The Samaritans* is arguably the most thorough-going takedown of the NGO world in contemporary Africa.[8] The two novels discussed in this chapter offer no explicit critique of the

NGO'ization of African civil society, nor of political life more broadly, but can be used to demonstrate the limits of international humanitarianism, itself a key component of global neoliberal governance, and to show the ways that the complexity and particularity of the figuration of lived experience confounds the imagined portability of "best practices."[9]

My two young adult novels are written in different moments in the evolution of best practices in relation to HIV/AIDS and they have different political allegiances to the ostensibly diverging forces of international intervention in the pandemic—global family values and liberal humanitarianism that come together in PEPFAR. The figure of the African living and dying with HIV becomes an export site for North Atlantic culture wars between liberal humanitarianism and global family values underpinned by evangelical Christianity over the period covered by these books.[10] Carolyne Adalla's *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, while written in the first-person voice of an HIV-positive character, brings a significantly different time, space, and set of issues into representation (loosely more allied with a global family values coalition) in the long history of the pandemic to those found in Van Dijk's *Stronger Than the Storm* (closer, but not reducible to liberal humanitarianism). Adalla's novel stages itself as a series of letters written by Catherine Njeri to a Kenyan friend in Germany: one half of an epistolary novel. Both novels work hard to ventriloquize African voices in the first-person, and while *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* falls more squarely in the global family values camp, there is the striking irony that Marilyn, the African in the west (where Catherine, our narrator, wishes to go), appears never to write back.

CONFESSIONS OF AN AIDS VICTIM

Conditions of Production

The novel was published by Spear Books, a subsidiary of East African Educational Publishers. The history of East African Educational Publishers speaks to an earlier, pre-neoliberal moment in African literary publishing. In 1965—barely two years after Kenyan independence—two British publishers, Heinemann and Cassell, opened offices in Nairobi. In 1968, Heinemann Educational Books (EA) Limited changed its name to Heinemann (Kenya) Ltd when part of it became locally owned. Dr. Henry Chakava was appointed as the first African editor at Heinemann in 1972. In 1992, the year before

Adalla's novel was published, the company became the first entirely locally owned multinational publishing firm in Kenya, changing its name to East African Educational Publishers.[11]

This brief publisher history shows the attempt to create national institutions out of previous colonial cultural institutions in the long history of decolonization. Heinemann has a long and illustrious history of bringing African writers to a global English-speaking audience through its African Writers Series, ably chronicled by Charles Larson in his definitive but controversial *The Ordeal of the African Writer* (2001).[12]

Biographical information on Carolyne Adalla is difficult to come by. *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* is thus far her only published novel. She "is a graduate in Bachelor Science (Agriculture), from Egerton University. She is currently working on a Youth Programme between Kenya and the Netherlands. This explains her interest in the subject of HIV/AIDS. So far, her major work is *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*."[13] So given her professional commitment to international youth NGO work, she would share some of the commitments of the author of *Stronger Than the Storm*, which will be elaborated shortly.

If Thina in *Stronger Than the Storm* is a poor girl from Guguletu, Catherine in *Confessions of an AIDS victim* and her friend Marilyn, to whom the letters are addressed, are potential Afropolitan subjects, well before Taiye Selasi arguably coins and definitively copyrights the term in 2005.[14] Catherine discovers that she is HIV-positive after a series of blood tests required for a US student visa to continue her studies in Texas: "I have tested positive for HIV and subsequently cannot be allowed entry into the USA."[15] Catherine addresses Marilyn as follows: "You have proved to be such a valuable and selfless friend in high school, campus and thereafter. We have literally shared the memorable moments of our adult life together until nine months ago when you left for the Netherlands in pursuit of further education. . . . And you are such a talented writer. You describe everything so finely and in such detail, from the horrible winters to the slow pace of social life in Holland" (4–5). Marilyn has been able to follow the "typical" upwardly mobile trajectory of a certain kind of postcolonial subject. HIV will prevent Catherine from following her. HIV appears here as that which thwarts our protagonist's educational development. Of course, HIV is not the only stumbling block to postcolonial educational advancement, though the novel's moralizing tone and individualizing of notions of responsibility and respectability mark its allegiance to the individualizing of responsibility—a key feature of neoliberal social imaginaries.

In her account of herself, Catherine falls hard for Henry, a popular boy at the boys' boarding school St. Patrick's, whom she meets at a debate competition. She describes Henry as the honey-tongued son of an illiterate tycoon: "In his first letter, Henry had indicated his hobbies as basketball, dancing, surfing and skating. Looking back, I can see that he would have been more convincing were he writing from some temperate continent, probably Europe or America. Skating in Equatorial Africa? As for basketball, I soon found out that he had never been seen on the basketball pitch. I guess he did not even know the difference between a basketball and a football," (24) but neither might Catherine. Part of Henry's allure comes from the faking of cosmopolitanism and the performance of the prestige of the "West." Moreover, this description tells us as much about Catherine's own aspirations as Henry's, and her debunking of Henry's pretentions reveal her own ones, lesser though they may be. Basketball is played on a court not a pitch. These performances of the minutiae of "class" are important for the imagined readership of the novel and instructive about the kinds of sexual behavior readers must abjure if infection with HIV is to be avoided.

HIV has many meanings for Catherine in the novel: the terror of mortality, stigma, and the fear of ostracism, but the blockage of a kind of cosmopolitan upward mobility is arguably most important. The novel, despite the word "confession" in its title, functions as a warning: Sex is perilous for young women. Don't be like me or you will get AIDS. The first chapter ends with a homily from the doctor: "The only salvation for mankind is for its people to avoid high risk behavior and live as morally upright as monks and nuns." Catherine responds: "How strange this world is! Catherine discussing AIDS instead of fixing an appointment for a date out! Thank God there is writing to do. It helps me fill in the long hours I would otherwise spend crying and worrying. Right now I am a strange mixture of hurt pride and frustrated ambitions that are still sufficiently alive" (9).

Within this moralizing, important medical information is presented. Readers learn about the ELISA test, the prevailing test of the early 1990s, which tests for antibodies to the virus (not the virus itself), symptoms of seroconversion, and the time lag between infection and seroconversion. This information reads as the paraphrase of a pamphlet, barely fictionalized in a conversation with a doctor. While a university graduate, Catherine appears without the informational and emotional resources to cope with her diagnosis. She tells readers: "From the pamphlet I have, ELISA is an abbreviation for Enzyme-linked Immunosorbent Assay, whatever that means" (7). Fiction

here is imagined as an information supplement for readers who are implicitly seen as also lacking crucial information.

The novel then provides arguments for why safer-sex practices, particularly condom use, have failed to take hold. Catherine's "feminist" boyfriend, Brian, remarks: "Take the use of condoms, for instance. I must say few men, among my friends that is, would voluntarily choose to use condoms to protect themselves against possible infections. . . . One guy in our office amused us by likening the use of condoms to deduction of income tax from his pay. Another said using the condom during sex is like eating the sweet with its wrapper on. What this suggests is that many people find it cumbersome to use the condom during sex, and with this bias many of them are likely to be infected or pass the infection on" (48).

In these staggeringly obvious ways, readers can see the difficulties with ABC prevention campaigns. Catherine's sexual biography reveals the difficulties with A. A is for Abstinence, difficult for her in a world that does not prepare her for the power of her own desires; B is for Be Faithful, difficult in a world of the redundancy of transactional intimacy (what intimacy is not transactional?); and C for Condom is equally difficult in a world of heteropatriarchal male sexual entitlement. ABC—the first three letters of the English alphabet, so simple every child can learn them, but the analogy to basic literacy belies the difficulty and complexity of Catherine's erotic options and choices. Catherine is often quite clear in the novel that she needs the economic support of boyfriends—sometimes with basic provisioning like rent, but more often for the small luxuries that are essential to her classed sense of self, like dinners out, perfume, etc. As she notes, "The only way these ladies can get a share of that is through love, fake or otherwise" (49).

The epistolary form of the novel feels almost quaint. The novel is written around the advent of email as a dominant form for international communication.[16] We are told that Catherine and Marilyn write to each other once a month. From 1977 to 1999, postal service in Kenya is delivered by Kenya Posts and Telecommunications Corporation, a national postal service, though debates about privatization are on the horizon. In 1999, the Postal Corporation of Kenya, with its six hundred post offices, is granted a legal monopoly until 2023, in a move that may mark a pushback against the free-market logics of neoliberalism. Reliable postal service is not imagined as a problem for the novel in its early 1990s moment, unlike the case in many other postcolonial countries.[17] The novel needs a reliable postal service for its very form, which marks a set of expectations about state

services that are in imminent collapse in the moment of its writing, and not unconnected with the difficulties of imagining and implementing a national AIDS policy.

Narrative and National Allegory

Catherine Njeri tells Marilyn and readers that she is twenty-eight at the time of her HIV-positive diagnosis, which would mean that she was born two years or so after Kenyan independence. Her life is thus far coterminous with the life of the Kenyan nation-state, though there are few other national markers in her narrative. However, her personal geography may be significant. She is born in the village of Kamacharia in Murang'a district and her father owns a bookshop in Murang'a town. Murang'a county is at the heart of Kikuyu country and Murang'a town, called Fort Hall under the British, saw considerable Kikuyu displacement and resistance to land confiscations by the British in the colonial period and was considered the ancestral home of the Kikuyu people by some Mau Mau fighters.[18] Catherine may willy-nilly figure the Kenyan national project in a crisis of economic development and social reproduction.

Catherine describes HIV/AIDS in Kenya: "It is like a cry of a nation which has been defeated at war."[19] Even though the Mau Mau rebellion was successful in driving the British out and achieving Kenyan independence, HIV/AIDS represents something like national defeat for the novel in the early 1990s.[20]

Sex Education, Sexual Biography, and the Politics of Respectability

The problem of HIV/AIDS in the novel is a resolutely heterosexual one, perhaps unwittingly prefiguring Ugandan president Museveni's 2002 remark that HIV/AIDS in Uganda is a heterosexual problem because there are no gays in Uganda, even though the national space represented in the novel is Kenya and not Uganda. The pandemic is heterosexualized as Africa becomes its epicenter.

Catherine's description of her sexual feelings and experiences are mostly held within the grip of sexual respectability, and the kind of sexual respectability that has particular difficulty in broaching women's desire. Occasionally Catherine notes and explains away the sexual double standard for men and

women. When she writes, "It was only much later, after I had read about the anatomical differences between men and women with regard to sexual arousal and response, that I began to understand why boys won't just stop at kissing," she appears to be securely within patriarchal sexual ideology.[21] When she discloses her HIV status to her boyfriend, Alex, a terrible fight ensues. "Don't call me names, Alex. Can you explain to me how you are attracted to prostitutes? I guess your girlfriend in Nairobi is one helluva prostitute too. A Casanova, that's what you are."[22] We are unwittingly in the deep history of colonialism and its geographic and intimate legacies here. In her path-breaking history *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (1990), Luise White establishes the centrality of prostitution in the founding of Nairobi as a city, the links between migrant labor and sex-work.[23] The first buildings built to code in Nairobi are brothels. The novel thus participates in a long argument about the sexual politics of colonial modernity—the mobility of first African men and then African women in the search for work after the colonial destruction of often thriving peasant economies accounts for sexually transmitted diseases. Here HIV becomes a new wrinkle in an old story. This commonsense account of the spread of HIV, which Catherine seems to believe here in the exchange with Alex, is disputed in the South African context by Mark Hunter, who shows how the mobility of African women in search of livelihoods means that the male migrant labor vector of transmission of sexually transmitted diseases no longer applies in the sexual economies of postcolonial African states more generally.[24]

Where else might we look for representations of HIV/AIDS in Kenya in the time of *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*? Writing of his experiences working in a clinic in Nairobi in the 1990s, Keguro Macharia, Kenyan author and queer theorist, describes silences around both HIV/AIDS and sexual norms and practices that differ from Catherine's:

> Perhaps because it was Moi's Kenya, in the grip of massive political repression and economic hell, we did not discuss how these young men got HIV. We did not speculate about their sexual practices or sexual identities. . . . Young men were young men. Careless. Free with their favors. Unlucky. Perhaps with each young man who walked in and left in a bodybag, we were slightly relieved it wasn't a brother, a cousin, a friend, a lover. Sometimes he was.
>
> Funeral notices spoke about long illnesses and sudden illnesses, pneumonia and tuberculosis. Per the press, African villages were "emptying." It was an abrupt shift from the "overpopulation" worries a few years earlier. I remember little. I borrow other memories. I invent some.

> I learned that there was a language to describe Black gay experiences with AIDS when I went to the U.S. It was in Marlon Riggs's *Tongues Untied*, the Other Countries collective's *Sojourner: Black Gay Voices in the Age of AIDS*, Essex Hemphill's *Ceremonies*, Melvin Dixon's *Love's Ceremonies*. It was in *Brother to Brother* and *In the Life*. We spoke about condoms and cybersex, masturbation and non-penetrative sex. Phone sex and mutual masturbation. To borrow from Douglas Crimp, we were discussing how to be promiscuous in an epidemic.
>
> A few years into my stay in the U.S., I wondered whether the stories and poems I'd learned existed in the same way for Kenya. It was easy to find statistics—all those empty villages and destroyed populations—and easy to find venues of transmission—"harmful" traditional practices, including circumcision and widow inheritance, along with the modern irresponsibility of long-distance lorry drivers and hypermobile sex workers. African promiscuity. African illiteracy. African backwardness. African promiscuity.[25]

Macharia is worth quoting at length here for some of the context that does not and perhaps cannot make it into Adalla's novel. *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, with its resolutely heterosexual concerns, may not be part of the Kenyan version of the stories and poems that Keguro finds in African diasporic cultural production, but the novel does sometimes offer a counternarrative to "African promiscuity. African illiteracy. African backwardness." Catherine is educated, hardly illiterate, and while there are mentions of "harmful" traditional practices and modern, mostly alcoholically fueled "modern irresponsibility," Catherine presents herself as a respectable, aspiringly middle-class subject. While sexually active, she is serially monogamous, no concurrent partners, and the nascent feminism of Catherine's account suggests that it is a kind of entitled toxic masculinity that drives the pandemic. While she sometimes attaches the adjective African to her description of such men and the social formations they constitute, her story *tout court* mostly refutes an "African promiscuity" frame. Catherine is invested in ideas of sexual respectability, and one of the overriding messages of the novel is that HIV can happen to anyone, even a well-educated, eminently respectable, and "normal" young woman. On the one hand, she is invested in being exceptional: "During the years that followed, I made lots of friends and improved my grades in class tremendously. By the time I reached standard six, I was a darling to the teachers and many pupils."[26] On the other hand, it is her ordinariness that she wishes to emphasize, particularly after her diagnosis: "I am aware that the story of my life is not so extraordinary to warrant attention; rather it is its similarity with the day to day lives of other girls

growing up that makes it worth narrating" (4). Similarly, HIV/AIDS must be an overwhelming personal tragedy and a quotidian and shared experience. Respectability has not and cannot save Catherine from AIDS, but that does not mean that she can relinquish it.

The African American texts that Macharia sees as providing a retroactive language for the omissions and silences he describes in the clinics all foreground race, and particularly notions of Blackness—celebratory ones—to counter the compounded stigmas induced by white supremacy in the US and cross-racial homophobia. Catherine barely mentions race, but sexual respectability appears as incapacitating in both Black majority and Black minority national contexts.

The desire to appear respectable is one of the reasons for the dangerous silences around sex, and by extension "sexuality," although heterosexuality is so resolutely naturalized in the novel, questions of sexuality are barely considered. While in a South African context it is possible to argue that there might be a resistant quality to assertions of sexual respectability as a counter to the racism in the charge of "African Promiscuity," this is less apparent in Catherine's case. Like many African colonial (and postcolonial elites), Catherine is mission-educated. She describes her first school: "The school was run by missionary sisters and the code of conduct was strict" (10). Her experiences at boarding school reveal an absence of sex education both at home and at school. "Mothers were rated poor sex educators. A number of girls admitted shyly that they never received any prior information on menstruation from their mothers—they just happened upon it, thanks to the boarding schools. One girl narrated to us how her mother had bought for her a packet of tampons along with her other shopping for the term. She had counter checked against the list she had written for the shopping and satisfied that it was an additional item, she decided to ask her mother about it. 'You are a girl. You will soon discover what it is,' was all her mother could tell her" (17). I do not think that this anecdote would constitute what "best practices" might term "peer education." The silences around sex, and particularly around feminine sexual desire, appear to Catherine as important factors in her inability to make intimate decisions that could have prevented her infection with HIV.

These silences appear partially produced by social stigma, which is presented as the great enforcer of respectability, and the enormous problem stigma poses for both HIV prevention and treatment programs has been amply documented, not just in fictional worlds. In a time when there are

no real treatment options, and arguably well beyond that time, the fear of being marked as subject of death and sexual shame prevents people from getting tested.[27] It is better not to know than to bear the stigma of being HIV-positive. Catherine only gets tested because she is required to do so in order to acquire a US student visa by an immigration rule banning HIV-positive people from entering the US, enacted by statute in 1987 and then strengthened in 1993 (the year of the novel's publication) and then partly lifted by George W. Bush in 2008 and fully repealed by Barack Obama in 2009.[28] With an HIV-positive diagnosis seen as something like a death sentence, and no treatment options available beyond the palliative, incentives for getting tested and knowing one's status were miniscule. Catherine gets tested as a kind of *pro forma* bureaucratic step necessary for her educational and career upward mobility and is surprised by the result. Unlike in the Black gay experiences, which Macharia wishes to bring to bear on HIV/AIDS in Kenya in the 1990s, here there is no sense of communal or social responsibility or care—no invention of new protective community sexual practices, like safer sex. Macharia mentions Marlon Riggs's *Tongues Untied*, the Other Countries collective's *Sojourner: Black Gay Voices in the Age of AIDS*, Essex Hemphill's *Ceremonies*, Melvin Dixon's *Love's Ceremonies*, alongside Douglas Crimp's influential essay "How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic," to suggest an alternative genealogy for the sexuality of the Afropolitan subject than the biography of the international student like Marilyn or Catherine.[29]

Instead, religious judgment underpins Catherine's understanding of HIV/AIDS. "And the first lesson is that AIDS is a reality, a terrible disease whose wages are death."[30] As in many places where the virus is mentioned, one sees in the biblical language the legacy of Catherine's mission education. Reworking the assertion in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death," she substitutes sin for AIDS to damn herself. This self-hatred produced by a religious recoding of disease as sin is compounded by the imagining of social isolation and effacement caused by stigma: "I cannot fathom the idea, but an AIDS victim!—that is what I am now. Pretty soon I will be faceless and nameless. Catherine, the beautiful name my mother gave me, will only be mentioned in hushed voices and by wagging tongues" (2–3). Ervin Goffman's classic definition of stigma would seem to pertain to the fictional Catherine too: "By definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances. We construct a stigma-theory, an ideology to explain his inferiority and account

for the danger he represents, sometimes rationalizing an animosity based on other differences, such as those of social class. . . . He possesses a stigma, an undesired differentness from what we had anticipated. We and those who do not depart negatively from the particular expectations at issue I shall call the normals."[31]

In stark contrast to the multiple contextual explanations for the pandemic in Kenya presented and disputed by Macharia above, Catherine Njeri's account of HIV/AIDS initially appears much more personal and individualistic. Her infection is the result of poor decisions she made about her intimate life, decisions that have removed her from the community of the normals. The novel is entitled *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, yet what exactly is Catherine a victim of? In her letter to Marilyn, Catherine feels obliged to recount her entire romantic and sexual history as some kind of explanation for her infection. A Jamesonian hunch: real history cannot be depicted directly but only appears as shifting and elusive background that leaves a trace on depicted events.[32] In this sense then, Catherine is a victim of colonial and postcolonial history, a victim of sexist ideology, and while the narrative broaches such notions, she mainly presents herself as a victim of her own unruly desires. It is only in the eighth chapter, when she steps outside herself to fleetingly imagine community with other people living with HIV (and this imagining is largely phobic), that we transcend the frame of HIV/AIDS caused by bad individual decisions.

Her central and repeated metaphor for AIDS is a (runaway?) underground train:

> Some people in the world are boarding the AIDS underground trains by sticking to high-risk behavior and refusing to alter their lifestyles accordingly. Maybe I fit in this category. We knowingly ignore all truths and facts about AIDS, passing by all the warning signals, cheating ourselves that we are enjoying life. In this inferno, we obtain tickets in the form of the AIDS virus and secure ourselves a place on the underground train. Thousands of people are busy obtaining their tickets yearly without giving it much thought, only to realise a shade too late that they must die, to the glory of AIDS.[33]

This partial personification of HIV/AIDS is often a central feature of the literary imagination of HIV, most thoroughly developed in Kgebetli Moele's *Book of the Dead*, the focus of chapter 6. The language and central metaphor of the above passage may articulate colonial legacies in a way that the narrative itself does not or cannot. The language of a kind of hell, fire, and brimstone Christianity is present. Christianity in many ways remains one

of the paradigmatic markers of colonialism in the region, and the relation between sexual morality deemed Christian and indigenous African intimate norms is central to both colonial and decolonizing ideologies and practices over the course of Kenyan national history.[34] The early 1990s, the time of the writing of the novel, sees the beginning of the massive boom of evangelical Christianity in East African countries like Kenya and Uganda, arguably because the prosperity gospel provides solace in the face of the failures of decolonization and the extensive material depravations and inequality produced by accelerating globalization.[35]

And then there is the train, that other great symbol of colonial modernity. The role of the East African railroad in the colonization of the territory that is to become the colony and then the independent nation state of Kenya is key in both the histories and historiographies of East Africa. Beginning in 1895, the railroad effectively opened up the lacustrine interior of East Africa for trade and white settlement in the Kenyan highlands, as well as bringing thousands of indentured Indian laborers to the territory. But Catherine Njeri's AIDS train is further an underground train, underground perhaps because hidden from sight, but underground trains are also a feature of public transportation in the large urban metropolises of the global north. Following Macharia's call for an intertextual/archival expansion in terms of the texts that can illuminate a Kenyan experience of HIV/AIDS, an entirely different register of "underground railroad" may riskily come into play in asking that we imagine new transnational possibilities of racial and sexual solidarity in the face of HIV/AIDS—but Catherine is no Harriet Tubman. In metaphorizing AIDS as an underground train, Adalla participates in the associative images of AIDS as a kind of western import, as an index of African sexual degeneracy caused by colonial modernity. Catherine writes to Marilyn: "The AIDS virus seems to be taking advantage of the moral weakness in our society and other imbalances. Hardly three decades from the time we attained independence, our Kenyan society is morally degenerating, caught at the crossroads between Western behavior and African morals."[36]

Catherine's recounting of her biography reveals an uneven engagement with what *pace* James Ferguson could be called the domestic and sexual norms of African modernity as discussed in chapter 3. Catherine claims that her parents' marriage begins to deteriorate when her father takes a second wife. Polygyny is clearly an intimate norm for her parents' generation, but less so for her own. In contrast to *Stronger Than the Storm*, which in its closing tries to imagine the harnessing of African customs, not quite ossified

into tradition in ameliorative initiatives around the pandemic, African intimate norms, paradoxically enabled by both "modernity" and "tradition," are imagined as only serving to facilitate the spread of the disease. Catherine tells Marilyn:

> "[They] stick to risky cultural practices that have been known to spread the HIV infection. By this I mean the practices of group circumcision, where the circumcision blade is never sterilised between each individual circumcision. I am also talking of the practices such as the inheriting of wives by an otherwise healthy man, after the death of a husband possibly from AIDS. This practice is common among Western Kenya tribes. . . . AIDS also presents a catastrophe to the polygamous nature of African society. I know of a man who had three wives and sixteen children. He contracted the AIDS virus somehow and infected all his three wives. . . . Soon sixteen children from one home will need an orphanage." (78)[37]

Even though the novel recognizes that ideologies of sexual respectability produce both the catastrophic silences around particularly women's sexuality and the forms of social stigma that facilitate transmission by adding to the difficulties of getting tested, "modern" monogamous heterosexual marriage remains the redemptive intimate form in the face of HIV/AIDS, and sexual activity outside that form must produce stigma. We also see here that sexual respectability has a geography, and a national and civilizational one at that. Catherine presents herself as largely without tribal affiliation, even though her patronym and hometown imply she is Kikuyu. She presents herself as detribalized into a kind of urban middle-classness, unlike her compatriots in the "Western Kenya tribes" who practice group circumcision, widow-inheritance, and—like her own father—polygyny.

These social and implicitly political framings of HIV/AIDS in Kenya come relatively late in the narrative and Catherine seems confident that it is her high-risk behavior that is to blame for her contracting of the disease. What else do readers learn as she recounts her sexual and intimate biography?

As a thirteen-year-old girl, she experiences a major crush on her step-brother, Maina. Throughout her twenty-eight-year-old self's recounting of her psychosexual history, Catherine demonstrates her "innocence/ignorance" on matters sexual. When Maina kisses her for the first time, she writes: "I had no idea what a kiss was like. Indeed for several months following this first kiss, I was under the delusion that it was Maina's own marvelous invention" (14). This innocence/ignorance is impossible to imagine in an era of television let alone an era of internet porn and dating apps, but points to the necessity

of a variety of forms (and content) of sexualized representation, which ABC provoked, even if phobically.

It is, however, in Catherine's nascent feminism that the novel tilts against the gendered underpinnings of the ideology of sexual respectability that it elsewhere upholds. "Already the world over women were beginning to brace themselves for the International Conference on Women to be held in Nairobi a year from then. I remember feeling proud of all those women, who were lobbying for equality, among other women's rights" (39). The reference here is to the third World Conference on Women held under the auspices of the United Nations in Nairobi in 1985. "It appears that in Africa, the economy favours the male species more than the female. You get the best jobs, hold the top positions in any given firm, drive the best cars, own land and everything else. The only way these ladies can get a share of that is through love, fake or otherwise, but rarely through climbing the same career ladder" (49). The claim that "love, fake or otherwise" is the only way for women to get "a share of that" provides a nascent feminist critique of the positing of transactional intimacy as the cause of the rapid spread of the pandemic in African national contexts.

HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa affected women disproportionately, and while Catherine cannot shake her sense of injustice at her HIV-positive status for impeding her own upward mobility, in these moments she is clear that her position as a woman is as much to blame for her situation as the "bad" personal sexual choices she has made. More interestingly, in the novel's self-staging as a letter written by a woman to her best woman friend, readers—voyeurs as we may be—are structurally in the position of the best woman friend. The confession is addressed to Marilyn but written for us. This invitation may thus tentatively model a different mode of solidarity than the one to be found in the "white savior industrial complex"—to borrow Teju Cole's scathing term (extensively discussed later in this chapter) for the range of complex feelings, actions, and positions that underpin so many aid initiatives. While Catherine seems to look favorably on global feminist solidarity in her reference to the third United Nations World Conference on Women held in Nairobi in 1985, her letters are addressed to a fellow Kenyan abroad, and she has no white intimates in the novel, and a certain kind of imperial benevolence feminism is the target of Cole's critique: "This world exists simply to satisfy the needs—including, importantly, the sentimental needs—of white people and Oprah."[38]

Confessions of an AIDS Victim marshals the "best practices" of ABC, even without explicitly mentioning them, at the cusp of the NGO'ization

of African public health policy. Seven years later and several thousand miles to the south, the literary imagining of HIV/AIDS and the imagining of the role of literature in an HIV/AIDS pandemic will have other representational strategies to deploy and a different ensemble of "best practices" to conjure and contest.

STRONGER THAN THE STORM

Conditions of Production

The front pages of *Stronger Than the Storm* reveal much about the desired social and educational impact of the book.[39] The book is published by Maskew Miller Longman, based in Cape Town, with representatives in companies across southern and central Africa. It was originally written by Lutz van Dijk in German and published in Germany under the English title *Township Blues*. It was translated by Karin Chubb, who also wrote a teacher's guide to the book. Chubb and Van Dijk are the authors of an academic study, *Between Anger and Hope*, published by the University of the Witwatersrand Press (2000) on the youth hearings of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation hearings.[40]

The author and translator of *Stronger Than the Storm* are, moreover, the cofounders of HOKISA (Homes for Kids in South Africa), a nonprofit organization that "aims to support young people affected by HIV and AIDS," who have lost parents to the disease or are "themselves infected," by assisting "in creating homes for these children and youth, in close co-operation and consultation with the communities in which they were born." Readers are told that all earnings and royalties from this publication will go to funding HOKISA and are also invited to make donations to the organization whose address and bank details appear on the same page.[41]

On the following page, there is a brief author's biography: "Lutz van Dijk, born 1955, PhD is an award-winning writer of youth literature who spent several years working for the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. He has so far published eleven novels for young adults, most of them in German. They have also been translated into English, Dutch, Danish, Italian, Norwegian, Bulgarian and Hungarian. His latest award is the Youth Literature Award of Namibia 1997."[42] Then there is the obligatory Nelson Mandela quote about HIV/AIDS and a dedication to Gugu Dlamini, "a young woman from Kwa Mashu near Durban who was murdered by her neighbors after she divulged

her HIV-positive status on radio and TV on International AIDS Day, 1 December 1998."[43]

I reproduce so much of the first few pages of the book before the table of contents because they suggest how a cosmopolitan and responsible interest in the South African pandemic imagines itself. The book needs a pedagogical frame—the accompanying teacher's guide. It needs a charitable rationale—the NGO, HOKISA, that will benefit from its sale. And there is the authorizing quote about the seriousness of the moral challenge posed by the threat of AIDS from the most famous leader of South Africa's national liberation struggle and the first president of a democratic South Africa, who stepped down from the presidency the year before, and the dedication to Gugu Dlamini, a figure for the scandalous victimization of HIV-positive people by the forces of stigmatization and fear (also mentioned in *Yesterday* in chapter 2).

The book thus seems part of international humanitarian discourse. Its author is credentialed by his long work with the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, and I somewhat grumpily note that its humanitarian impulses are directed at children. This direction is nothing new and has a long material and discursive history going as far back as abolition, and relatedly the first-person narrator of the novel, the formidable Thinasonke, is presented as "an innocent victim." Her infection is the consequence of child rape. The charity is called Home for Kids in South Africa. Who can argue with that? But the charity in its moment in South African history is stepping in to attempt to remedy not only the failure of adult parents to provide homes for their children but also the failure of the newly democratic state and the failure of the free market under the contemporaneous internally led structural adjustment economic policies inspired by the International Monetary Fund and financial institutions like the World Bank. While these processes inform the most immediate contexts of the charitable intervention, the long history of dispossession and exploitation produced by settler-colonialism and racial capitalism in South Africa further underwrites this need for charitable action, yet these ongoing historical processes contain wider economic, social, and political drivers that neither a young adult novel nor a single child-oriented charity could hope to address.

While it would be churlish and unfair to reduce the novel to an example of the "white savior industrial complex," its participation in the discursive and material "best practices" of international humanitarianism risk partial

complicity. Here is Teju Cole's famous and defining series of tweets on the phrase.

1. From Sachs to Kristof to Invisible Children to TED, the fastest growth industry in the US is the White Savior Industrial Complex.
2. The white savior supports brutal policies in the morning, founds charities in the afternoon, and receives awards in the evening.
3. The banality of evil transmutes into the banality of sentimentality. The world is nothing but a problem to be solved by enthusiasm.
4. This world exists simply to satisfy the needs—including, importantly, the sentimental needs—of white people and Oprah.
5. The White Savior Industrial Complex is not about justice. It is about having a big emotional experience that validates privilege.
6. Feverish worry over that awful African warlord. But close to 1.5 million Iraqis died from an American war of choice. Worry about that.
7. I deeply respect American sentimentality, the way one respects a wounded hippo. You must keep an eye on it, for you know it is deadly.

While expanded into the above aphorisms, the "white savior industrial complex" remains a soundbite—a risky shorthand that erases an enormous range of historical institutions, experiences, and actors in the poetics of condensation. It is like the other side of the coin of "best practices."

The year 2000 is now far away enough to historicize a literary text, and these prefatory materials allow for that to happen in contexts beyond the "white savior industrial complex." Author Van Dijk and translator and teacher Chubb's academic book concerned the youth testimony of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC was created by an act of parliament in 1995 and presented its report in October of 1998. Thus 2000 is two years after the report, one year after the end of the Mandela presidency, and in the midst of subsequent South African president Thabo Mbeki's AIDS denialism, and perhaps most relevantly after the constitutional court's decision in Grootboom that the South African constitution granted the right to housing insofar as it was possible within the means of the state: a very different strategy for the imagining of redress for the housing crisis than HOKISA.[44]

It is possible to locate some of these informing historical events in the NGO/novel ensemble of *Stronger Than the Storm*, which while determined by the bigger frame of child-centered international humanitarianism is also deeply invested in the specificity of its South African setting, if not

the singularity of its central protagonist. Each chapter title appears first in isiXhosa and then in English, implying either an allegiance to the life worlds the novel wishes to bring into representation and/or a recognition that some of an international interest in the story will depend on the evocation of local color sliding into exoticism. How different would the novel be if it had been translated into isiXhosa instead of English?

Narrative and National Allegory

Let me begin with a synopsis of the novel's plot. Importantly, the novel opens with a kind of happy ending: Thinasonke and Thabang, her childhood best friend-turned-boyfriend, embrace in the sea: "For at least two minutes we manage to kiss and hold each other without drawing breath at all. If we train harder, we could probably last even longer! Then we burst out laughing and gasp for air like two fish on the beach, flopping onto our backs. '*Usebenzile*—well done, Thina!' Thabang cries. 'If the next Olympic Games are held in Cape Town, we'll make the team for underwater kissing!'"[45]

The playful wish for the next Olympic Games to be held in Cape Town is worth noting. The return of South Africa to the global sporting arena after decades of cultural and sports boycotts of the apartheid regime was another site for ebullience around racial reconciliatory rainbowism to the TRC. South Africa's triumph in the 1996 Rugby World Cup culminating in Nelson Mandela donning a Springbok journey and powerfully sentimentalized in the Hollywood film *Invictus* was an emblematic moment here.[46] Thabang is invoking the idioms of national sentimentality in imagining the healing of both HIV/AIDS as/and national trauma.

In 2012, Van Dijk publishes another young adult novel, *Themba: A Boy Called Hope*, that tells the story of an HIV-positive football-obsessed youth and his mother.[47] This novel imagines the arena of sports as a site for the working through of questions of HIV/AIDS and national belonging in the aftermath of South Africa's hosting of the World Cup finals in 2010.

The happy opening of *Stronger Than the Storm* sets the tone for the recounting of trauma that follows and echoes an optimistic take on the Truth and Reconciliation hearings, namely that the past can be healed by the future. The novel stages itself as Thina telling her story to Thabang: "Now that I have told Thabang the story, I want to try write it all down. To begin with, only for myself. It is a bit like that boulder by the sea. Being able to throw off that weight not only makes you feel light and free. If you do it the right way, it

can perhaps even make you stronger."[48] Thabang, the boyfriend, is the first audience for the story. In *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, it was Marilyn—the best woman friend—who is the primary addressee. That it is the narrator's boyfriend who is the primary addressee here suggests that this novel has a little more faith in the possibilities of a future redemptive heterosexuality as the route to healing and social reproduction. In contrast, Catherine Njeri's similar faith in the redemptive possibilities of heterosexuality as social continuity is mournful and retrospective—"If only I had not" rather than "If . . . , we'll make . . . ."

While *Stronger Than the Storm* is essentially a novel of trauma, survival, and recovery, elements of it can be read as a partial national allegory. Mangaliso, our narrator's brother, refuses to speak after being released from an apartheid-era prison. One night on her way home from buying her grandmother beer at a local *shebeen*, Thina is brutally attacked by three boys who rape her and steal her satchel with all her school supplies. She manages to make it home after the attack and a policeman and Granny's sangoma are summoned. Thina then sleeps for two days: "Mangaliso stayed with me day and night. When I regained consciousness the first thing I reached for was his hand" (30). The brother is a victim of apartheid-era state violence. Thina is a victim of post-apartheid sexual violence, though the grandmother's recounting of the history of a place like Guguletu suggests the continuities rather than the ruptures in the designation "post." Thina's friend Lindi's mother proclaims: "Oh Thixo, it has really got terrible! . . . More terrible than in the old days when we at least knew who was the enemy and where we were safe" (36). The novel will work to restore voice to the brother and the possibility of a normative future to the sister in ways that map onto the imagining of healing and restoration for the victims of the racial/political violence of the apartheid era and the victims of the sexual violence of the post-apartheid era, respectively.

Next readers learn definitively from the results of a blood test that Thabang's mother's illness is the result of HIV infection. A group of students in collaboration with students at an affluent "white" school in Newlands announce that the attack on Thina has made them want to write a play about violence and perform it in the community as a piece of street theatre. (Thina is initially unhappy about this turn of events, suggesting the dangers of bringing her trauma into representation—an accusation that the novel itself could potentially face but circumvents by explicitly making Thina the author of her own story in the novel's self-staging.) The authorship and production of the

play inevitably dramatize the difficulties across multiple representations of HIV/AIDS of the ventriloquizing of Black experience by white authors.[49]

Thina confesses to Miss Delphine, her schoolteacher, about the rape and consents to getting an HIV test. During a school outing, Thina spots a bedraggled-looking Thabang on the street in Cape Town. Thabang tells the story of how he ended up there: "'They said I should have made sure that it would stay secret, that nobody should know what Mother died of. Now I had brought shame not only to the family but to our neighbors in the whole street. They threatened to burn down our house one night if I did not leave at once. Ugawulayo—AIDS, that is the evil disease and it is a punishment for your sins.'"[50] Once again, the biblical phrase "the wages of sin is death" structures the imagining of HIV/AIDS. Thina persuades Thabang and Thobile to return to Guguletu with her, and her family agrees that the two brothers can come and live with them. Thina takes an HIV test.

When the test comes back positive, Thina goes into a state of shock and becomes completely uncommunicative for eight days. Once again, the primary response to trauma is imagined as silence. Then, she tells her status to Thabang, who threatens to kill her attackers. Thina follows Thabang into the bush one night and discovers Thabang covered in blood. He says, "I've got them, Thina!!," recounting to Thina how he captured two of the three youths, named Vuyo and Zweli, and was on the verge of castrating them when he was attacked by the third one, whom he easily overpowered because that third youth, Nkulu, had earlier been injured by the police. The blood on Thabang is also Nkulu's blood. It turns out Thina has been followed by her brother, Mangaliso, who says, "We learned to move quietly years ago in the underground, when we could only move at night'" (88). They head off to the hiding place where Thabang had left Vuyo and Zweli with the corpse of Nkulu. Mangaliso asks "Thabang and me to sit down on the ground, in a circle of five together with the perpetrators. 'Before the sun rises, we have to have looked into each other's souls to find out how we can leave this place'" (91). The scene appears as a microcosmic TRC run by affected children.

Mangaliso, a few pages earlier the agent of murderous revenge, now invokes the concept of Ubuntu in the attempt to forgive Zweli and Vuyo, the same boys he had intended to castrate. The novel's representative of apartheid-era violence acts as a flip-switch between ideas of justice as revenge and retribution and the idea of justice as somehow attached to notions of forgiveness. The second Mangaliso prevails as Zweli asks Thina for her forgiveness: "'I did something terrible to you, Thina. . . . I don't know

whether Nkulu was also infected with HIV, but I am. In the village where my grandparents live there is a sangoma who says you can be cured through sex with a virgin. I have never really believed that. But that evening we had all been drinking and then we became hooked on the idea. I cannot excuse this all with anything, and I cannot atone for it. But I . . . I . . . want to ask for your forgiveness'" (92).

Despite his wound, Thabang refuses to go to a doctor or a hospital: "There they will only ask me stupid questions and, if the police get involved, it could become nasty for me" (96). The grandmother agrees to tell Thina's mother about the HIV test. The mother refuses to accept the news and throws Thabang and Thobile out of the house. After a confrontation with her mother Thina runs away and joins Thabang and Thobile for Christmas in a shed at the school, where they had taken shelter.

At a performance of the play, now called *Township Blues* (also the original "German" title of the novel), Thina announces that she is HIV-positive. Thina returns home and there is a family *indaba* "when members of my family met delegations from Zweli's family to come to an arrangement without bloodshed. Everybody had resolved not to involve the police but to handle the conflict themselves" (105).

The novel ends with an implicit blessing on Thina and Thabang's relationship from the grandmother in the form of an isiXhosa proverb: "'They are like *umtya nethunga*, like the rope and the bucket. Both are necessary to get fresh milk from our cows'" (106). Thina's fingers are cold as she scribbles the last page, presumably from what we have just read, but she is looking forward to surviving whatever storms may come, and to spring.

This narrative summary should indicate the novel's faith in a kind of documentary realism in the form of testimony or truth-telling. The narrative is in Thina's voice and there are many moments in the text when she tells readers that first she, and then Thabang, will be reading what she is writing. But while readers need to believe Thina, she is of course an entirely fictional character. Three sentences on the title page of the novel mark an interesting attempt to finesse this tension: "A novel for young adults about HIV/AIDS in South Africa. All characters in this novel are fictitious. However, places like the township Guguletu do not only exist in South Africa." The characters are fictitious, but perhaps representative. Guguletu is empirically real, but not singular—there are other places like it not (just) in South Africa. Guguletu emerges as not only the place of the novel's setting but somehow related to the spread of HIV/AIDS, an indicator of the novel's reach beyond it.

That implicit faith in the determining power of material context sits uneasily with the specificity and generality of Thina's experience. The novel's allegiance to realism mediated through an idea of testimony is apparent in its staging of the writerly voice of its first-person narrator, who explicitly tells the reader what has happened to her. On the other hand, there are elements of Thina's narrative that call out for a kind of allegorical reading, and it is possible to read the novel of as a partial national allegory for South Africa in and around the year 2000. Here is such a reading:

Mangaliso, Thina's older brother, is a young comrade when he is arrested, presumably tortured and robbed of the power of speech by the police of the apartheid state. Thina is born while her mother is in an apartheid prison. Guguletu, as a location (as a word might have it), is the product of apartheid-era forced relocation and racial segregation policies and practices. Its persistence in its apartheid-era spatial forms renders the designation "post" in post-apartheid questionable.

Since there are no dates in the novel and Guguletu is suggestively both inside and outside the time-space of South Africa in certain ways, the novel is anchored in its times of writing by the HIV/AIDS elements of its plot and by its reworking of testimonial faith in the immediate post-TRC, or more accurately failure of the TRC moment. The novel provides no mention of the emerging political activism around HIV/AIDS in the vicinity of Cape Town. No one in the novel's Guguletu appears to have heard of the Treatment Action Campaign, founded in Cape Town in 1998, partly in response to the murder of Gugu Dlamini—even as the novel is dedicated to her. The TAC itself is a very different kind of NGO, working much of the time along more explicitly political lines and thus not portable or recuperable for the rhetorics of best practices.[51]

In its narrative, the novel dramatizes the difficulty of social continuity and reproduction as the characters move across the imagined great divide in twentieth-century South African history (and historiography) apartheid to post-apartheid, and the so-called post-apartheid era from the constitutional triumphalism of the early Mandela presidency through the TRC years into the AIDS denialism years of the Mbeki presidency.[52]

Realistically, a multigenerational women-centered household is the domicile for the novel's central characters, a common unit/space of domestic reproduction across the long twentieth century in South Africa. Thabang and his younger brother are chased by the forces of stigma around HIV/AIDS onto the streets of Cape Town. When Thina is thrown out of her

house by her mother for similar reasons, the three children take up temporary refuge in the school shed. After Thina is raped, her assailants steal her satchel with her school supplies. Housing, education, crime/security, and health mark four of the biggest governmental and humanitarian crises facing a post-apartheid government. The novel engages all of them, making clear that HOKISA would not be an adequate solution and the happy beginning/ending of two teenagers in love in the sea struggles to contain, let alone redeem, the historical and ongoing violence of the national polity. In the face of this structural and interpersonal violence, what work can testimonials and other forms of cultural representation do?

The Play within the Novel, or The Anxiety of Representation

The students at Forest Hills, the high school in Guguletu that our young protagonists attend, collaborate with students from a nameless school in Newlands, a wealthy, white suburb of Cape Town, to make a play.

> "Thina, Lindi has told us that you were lucky to get away with a bad fright after that brutal attack . . ." I said nothing, waiting to hear what she wanted. "Still, we had a meeting of our SRC [Students Representative Council] together with a few pupils from Newlands, the day after the attack on you. Henk had the idea that we should write a play about violence and perform it in the community, as street theatre. Every one of us has had some experience of violence, but yours is the most immediate example. Also, it was youths of your own age that robbed you . . ." She looked at Henk and nodded encouragingly. "You see, Thina," he started hesitantly, "we wanted to ask you to tell us exactly what happened. That story will form the plot of our new play. Then everyone knows that it is not just a story, not just something someone dreamt up, but that it really happened. It will be a documentary! What do you think?"
>
> My hand flew to my mouth in absolute horror . . .[53]

Readers are in a set of difficult paradoxes here. The play is at least initially perceived by Thina as a kind of revictimization—"My hand flew to my mouth in absolute horror." How can the novel's restaging of her trauma not fall into the same trap? What double bluff may lie in the claim that the factual is superior to the fictional in the making of a play within a novel? One could argue that the play might be preferable to the novel in terms of the rhetorics of truth and reconciliation in the fantasy of the rainbow nation.[54] The play would be collectively produced by the students across the great racial

and class divides of contemporaneous South African life. Instead, the novel is imagined as individual testimony in the form of a story told by Thina to Thabang, but the play, initially called *Shakespeare's Condom* before acquiring the eponymous "German" title of *Stronger Than the Storm—Township Blues*—appears not to be taken seriously by the novel and comes across in the description below as an almost parodic trivializing of Thina's trauma. "Lindi volunteered: 'Provocation all the way! We want to call the play *Shakespeare's Condom* and make it a kind of mixture of the Hollywood Blockbuster *Shakespeare in Love* and *Romeo and Juliet*. The two darlings not only abseil from the balcony after their romantic scene with a rope of condoms knotted together, they also turn literally inside out by conquering all the plagues of this world, from lunatic parents to AIDS, through the scrupulous use of condoms."[55]

How is the authorship of the novel—Van Dijk, Chubb, the global humanitarian NGO ensemble—imagined as preferable to the exuberance of the play? Who can own Thina's story? And who benefits from its telling and retelling? While the TRC imagined truth-telling as politically and personally transformative, the novel stages the audience for its telling as Thabang, the immediate family, and an undefinable and potentially remote collection of readers literate in English and German. The play, at least, would be partially by and for the community most affected, but its youthful exuberance appears almost as the object of satire.

Transitional Justice and Customary Law

There is no national TRC for the crime committed against Thinasonke. The novel is consistent in its portrayal of the state in both its apartheid and post-apartheid forms as entirely untrustworthy. The young denizens of Guguletu do not feel themselves as citizens of a democratic polis—the police, the hospitals offer no redress but only more danger. There is no mention of a town council or any other governing body, or even a political party. Justice is imagined as a community matter with recourse to an imaginary that is called traditional, despite the confession from Zweli that it was the advice from a sangoma that sex with a virgin would cure his HIV.

Interestingly it is Mangaliso, the tortured and longtime silenced "comrade" in the anti-apartheid struggle, who articulates and implements this form of justice outside the purview of state power.

> Mangaliso noticed my confused expression: "Vuyo and Zweli are not possessed by evil spirits, Thina. Our tradition of *ubuntu* has helped me to look deep into their hearts. Do you want to know what I saw?"
>
> I nodded though I did not really understand what he was saying.
>
> "We can only become human if we look for humanity in others for as long as it takes to find it. *Umutu ngumntu ngabantu*. I am what I am through you. Nkulu, Vuyo and Zweli have done terrible things. Their evil power became so great that it also turned Thabang blind with hatred."

The scene of justice is not a police station, nor a courtroom, nor a house of parliament, but a gang member's cave in the "bush" outside of Guguletu. "No, you should not forget anything. But you can become stronger, wiser, more humane—Thina, I know you can do that!' Mangaliso answered. 'Our ancestors learned a great deal by observing the animals around them—more than we can today. They had a wise saying. *"Indlovu ayisindwa ngumboko wayo"*—No elephant finds its own trunk too heavy to carry. We should learn to be strong enough to cope with our own problems. To do it with dignity and honesty, not to perpetuate our problems by burdening others with them and so creating more and more unhappiness.'"[56]

However, the darker side of customs and practices deemed traditional lurks on the edges of the action and sometimes must be explicitly disavowed, and the customary emerges as a resource that can be adapted to specific circumstances by a range of actors who have authority distributed among them rather than centralized.[57] That much of this customary "law" may be patriarchal makes a novel invested in the empowerment of an HIV-positive young woman somewhat anxious.

Thina has many fears after she is raped, first that she may be pregnant. Then—"The pride of my whole clan would be affected, much less lobola for a ruined girl like me."[58] The fear of being HIV positive comes later.

Lobola is a complicated custom, with a contested history and present. Usually the term is glossed as "bride-price," historically paid in cattle, but also in cash, and part of a complicated property regime in wider social networks of lineage alliance and consolidation, and reciprocal relations of social support. Thina's fear that she is now a ruined girl suggests that the practice places a premium on virginity, which is not always the case. Sometimes fertility must be proven before lobola payments are included. The novel's representation of Guguletu as a peri-urban space—a "township"—renders relationships with rural areas somewhat vestigial and "cultural," if not invisible. Thabang's

father is in Johannesburg. We are not told where the various uncles who come for the indaba that decides on the fate of Zweli and Thina live, and the history of Guguletu through the grandmother's oral history is presented in terms of apartheid-era forced relocations. The rapid post-apartheid growth of places like Guguletu with huge influxes of people from both rural parts of South Africa and elsewhere in the continent is not mentioned.

In 2000, the year of the novel's publication, seven xenophobic killings were reported in the Cape Flats district of Cape Town. Kenyan Kingori Siguri Joseph died in Tambo Close, Khanya Park in Guguletu after being attacked and shot.[59] In separate incidents, two Nigerians were also shot dead in NY 99 in Guguletu, and Thina tells readers in the novel—"And NY 99 is the next road down from ours."[60] The "real" Guguletu is as cosmopolitan as "tribal."

The detribalization hypothesis is a feature of both white liberal and racist anxieties about African urbanization over the twentieth century in South Africa, namely that urbanization itself undermines indigenous African cultures and values and destroys both social cohesion and the possibilities for social reproduction. The novel, in contrast, attempts to imagine the redeploying of African "traditional values" as resources in the ongoing crisis of everyday life in a place like Guguletu, which is represented as monolithically ethnically Xhosa, and the novel is careful to eschew the parts of this imagined tradition that are not so easily accommodated to its liberal, moral vision.

As Thina notes:

> It was my good fortune—and Zweli's—that the traditional solution after a rape, namely a forced marriage, was not an option. However, Zweli was sentenced to circumcision school immediately, with all the accompanying instructions into the duties of an adult man. That was his only chance to be re-admitted to his clan. The younger Vuyo was already heavily punished through the loss of his brother. All were agreed on that, especially as he promised absolutely never to take part in any attacks or any other gang-related crimes ever again. Not that the demands for material compensation were dropped, not at all. In the beginning of the talks the demands were much higher than the traditional lobola. The reason for this was that health problems were anticipated for me in the future, and would need expensive treatment. The word AIDS was not mentioned, not even once.[61]

This question of material compensation is one of the things that distinguishes the indaba, a customary institution that traverses the precolonial, apartheid, and post-apartheid eras, from an institution of transitional justice

like the TRC, which notoriously did not broach the issue of reparations but instead focused on amnesty. The successful antiretroviral rollout begun by the South African government in 2003–4 could not have been anticipated in 2000. Treatment need not be expensive, and the insistence that "the word AIDS was not mentioned, not even once," suggests that this customary forum is no different than the surrounding civil society in finding AIDS unspeakable.

Neither Thina nor the readers are told why the "traditional forced marriage" was not a solution, though the ending of the novel strongly implies that the grandmother's protection of Thina and Thabang's love for each other may have something to do with warding off that disastrous fate. From the vantage point of 2024, the novel's faith in the ability of customary practices to provide justice looks optimistic. The failed Traditional Courts Bill of 2012 attempted to consolidate the power of often despotically appointed chiefs and remove constitutional protections from 17 million rural South Africans, and CONTRALESA (Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa) has often made statements against gender equality and opposed LGBTQ rights.[62]

Readers learn in the play within the novel of two gay characters. "Sizwe said that his oldest brother and his best friend were also infected. And, as though making sure that we would really understand, he added: 'They love each other, two men, okay?'" It is the play that invokes the racial reconciliation spirit of the TRC, that gay issues can be broached there rather than in the sphere of the customary. The recent fracas about the 2017 feature film *Inxeba/The Wound* reveals how contested questions of gay sexuality are in the realm of the customary.[63] In the above quote, Thina says that Zweli is "sentenced" to circumcision school; the word choice of "sentenced" is an odd one here, as some of the attempts to locate an indigenous African "homosexuality" have focused on these homosocial institutions and practices. Recent years have seen efforts made to inhabit customs like lobola queerly.

Stronger Than the Storm manages to integrate HIV/AIDs within the wider tapestry of South African history as it unfolds in the moment of writing and finds resources for the enacting of reconciliation in the imaginary of the customary. It can be periodized as a post-TRC novel, with its faith in the healing power of the confessional and a novel that anticipates recent public debates on the role of the customary in imagining forms of justice and sovereignty, and in its depiction of Guguletu as both a place determined by its specific histories and as potentially a kind of more generalizable space it

suggests both the limits and the possibilities of a cosmopolitan, humanitarian, and pedagogical interest in the South African HIV/AIDS pandemic.

While I think the novel's self-staging in the prefatory and paratextual material discussed earlier makes it part and parcel of the neoliberal ensemble of "best practices," a central tension emerges between the conditions of its production and imagined reception and key parts of its narrative content. The resolution of Thina's predicament does not involve any NGO or recourse to external benevolence. The novel does not end with her happy and thriving in a house built by HOKISA. Instead, the novel suggests revivified community and customary solutions, with undertones of what we might recognize today as abolitionist philosophies and practices. Mangaliso deploys his version of Ubuntu to perform a "non-punitive relation to harm." The novel consistently displays a deep distrust of the institutions of criminal justice across both apartheid and post-apartheid eras. No victim of crime in the novel ever wants the police involved, and this distrust extends to potentially more helpful institutions like hospitals. While these attitudes of the central characters toward key institutions of both biopolitics and necropolitics—let's shorthand them as governance—could be folded back into romantic notions of community and the paradoxical impossibilities of self-determination in a globalized world, they would struggle to be transformed into "best practices" frames and rhetorics. Whether or not these community practices could be scaled up remains an open question, and the state (democratic or otherwise) seems too important an institution to abandon altogether, especially given the subsequent success of the South African government's massive ARV rollout.

The two novels discussed in this chapter offer very different configurations of the person living with HIV, albeit both figurations rely on versions of victimage and our two protagonists both suffer with feelings of self-incrimination. The two characters are, however, differentially socially embedded. In *Stronger Than the Storm*, Thina is very explicitly presented as a subject of South African history, whereas in the case of Catherine Njeri, the question can arise: How Kenyan is she? The determining social cleavages that drive the narrative in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* are those of gender and class. These two cleavages are present in the imagining of what produces the impetus of the plot in *Stronger Than the Storm*, but they are complicated by matters of race, language, and ethnicity.

Although *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* stages Catherine as at least partially a guilty victim and more of a self-responsibilizing neoliberal rather than historical subject, it is also plausible to claim that in the Kenya of the

early 1990s, an ABC prevention strategy even with its failures represents something like a "best practice." ABC partially produces Catherine Njeri's precarious condition and creates the dearth of possible representations that might have allowed an astute observer like Macharia to give meaning and value to the deaths he witnesses. Life-saving antiretroviral drug therapies were still in their infancy in Europe and North America and their patents so heavy-handedly protected that they would have been beyond the reach of any African healthcare system. Treatment options were palliative at best. ABC was something like a collective effort to marshal the moral resources at hand to fight HIV/AIDS, which both helped and hurt. *Stronger Than the Storm* explores other options, not without problems. That novel needs an innocent victim rather than a guilty one to reconfigure an idea of African culture as a consolation for rather than a cause of the pandemic, rendering more explicit social determinants of illness and health and moving its HIV-positive protagonist back into the circuits of a socially reproductive intimacy.

SIX

Documentary Fictions

AUTHORS AND DOCUMENTS OF SEX AND DEATH

> Fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners.
>
> VIRGINIA WOOLF

> The disciplinary interest in literary criticism is in the singular and the unverifiable.
>
> GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK

THIS CHAPTER PONDERS HIV as an author who creates and curates a dystopian record of sexuality and identity in a time of pandemic. It argues that Kgebetli Moele's *The Book of the Dead* (2009) supplements *documentary citizenship* in South Africa through an aggressive recording of reductive details about Black South African lives in contradistinction to the failed efforts of the South African state in identity documents like the passbook and the "book of life." HIV, with its/his "book of the dead," emerges as a murderous substitute for the sovereign state in a vicious fantasy about the necessity and dangers of counting and discounting Black life in a long crisis of social reproduction, rendered particularly acute during the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

PERSONIFICATION AND AUTHORSHIP

The Book of the Dead (2009) provides the single-most elaborated fictional attempt to personify the HI virus, and as an *author* at that.[1] Moele's novel thus confounds the defining trope of "silencing" in many South African representations of HIV/AIDS, literary and otherwise. HIV in the novel is nothing if not voluble.[2] The novel is divided into two sections: "The Book of the Living" and then the eponymous "The Book of the Dead." The narrator of "The Book of the Living" is an omniscient third-person narrator with a

tendency to free indirect speech. HIV is presented as the author of the second half of the book, but what kind of author is it, and what kind of book do we have in "The Book of the Dead?"[3] This chapter reads Moele's novel as an attempt to understand the historical agency of HIV/AIDS in post-apartheid Black South African biographies by making HIV an author, and further considers the oblique references to other possible books, authors, and genres for the recording of these biographies. HIV, in its half of the novel, is somewhere between a diarist, an omniscient narrator, and state information functionary, with tonal echoes of the bureaucratic language of Ingrid de Kok's poem "The Head of the Household," discussed in chapter 4. HIV thus paradoxically appears in the novel as both outside historical time and very much inside it.

In a 2013 interview, Moele describes his desire to have HIV speak for itself, "to speak with its own mouth" in the face of the failure of what he calls "the public service announcement." Moele here implies that perhaps if people could hear directly from HIV, the warnings could be more effective, but the voice of HIV also powerfully and schematically undermines all the public health initiatives in the novel: "The public service announcement [PSA] preaches caution against HIV, yet we have never seen HIV—we only have people warning us about the disease. But since 1991, the infected rate has kept going up. What was the problem with their warnings? That is what I wanted to do, to let HIV speak with its own mouth, in response to what we perceive."[4]

While the interview quote suggests that directly hearing the voice of HIV may help in preventing infection, HIV is presented as invincible in the novel, and as an authoritative recorder of Black life and death in South Africa. This personification of HIV refuses the pedagogical impulses of public health announcements, by granting HIV both narrative omniscience and omnipotence. HIV kills everyone in the novel, no matter what preventive or treatment strategies they try to stay alive, with the singular exception of the child, Thapelo. We have encountered attempts to embody and personify HIV in chapter 1, where I argued that Michael Callen as Miss HIV in John Greyson's *Zero Patience* served as a campy subcultural teacher about safer sex, and through the invocation of Scheherazade insisted on the value of storytelling in the face of death. In Moele's novel, HIV emerges instead as a powerful historical and historiographic force, with Khutso, the main character across both parts of the novel, as HIV's chief assassin. However, in Moele's novel, it is the prompting and recording of death, rather than its prevention or the mourning thereof in *Zero Patience*, that characterizes this fictional personification of HIV.

An interlude—chapter 12 of "The Book of the Living"—offers the most elaborate personification of the HI virus in the first person:

> I live amongst you, waiting like a predator. I am faceless. I am mindless and thoughtless. But I am feared and despised. You hate me. But then I put on a face—wear a human face—and I am respected, appreciated and valued. I am I. . . . I am alive, but I have no dreams or visions. I have only a purpose. Sometimes I am very poor and sometimes I am very wealthy, but most of the time I am just I. That face, that man, that woman is me. . . . I like the game you are all playing, talking about me as if you can identify me—thinking that I am a virus when I am out walking in the street. You think that the bony remains that are breathing their last look like me, but they are bones that I have long deserted. . . . I am coming for you.[5]

HIV struggles to characterize itself (though I feel a strong urge to gender HIV as male) in the above passage, falling back into the tautology of "I am I" twice, with the qualifier—"I am just I" the second time. The virus further resists self-identification even as a virus, or as being seen as a virus by others. Sometimes a virus has a human face, but that face is something that looks like it can be put on or discarded at will. Mindless and thoughtless, HIV can nevertheless write. Alive without dreams or visions, and then defined only by purpose, HIV here stands both outside and inside the novel's version of the human as it also crosses all classes—sometimes very poor, sometimes very wealthy. Notably, even as the virus claims the pronoun "I," it cannot be identified. In this way, HIV satirizes the colorful fantasy of the rainbow nation, insofar as he/it appears both color-blind and transcendent of race.

The virus significantly refuses the image of its emaciated and dying victims and refuses to be reduced to the appearance of "the bony remains that are breathing their last." Here we see a rejection of dominant national and international media spectacles of the African dying of AIDS: the hollow-eyed, emaciated figure plastered across newspapers to prompt both horror and sympathy.[6] These images partake in the long history of missionary and then humanitarian depictions of African suffering. HIV in *The Book of the Dead* is clear that it has long deserted those bony remains, and cannot be reduced to them, and suggests the futility of those spectacular images of embodied suffering for the making sense of HIV/AIDS and the uselessness of the self-consolidating sympathy from observers that such images may hope to prompt. HIV understands itself as both lethal and banal: "I have been talked about so much that people say my name like it belongs in a nursery rhyme. They have seen so many pictures of dying people that they eat their

evening meal in front of the TV, undisturbed by the reports on the news. They have seen me take down gladiators—eat them up, put them in bed and leave them wearing nappies—and yet they are still not afraid. I have become . . . usual."[7] The casual repetition of the three letters H, I, and V as a nursery rhyme has meant that HIV thinks that HIV has become child's play. The South African published title of Jonny Steinberg's *Sizwe's Test* is *Three Letter Plague*.[8] The enormous complexity of the pandemic is reduced to three letters—H, I, and V. The resonances with the child-learning-to-read shorthand of "ABC" (Abstain, Be Faithful, Use a Condom) discussed in the previous chapters are obvious.

HIV, even as the cause of those emaciated bodies, repudiates any identification with them. In this way, he is like the horrified and then indifferent television viewers who may or may not look up from their dinners, oscillating between thoughts of "Thankfully I am not that" and "How could I help?" The narrative structure of the book further voices difficult identification between HIV and the readers of the novel. Is "The Book of the Dead" something like HIV's diary or, more chillingly, to-do list. Who is a diary for if not minimally its author? As readers of the novel, what does that make us? The novel requires us to see through the eyes of HIV and imagine his recording voice, thus encouraging reader's identification with and repudiation of what it has us see in a vacillating manner not dissimilar to the horror/indifference flip-switch of Levin's imagined television news report audience, discussed in chapter 2. This affective response may be related to "compassion fatigue," first theorized in relation to healthcare workers, but compassion fatigue is very far from the personification of HIV's responses to its victims, which approach joyous glee and pride.[9] Though one notices an odd moment of mourning of Khutso by HIV at the very end of the novel: "[I] get up and walk away before the tears come." So fleetingly and finally, HIV imagines Khutso's life as perhaps grievable.[10]

HIV emerges over the course of the narrative as a figure of powerful, vital, protean threat, inhumanly human and something to fear rather than pity: "Many think that I am only for the poor, but I am walking with two legs amongst you. Smiling back at you. Laughing at your jokes."[11] The virus is out walking the streets, quotidian and unrecognizable, rather than simply a specter or spectacle: he is alive and able to assume many different faces. HIV appears most strongly as ghost or spirit in the sense of being a disembodied animating force, but of death rather than life. While the novel mocks indigenous cosmologies and cures, its figuration of HIV is strongly an animist

one. This may appear a strange claim, yet HIV's weird transcendent nature, its/his ability to be both embodied and disembodied, renders HIV as kin to a malignant disgruntled ancestral spirit, but one who unlike "normal" ancestors cannot be placated.[12]

It is worth anticipating Khutso's lie to the bookseller about his intentions for "The Book of the Dead"—the hinge moment between the two parts of the novel—"I am going to record my paternal family history: the male lineage from 1840 to the present day."[13] HIV emerges as the vicious antagonist to a writing project that ironically promises social reproduction and continuity, i.e., recording "my paternal family history, the male lineage from 1840 to the present day," a writing project that could never be because the South African state lacked the recording capacity of HIV in the novel we have during much of that time period.

What is at stake in this granting of a human voice to an agent that is barely animate in biomedical discourse? Are viruses alive is a question that has preoccupied biologists and historians and philosophers of science.[14] The novel provides a resounding yes to that question, but reposes it for ghosts, ancestors, and perhaps even writing itself. What, if anything, can be learned from this projection or phantasmatic explicit threat made by a writing virus "I am coming for you"? That second-person pronoun marks one of the few moments of explicit address to the readers of the novel, and both singularizes and universalizes the threat.[15] That double move refuses both the biopolitical (Foucault) and the immunitarian (Esposito) conceptions of self, body, and the social as HIV appears as something transcendent like God or the Fates, or vengeful ancestral spirits, but more on these theoretical elaborations soon.

It is Thapelo, Khutso's son, who most powerfully resists the sustained but inevitably incoherent attempts to personify HIV in the novel: "'I am terrified of Aids. I hate Aids, Dad, I hate it,' the little gangster continued. 'If Aids were a person, I would kill him or her with my bare hands, but there is no Aids, there are only people, and that is the worst thing about Aids.'"[16] As the moniker "little gangster" makes clear, HIV has an almost affectionate contempt for Khutso's son, whom it regards as a possible effective recruit in the war on people that HIV is waging. I am stumped by HIV's recording of the sentences "If Aids were a person" and "there is no Aids." Does HIV note this only to show how wrong and foolish Thapelo is? The echoes of contemporaneous state-sanctioned AIDS denialism are pronounced, but Thapelo's follow-up phrase, "there are only people," may suggest some nascent political optimism in the sense that he implies that people are responsible

for HIV and, if that is the case, people can also change it, fight it, kill it, end it. While Khutso's name is the first and last name in the book of the dead, Thapelo's name is recorded, but his death is deferred to some future date and future book. The fantasized and impossible recording of past male lineage that is falsely asserted as the rationale for the buying of the material object of the book of the dead may continue after that book's final chapter: "For the last time I touch the great book, thinking of all the triumphs we have shared, then I put it down and get up and walk away before the tears come. Somewhere out there I have conquered another author of no mean talent and we are starting another book together for the cause" (165).

Will Thapelo live on and escape having his name recorded in the book of the dead? And how might he live on as something other than HIV's soldier in the cause of death, as his father was?

Thapelo is imagined as possibly continuing HIV's work of death, when he is older: "When the time came for the little gangster to go back to school it was a sad goodbye, and Khutso cried. I was also sad. I liked the little boy. I liked him because I knew that one day he would make a formidable soldier in my legion" (164). For this moment in the novel, no one has immunity from AIDS, besides HIV itself. Paul Preciado's summary of the movement between Foucault and Esposito written in a time of COVID allows for a broaching of the political thinking of HIV here, which I hope to contrast with both prevailing biomedical conceptions and the novel's personifying figuration. Here is Preciado:

> During and after the AIDS crisis, many writers expanded on and radicalized Foucault's hypotheses by exploring the relationship of immunity and biopolitics. The Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito analyzed the links between the political notion of *community* and the biomedical and epidemiological notion of *immunity*. The two terms share a common root, the Latin *munus*, the duty (tax, tribute, gift) someone must pay to be part of the community. The community is *cum* (with) *munus*: a human group connected by common law and reciprocal obligation. The noun *immunitas* is a privative word that stems from the negation of *munus*. In Roman law, immunity was a privilege that released someone from the obligations shared by all. He who had been exempted was immunized. He who had been *de*-munized, conversely, had been stripped of all community privileges after having been deemed a threat to the community.[17]

No one has immunity in the world of the novel and the *munus* appears to be paid only to HIV, who stands like the sovereign outside of community, or

transhistorical spirit, or a haunting of what could never have been written. If the novel is clear that no one has immunity, what happens to ideas of community? Relatedly, HIV stages itself as the custodian of the historical record and the book of the dead imagines itself as something like the official history that Black South Africans were written out of by the documentary practices of, first, colonialism and then the apartheid state. If the state through indifference, cheapness, or internal bureaucratic conflict between its policing and public health components has failed in its biopolitical function of assembling the necessary information for communal life, HIV stands in as an entirely necropolitical substitute.[18] While as the Preciado quote illustrates, taxation is clearly constitutive of community, *The Book of the Dead* further powerfully suggests that so are the documentary, civic registration, and other identificatory practices of the state. If HIV only desires to offer a record of how sex leads to Black death, it becomes imperative to ask who else has wanted to record Black (sex) lives and death and why in the forty or so years that constitute the time span of the novel, beyond the public health initiatives of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

"HOME AFFAIRS" AND OTHER BOOKS

Turning to the public recording functions of HIV in the novel, the extraordinary work of South African historian Keith Breckenridge is crucial. Breckenridge tracks the conflicts within the long history of the South African state to identify and periodically document Black South African lives through documents like the notorious *dompas* or passbook, architect of apartheid Hendrik Verwoerd's *bewysboeke*, the failed "book of life," and attempts at the national consolidation of a variety of fingerprinting registries from scattered efforts by state and private initiatives such as those by local authorities, mining companies, law enforcement, and the like. The most ambitious such attempt occurred in the 1950s after the passing of the Population Registration Bill and the census of 1951. Here is how Eben Dönges, then minister of the interior, introduced the Second Reading of the Population Registration Bill, on March 8, 1950:

> A population register is actually a book containing the life-story of every individual whose name is recorded on that register. It contains the most important acts relating to such a person. In some cases, the life-story of the

> individual is very short. In the case of a stillborn baby, it contains only one entry and one page. In other cases, a long life-history has to be recorded in that book. All those important facts regarding the life of every individual will be combined in this book and recorded under the name of a specific person, who can never change his identity. It is only when the last page in that book of life is written by an entry recording the death of such a person, that the book is closed and taken out of the gallery of the living and placed in the gallery of the dead.[19]

I can find no extratextual evidence that Moele publicly discussed the Population Registration Bill or the Dönges introduction to it, but the echoes between the aspirations of the bill and HIV's recording practices in the novel are loud.

For much of the twentieth century many Black South Africans had only one bureaucratic form of identification—the notorious dompas or passbook that allowed them to work in white urban areas. The extension of the dompas to women saw massive resistance, culminating in the women's march in Pretoria in 1956.[20] As Mamdani, Phillips, and others have shown, state indifference to colonized populations has a long history, most readily apparent in the ideas and institutions of customary law.[21] One historiographic line of argument about customary law runs as follows: "The emerging colonial apparatus in British sub-Saharan Africa had neither the will nor the capacity under policies of what came to be called Indirect Rule to implement its norms all the way through the social body of the societies it was colonizing. Interested largely in the extraction of surplus value from these societies first in terms of agricultural and then mine labor, many matters of civil law were to be left to the customary law of these societies, if the customary law was too difficult to ascertain—it could be invented and often arbitrarily imposed."[22] Breckenridge offers an important counter to that now standard historiography of customary law—the hegemony on a shoestring hypothesis—and its corollary—"the theory of decentralized despotism"—by noting the conflicts within the state in South Africa across colonial, apartheid, and post-apartheid eras between proponents of biometric and documentary recording, i.e., between those who thought that universal fingerprinting was sufficient for the state's purposes and those who favored more comprehensive documentation in the forms of civil registration of, minimally—birth, death, marriage, children, domicile, employment, or some combination thereof, the events imagined as constitutive of "a life." "The Book of Life" that Dönges describes never really got off the ground; even though whites were already

amply registered by 1950, Black South Africans were excluded from the "The Book of Life" initiative.[23]

The emergence of super-exploitative systems of migrant labor, of which the *dompas* becomes the documentary marker, signals the apartheid-era continuation of colonial-era imaginaries of customary law and practices of sovereignty. Because documentary citizenship required too much state investment and Black life was often, but not always, seen as not sufficiently valuable to record and count beyond influx control, or fingerprinting for the sake of policing, Breckenridge notes:

> From the first plans for the introduction of fingerprinting that were drawn up by Galton, biometric administration was motivated by a desire to identify the illiterate subjects of Britain's imperial possessions. Remarkably this project—of fixing the names of illiterate African subjects in particular—remained the driving justification through the whole of the twentieth century and it is still the *raison d'etre* of the current round of large-scale biometric systems, both in the former colonies and at the gates of imperial capitals.[24]

Why and how must a state record? In the above excerpt, we see that biometric administration provides a cheaper form of state identificatory surveillance for racialized others. Earlier Breckinridge argues for a tension between biometric administration and more fulsome documentary citizenship within the recording apparatus of the state, with technological advances paradoxically producing a weaker and more hollowed-out state:

> Agar, following the administrative and information-handling capacity of the British state in detail over the twentieth century, has shown that the contradictory imperatives to manage almost universal welfare benefits and reduce costs through the deployment of large-scale computer systems after the 1970s has produced a much weakened and hollowed-out state, one in which officials have only the vaguest idea how the work of information processing is actually done.[25]

To understand this book of the dead and its author as murderous substitutes for the recording state, it may be useful to compare it with the other books and authors presented in the novel, as well as the haunting shadows of the dompas, "the book of life," and the fingerprinting registries. There are glancing but significant references to other books and writing practices within the novel which suggest that, as much as some of them confirm HIV's historical narrative and documentary modes, alternative historical narrative and writing genres lurk at the edges of *The Book of The Dead*.

Khutso's name, written out of official, state-authored texts because he is Black, is mentioned in relation to another quasi-official book, a book of all the troublemakers in high school: "He remembered that in his high school days all the troublemakers had been blacklisted in a book like the one he had before him. Ngwan'Zo's name had been written in the book in the first months of their third year of high school and Mato's a few months after that. Khutso wondered how his life would have turned out if his name too had been written in the book."[26]

Both friends subsequently leave school, partially as a result of this blacklist. Here, to be recorded, like in the subsequent book of the dead, is to face bad consequences, and Khutso explicitly compares the troublemaker list book and the recently purchased "book of the dead"—"in a book like the one he had before him" (83). To have one's name in a book is not a mark of affirmative recognition, but rather to be singled out for discipline or punishment, or in the case of "The Book of the Dead," death. Khutso's education and attendant upward mobility appears dependent on avoiding being noted. The teacher or principal who wrote Ngwan'Zo's name eerily prefigures HIV as the author/recorder of names in the novel's literal "Book of the Dead." Education as a route to dignity and prosperity in the post-apartheid world of the novel is treated with skepticism throughout, and certainly offers no protection against AIDS. In addition, the prosperity of Khutso is presented as a factor that enables rather than constrains HIV. We are in the ambivalence of the public record in this blacklist book. To be noted and counted is to be subject to surveillance and punishment. It is good that Khutso's name does not appear in this kind of schoolbook. The evasion of the record looks something like freedom.

At the same time, to be invisible and not counted is to be discounted, de-individualized, and rendered a member of a disposable or surplus population who cannot access any of the rights, protections, and benefits of citizenship. Such rights, benefits, and protections depend on recognition from the state and such recognition usually requires official documentation. This kind of enabling documentation appears in the novel in the form of Khutso's matriculation certificate: "Then his mother danced a ritual dance, thanking all her ancestors because she had never believed that she would ever hold a matric certificate in her hands" (27). She dances because she believes that state recognition in the form of the matric certificate is Khutso's ticket to a better life. At first glance, this may appear to be the old shibboleth of the tradition/modernity dyad, but let us note that there is no conflict for Khutso's mother. For her, it is entirely obvious that ancestors and matric certificates are of the

same spatiotemporal order. The novel here confounds African historiography, which Mbembe argues "invented a narrative of liberation built around the dual temporality of a glorious—albeit fallen—past (tradition) and a redeemed future (nationalism)."[27] The matric certificate—ironic marker of a redeemed (national) future—and the ritual dance for the ancestors do not require a dual temporality here. How the novel engages the customary in the realm of "traditional medicine" in response to HIV will be considered later.

In the same interview mentioned earlier, Moele offers remarks on the place of sex in the writing of life that state documentary practices wish to record and ignore: "'Sex is the central force, the gravity. Every face that you see in the world is the result of sex, the other things are just secondary issues.' Indeed, every contour that makes up the individual physiognomy that distinguishes one ID card from another betrays a family history and an underlying sequence of events, reaching right back to a birth that may have been triggered by love, lust or plain strategic decision-making."[28] The yoking of sex to procreation here works against the links between sex and death central to HIV's "book of the dead," but speak to the book of the dead that Khutso promises the bookseller he will write. The "plain strategic decision making" anticipates the transactional sex model for the transmission of HIV. Moele claims that it is sex that produces the singularity of each person's physiognomy recorded by an ID card. That the apartheid state panicked about sex, particularly, but not only on racial lines is hardly news. Along with the aforementioned Population Registration Bill and the Group Areas Act, keystones of the apartheid legal regime were centrally concerned with prohibiting sex across the color line, most notoriously the Immorality Amendment Act and the Mixed Marriages Act also both passed into law in 1950. While much has been made over the surveillance aspects of the apartheid state and the intrusiveness of such legislation and their largely selective enforcement, the state was concerned about Black intimate practices mostly in an instrumental way, particularly to ensure the absorption of reproductive costs by the Native reserves/homelands/Bantustans.[29] Here Moele suggests the supplementary documentary role his narrator, HIV, may play in the "hollowed" out information gathering and processing roles and responsibilities of the state. HIV, like the apartheid state before it, desires to keep records of people's sex lives, not just to criminalize them, but to kill them.

However, HIV is not the only keeper of a journal in the novel. Pretty, Khutso's wife, keeps a diary. Unlike what becomes the book of the dead, readers of the novel are not given any details about Pretty's diary's provenance

or its final trajectory, but it is possible to read the diary as a shadow book or another possible record, with a feminine author in a distinctly personal genre, to the relentless masculinism of HIV as the author of the book of the dead, and the book of the dead that would be impossible to write except as fiction that Khutso tells the bookseller he wishes to write. Here is all that is told about Pretty's diary:

> Three weeks after her death, Khutso packed Pretty's belongings into a box. In her handbag, he found her diary. Pretty had glued a picture of Thapelo and Khutso onto the cover with the caption Everything for my Family written below it. Inside on the New Year's Resolution page, she had written, I have to celebrate the birthdays of the people that I love and buy each of them a present.
>
> Khutso read it page by page. The last entry was on Wednesday, 13 March 2002: I AM HIV POSITIVE.
>
> The test certificate, confirming that she was HIV POSITIVE, had been glued to the same page.[30]

There are no further entries. An HIV-positive diagnosis terminates Pretty's recording impulses, even as Khutso's diagnosis inaugurates HIV's record. Pretty's diary emerges only posthumously. And unlike HIV's book of the dead, which records dates of infection, CD4 counts, and deaths, in her diary Pretty records birthdays and resolutions, and the cover of the book is graced by what we must assume is the photograph of Pretty and her husband and son: Khutso and Thapelo. There is no gold embossing, just simple glue. In addition to the photograph glued to the cover, the certificate showing that she is HIV-positive is glued to the page of the date of her diagnosis, after which she writes nothing. The diary has the markings of a scrapbook or collage and is made by homely craft—the snapshots, the gluing, which can be contrasted with the gold embossed, professionally printed book of the dead to come. Unlike the possibility of Khutso's matric certificate, Pretty's HIV-positive certificate is seen as a death certificate of sorts, an official recognition of the end of her life as a person and as an author. "Everything for my Family" is the caption underneath the photograph of Khutso and Thapelo, and thus the photograph suggests family here is the bourgeois nuclear family, a respectable model of kinship that does not appear in the other representations of kinship in the novel. Given Pretty's fate, it is clear that her professed commitment to this intimate form fails to protect her or her immediate family. The sentimentality and respectability of the photograph and caption are powerless in the face of HIV and his legions.

Readers are never told what happens to Pretty's diary. Does Khutso throw it away? Does he keep it as a memento or evidence of what he perceives as her treachery? Might he pass it on to their young son, Thapelo, as a record of his mother's life? Or can we read it, as little of it that appears in the narrative, as a different kind of documentary archiving of life in South Africa in a time of HIV/AIDS?

Pretty's diary may resemble a newish genre in the context of representations of HIV/AIDS: memory books or boxes. Swedish crime writer Henning Mankel was instrumental in bringing this genre to a wider readership in his *I Die, but the Memory Lives On: The World AIDS Crisis and the Memory Book Project* (2005). Mankel writes: "HIV has changed the way we look at public and private memories," arguing that the memory book project builds on the memorializing work of the AIDS quilt.[31] Beatrice Were, a leading Ugandan HIV/AIDS activist of the times, points to the range of support for and prevalence of this new genre and the optimistic investment in its possible impact: "Today the Memory project has been emulated by several key international and national development agencies including Plan International, Actionaid Uganda, Healthlink Worldwide, The AIDS Support Organisation (TASO), Groots Kenya and many others. The project has carried its wings to many other countries in Africa including Tanzania, Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa. It has in fact reached to most countries in the world where HIV/Aids is a threat to family life."[32] The memory book phenomenon can be contextualized within a South African affective public sphere that attempted to engage historical trauma that preceded, and in many ways, compounded the suffering caused by HIV/AIDS. In his *Never Too Small to Remember: Memory Work and Resilience in Times of AIDS*, Philippe Denis writes: "Ten years after the end of apartheid, the importance of memory work has never appeared more clearly in a country which still struggles with the effects of decades of discrimination and abuse. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, however significant it may have been, was only one step in a long journey of healing and reconciliation. The HIV/AIDS epidemic and the corollary evils of gender abuse, poverty and unemployment compound the problem. In South Africa, everybody is affected by the situation directly or indirectly. Everybody has to find ways of dealing with painful memories."[33]

Notably, Pretty's diary, minimally described as it is, looks like the model memory book in the appendix of *I Die, but the Memory Lives On*, which has pages for the name of the mother, "Family Traditions and Special Events," "Thoughts on Life and Things I Believe In," and so on. Pretty's diary and

the memory book work within what Lauren Berlant has called the genre of the personal, and record everyday tasks and celebration, appointments and aspirations, honoring responsibilities, pleasures, and commitments obliterated by the premature deaths caused by HIV/AIDS.[34] It appears by the brevity of the mention of the diary and the affective flatness of his description of it that Khutso thinks very little of Pretty's diary and the wider genre of memory books that it invokes, and HIV, in his "book of the dead," does not think Pretty's dairy is worth mentioning at all. Thus, *The Book of the Dead* militantly refuses the humanitarian impulses and ensembles that enable pedagogical and public health and memorial projects that characterize the memory book phenomenon and the two young adult novels discussed in chapter 5.[35]

So, we might need to read Pretty's diary as something more and other than a halfway memory book, even as the few details given about Pretty's diary eerily prefigure the obsession with dates and their recording in "The Book of the Dead." It is birthdays rather than dates of infection and death that Pretty wishes to record in her diary. "'Yes, I know, Khutso,' Pretty said. 'I am making an excuse to celebrate my son's life. You grew up without celebrating birthdays, I totally understand. You and your people like to celebrate people when they are dead. You like to talk well of them when they cannot hear a word, and spare no expense for their funeral, treating them like they are gods. Why not celebrate a living soul instead?"[36]

Even though Pretty is the first AIDS-related death in the novel, her commitments throughout are to the living, including to her own survival and thriving, which is how I will read her role in the novel's depiction of transactional sex as a behavioral model for transmission. The narrator of the book of the living tells readers: "Inside on the New Year's Resolution page, she had written, I have to celebrate the birthdays of the people that I love and buy each of them a present." Pretty's planned and recorded celebrations of life here are communal, as are the funerals of Khutso's people, as opposed to the solitary glee in HIV's book of the dead. But who reads these books? Moele in an interview asserts: "I am not surprised. South Africa has eleven official languages, all of them overpowered by a foreign language and a reading market that is . . . if it was an animal, it would be on the list of endangered species and, therefore, protected."[37]

In addition to the high school book of shame and Pretty's diary, other books appear more obliquely in the novel in the form of sly allusions.[38] At some point Khutso must have read F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic American

novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925). Here is the entry for the only white woman who is written up in "The Book of the Dead":

> I was cruising in Khutso's British supercar—prowling, top down, along Oxford Road on my way to Rosebank. A Gwyneth Paltrow lookalike was cruising next to me in her convertible and I was loving it. Suddenly a G-string hit me in the face and fell into my lap. I looked at Gwyneth and caught her naughty smile . . . She told Khutso that her name was Daisy Fay, but when he was signing her into the book of books, he remembered that Daisy Fay was a character in a novel he had read. Still, he signed her in anyway:
>
> *15 August 2008: Daisy Fay*
> *Done. Liberal white woman!*[39]

This passage dramatizes the shifting possession of Khutso by HIV and the fleeting moments of autonomy or difference that the former may have from the latter. "I was cruising," "a G-string hit me in the face" versus "She told Khutso" and "he remembered." What is clear is that it is Khutso who is the reader of books, that he has memories beyond or before HIV, and that HIV's possession of Khutso is not complete. Daisy Fay Buchanan is a lead character in Fitzgerald's novel. What is Daisy Fay doing in "The Book of the Dead"? Arguably the most famous description of her in her home novel is as follows: "'Her voice is full of money,' he said suddenly. That was it. I'd never understood before. It was full of money—that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals' song of it . . . high in a white palace the king's daughter, the golden girl."[40]

Daisy Fay is how the woman identifies herself to Khutso. Daisy Fay may be who the woman wants to be in the encounter. There are strong crosscurrents of recognition in this entry in the "Book of the Dead." First, it is strongly implied that the woman's real name is not Daisy Fay, that the literary reference may initially be produced as part of her fantasy in the sexual encounter. She gets to play the part of a rich Jazz Age married American woman, though none of the privilege associated with such identity variables offer any protection from becoming HIV-positive, though assumedly she would have much better treatment options than some of the women Khutso and HIV infect. Gwyneth/Daisy Fay/liberal white woman is an object of erotic allure because of her heady combination of money, whiteness, and freedom. She clearly initiates the encounter.

While Khutso appears not to get the reference in the encounter itself and only remembers it when it comes time to write her "name" in the book of the dead, the thrill of infecting Daisy Fay reveals a retrospective participation

in a cognate fantasy: "Done: liberal white woman!" Book-reading and book-learning might be good for an extra erotic charge to the encounter but are seen to fail miserably in the prevention of HIV transmission. Khutso begins the encounter with a cinematically mediated fantasy, only partially and belatedly joining the literary fantasy of Daisy Fay. Why Gwyneth Paltrow? Paltrow represents a highly commodified celebrity culture that dabbles in self-help masquerading as soft humanitarianism: organic hummus and the notorious goop can save the planet and alleviate suffering, all while helping you to look beautiful.[41] The Goop podcast's self-description is nicely indicative: "On The Goop Podcast, GP and Erica Chidi Cohen chat with leading thinkers, culture changers, and industry disruptors—from doctors to creatives, CEOs to spiritual healers—about shifting old paradigms and starting new conversations. Tune in to hear from Oprah, Brene Brown, Bryan Stevenson, Joe Dispenza, . . . Erin Brockovich, and more." All this talk of wellness, new conversations, and spiritual healing fail to protect Daisy Fay against the machinations of Khutso and HIV. HIV is a universal threat in the world of the novel. Even rich, white women have no guaranteed immunity.

The stretch of Oxford Road through the suburb/neighborhood of Rosebank in Johannesburg is a notorious area for heterosexual prostitution. Most commonly the johns are white, and the sex workers are Black.[42] I am not sure what is at stake in the racial reversal here. Khutso and HIV appear uninterested in sex workers as possible candidates for the book of the dead. It is a representative of the wealthy white women—who drive rather than walk Oxford Road—who makes it into *The Book of the Dead*, albeit as a fictional character from an American classic. South African literary critic Lesibana Rafapa asserts that "*The Book of the Dead* (2009) paints on a larger canvas the regrettable co-option of Blacks into a self-defeating episteme of colour-blindness."[43] How might this class color-blindness affect the figuration of HIV in the wider novel? Wealth appears as the price of entry into this ostensible color-blindness. The character/narrator, HIV, shows very little interest in poor people of any race in the novel. HIV through Khutso targets almost exclusively the emergent Black urban middle-class—the group of people known in popular parlance as the "Black diamonds" or what disgraced former president Jacob Zuma derisively called "the smart Blacks."[44] Death by AIDS could be read in the novel as punishment for their racial betrayal in forgetting the historical injustices of settler-colonialism and apartheid, even as the sociological descriptions in the novel refuse to name apartheid explicitly. Rafapa continues initially in relation to the depiction of Pretty, Khutso's wife:

> The economic lowliness of a family affording only goat meat during a celebration, and the high-class Pretty's cultural solidarity with Khutso's people, satirically points to the democratic South Africa's creation of a new Black middle-class co-opted by the economically advantaged whites. Pretty's character speaks to Moele's discourse on a phenomenon whereby few upwardly mobile Blacks joining the whites whose affluence has been structurally and institutionally favoured through racial power from the days of apartheid, refuse to aid a post-apartheid colourblindness that, according to Milazzo ("Rhetorics" 12), seeks to de-politicise institutional racism by denying collective advantage in its appeal to a "shared humanity that precludes any critique of white privilege."[45]

On the one hand, the sexual encounter between Khutso and Daisy Fay reveals the complicity of people like Khutso with the depredations of racial global capitalism by having him literally fuck an archetype of the American gilded age. On the other, the encounter with Khutso is arguably enabled by white privilege but the narrative implies that even white privilege is less powerful than HIV.

Prior to his possession by HIV, Khutso, as the literary reference to *The Great Gatsby* suggests, was a reader, and one with a redemptive and compensatory sense of reading. In the recounting of Khutso's educational biography, due to the difficulty of making new friends after the departures of his friends Maoto and Ngwan'Zo, we are informed: "It was then that he discovered that books were much friendlier than people."[46] Khutso has an overwhelming emotional reaction to the library at the University of the North. The University of the North, founded in 1959 and often held up as a successful example of separate but equal facilities for Black South Africans during apartheid, becomes the University of Limpopo in 2005. The introduction to the world of books that the library represents brings him to tears.

> Inside the library he wanted to scream—his mouth wide open—totally amazed by even the few books that he could see. He covered his mouth with his hand. That wasn't what he thought the library would be. He thought he would read all the books in the shortest time. He had thought it would be the size of a classroom.
>
> Still smiling, Khutso sat down onto the floor, shaking his head, defeated by his thoughts. "I am in a library," he said quietly to himself, his eyes filling with tears.[47]

There are way more books than he can see, let alone read. It is one of the crowning ironies of the novel that Khutso's love of books is reduced to a

single book, the book of the dead, and that reading too will fail to save him from an AIDS-related death. Amazed by the abundance of printed materials in the university library, first Khutso wants to scream, then feels defeated by his thoughts and quietly cries, but these are reverential tears, produced by a sense of the enormity of the community of writers and readers the library invites him to join. The library represents a community that can contain the living and the dead, those who are present and those who are absent, but does not and cannot contain that "book of the dead" that Khutso tells the bookseller he wishes to write.[48]

All these other books fade in the face of the book of the dead, which eventually manages to subsume them all. Roughly halfway through the novel, Khutso, our central protagonist, custom orders what literally becomes the book of the dead from a printer. This passage is worth quoting almost in its entirety.

> Finally, he had what he wanted: a leather covered journal with five hundred unnumbered pages—each page divided into two columns—and two golden pages in the beginning and two at the end. The only words embossed on the front cover in twenty-three carat gold: *Book of the Dead*.
>
> "This is the most unusual request I have ever had," the sales manager told Khutso when he went to collect the book. "And to tell you the honest truth, it's the first job this company has ever done for a Black man. Believe me because I have worked here for thirty years."
>
> The man went on to tell Khutso about all the special books the company had made, and all the special people they had made them for, but Khutso knew that he was avoiding the question he really wanted to ask. "In case you are wondering what I am going to do with this book," Khutso finally said, making his way towards the door, "I am going to record my paternal family history; the male lineage from 1840 to the present day."
>
> "Book of the Dead," the sales manager said, unable to pretend that he was anything but relieved. "And here I was thinking that you are a serial killer, and you wanted to record the names of your victims."
>
> "The Black man is always a suspect . . ." Khutso replied, watching as shame stole over the sales manager's face.
>
> Outside the printer's offices, Khutso sat in his car with the book on his lap. It was as if he was introducing himself to the book, and the book was introducing itself to him.[49]

The book, like HIV, is strangely personified, almost in animist fashion, as it appears "as if he was introducing himself to the book, and the book was introducing itself to him." And then the remainder of the eponymous novel

is this "book of the dead," which is not even written by Khutso himself but by an assumedly masculine personification of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus and catalogues the names and brief details of the relationships with all the women the two of them—the virus and Khutso—infect. It appears on closer examination that the names and dates of infection and death appear italicized in the book of the dead and the ontological status of what we readers have on the page is uncertain. The imagining of the virus's relation to Khutso is complicated. The record of the book of the dead looks most like HIV's diary about writing the book of the dead, though the entries evoke other significant genres—the census, the death certificate, the book of judgment, a list of sexual conquests.

The scene of purchase and the cross-cutting fantasies about what the blank pages of the book might become pull in multiple directions. First, the book is presented as a kind of racial originary document: "This is the most unusual request I have ever had," the sales manager told Khutso when he went to collect the book. "And to tell you the honest truth, it's the first job this company has ever done for a Black man. Believe me because I have worked here for thirty years." There are many possible readings of this statement by the bookseller: This book will be the first of its kind written by a Black man; a Black man finally has the purchasing power to buy such a book; luxury businesses are a route to color-blindness?

It is a custom-made book: "A leather covered journal with five hundred unnumbered pages—each page divided into two columns—and two golden pages in the beginning and two at the end. The only words embossed on the front cover in twenty-three carat gold: *Book of the Dead*." No Black man has ever requested such a book before, though one wonders how many white men have ordered a book with the title *Book of the Dead*. Of course, the real-life opposite or corollary to a book of the dead is "The Book of Life." The Book of Life was the South African State's long and contorted attempt to provide an identity document to all its white, colored, and Indian citizens. Keith Breckenridge writes: "Like the Swedish system and the Nazi *Volkskartei*, the population register was supposed to be a continuously updated register of domicile for all whites, Coloureds and Indians. This unrealisable surveillance ambition, and the proliferation of linked registration functions, was the Book of Life's undoing. Over time the Book of Life project would transform into its opposite, becoming a radically simplified biometric register of identification only."[50] Moele's novel's depiction of the book of the dead presents

HIV as a surrogate for the recording state, noting who counts and what the salient information about them might be. "The book of life," with all the ambivalences about its surveillance, caring/counting, and policing functions, is transformed by HIV into "the book of the dead."

It is only in 1981, ironically and coincidentally twenty years after Khutso's birth (if he is forty-one in 2002—the date and age recorded in "The Book of the Dead"), that the South African government decides to require fingerprint authentication from all South Africans white and Black, which created the world's first universal biometric population register. Following from that decision, all South Africans were issued with a common identity document, stripped of many of the surveillance functions that had originally been included by the document's designers (although the last three digits of each individual's identity number continued, briefly, to do the work of racial classification).[51] The three digits identifying white men were 007, just when you think the bureaucratic architects of white supremacy cannot make a joke. The South African state's "book of life" balks and founders when broaching the possibility of including Black subjects into its documentary life.

The novel takes this failure one step further by making the book of the dead the record of Black life. Khutso feels obliged to account for the uniqueness of his purchase: "'In case you are wondering what I am going to do with this book,' Khutso finally said, making his way towards the door, 'I am going to record my paternal family history; the male lineage from 1840 to the present day.'"[52] In the face of this racialized interrogation what are readers to make of Khutso's lie here? How does a Black man imagine a legitimate answer to a white man's query about the purposes of a book of the dead? And what might this never-written book in Moele's eponymous *Book of the Dead* contain? Given the colonial and apartheid state's indifference to the documenting of Black lives, would there even be records of the births and deaths of Khutso's male lineage from 1840 to the present day? The novel appears caught between the regimes of documentary and biometric citizenship. As Keith Breckenridge's work has shown, documentary citizenship was never really in the cards for Black South Africans, whose identities were alternately reducible to the dompas and a fingerprint.[53]

The novel is increasingly obsessed with problems of tabulation, numbers, and dates and the recording of them. Let us look more closely at the details recorded about Khutso, the character that the narrative is most concerned with.

> The honour of being the first entry in this great book went to Khutso. In the middle of the second golden page, I wrote:
>
> 03 October 2002: Khutso
> Age: 41 years
> Height: 1.74 meters
> Weight: 107.6 kilograms
> Status: HIV positive
> CD4 count: 650
>
> We were sitting in Khutso's study, both of us pondering the mission that we were going to undertake together. We are going to fuck 'em dead, I told him, and he smiled.[54]

We have the date of recording—October 3, 2002; age—41 years; and then his height and weight. These would be standard if shifting items in most identity documents—stuff of the book of life. Then the entry continues to record HIV-related medical data: Khutso's positive status and his CD4 count. These latter are the key details for HIV's record in the book of the dead. The next time there is an entry for Khutso in the book of the dead, we learn that on January 6, 2005, at age 44, his weight is down to 95 kilograms and his CD4 count is down to 400 (133). Khutso appears again as the very last entry in the book of the dead. His weight is down to 64 kilograms and his CD4 count is 60 (165). Medical records reduced to numbers, but the second half of the novel attempts partial narrative biographies of those numbers. "The great book became our whole world, and at times I even felt like Khutso's job was a big hindrance to the cause—if he hadn't been working, I would already have been much bigger than I was. The average entry was seven women a week, one for each day of the week, but the record was sixteen in a week: 23–29 June 2003. That was when Khutso was at his peak" (153).

Here are the names besides Khutso and Thapelo that appear with their own entries in the book of the dead: Thabiso, Demie, Jarush, Matimba, Jessica, Michelle and Candy (one entry), Reneilwe, Nomsa, Elizma, Sandra, Nonkululeko (the one who almost get away), Daisy Fay, Kgahliso. The book of the dead spans some six years from the first entry on October 3, 2002, until November 6, 2008. HIV tells us there should be at least three hundred entries, but apparently it has only bothered to enter fourteen. In this imprecision, produced by its indifference to maintaining a proper record, HIV counts Black life about as carefully as the apartheid state did.

A couple of racial and potentially national allegories begin to emerge in the encounter with the "Book of the Dead."[55] The novel and the eponymous book it enfolds hyperbolically reinscript at least two powerful ideologies about African sexuality: One recent—the archive of Black sexuality can be reduced to the archive of HIV/AIDS. In the case of the Moele novel, the archive of sexuality is written by personification of the HI virus and called the book of the dead. Relatedly, the ways the HI virus represents Khutso's sexuality reproduces a range of powerful if phobic reductions of Black sexuality to a predatory, super-potent, dangerous Black male heterosexuality. While much of this is satirical, the risk that a reproduction of a damaging stereotype is still a repetition, even in a critique, remains.

However, the novel suggests that HIV is a serious historiographic agent and the author of a new national biography. On the one hand, Khutso is a protagonist in one of the oldest and most enduring South African literary, filmic, and ethnographic stories: a young Black man leaves his rural homestead, goes to the city, and loses his moral way. Alan Paton's 1948 *Cry, the Beloved Country* is the most well-known exemplar of this defining genre in South African letters.[56] South Africa's first African feature film, *African Jim*, also known as *Jim Comes to Joburg* (1949), offers a more upbeat, less tragic reworking of the same story.[57] On the other hand, the utterly unsentimental rendition of Masekeng, Khutso's village in Limpopo province, shows the countryside to be as corrupt as the city and thus confounds the central opposition needed to get the old story rolling. The long history of how the emergence of racial capitalism in South Africa impoverished the countryside is encapsulated in the following description of Masekeng: "Masekeng—the place where Khutso grew up—was a village where only one house had electricity and a borehole. Most of the community relied on water from the springs that they shared with their animals unless they had five cents to buy a twenty-five litre bottle of water from the local businessman—who owned the house with the borehole—or if they had the energy to walk more than ten kilometres to a government supplied tap."[58]

The state has utterly failed at basic provisioning. It is a ten-kilometer walk to the nearest potable water. The natural springs are polluted by domestic animal waste, but people are obliged to get water from them. The impoverishment of the countryside is hardly a post-apartheid phenomenon, as the destruction of often thriving peasant economies was central to the colonial state and the setting up of key extractive industries in the second half of the nineteenth century.[59] Masekeng is definitely not described in pastoral terms or tones.

It is perhaps wrong to try to write *The Book of the Dead* into a Patonesque South African literary tradition, since it explicitly eschews the racial drama of apartheid, especially in the tonalities of white liberal guilt as the structure of feeling for rendering the suffering of South African history. At the same time, it also eschews the national allegorical story of nonracialism arguably inaugurated by a novel like Sol T. Plaatje's *Mhudi* (finished in 1920, published in 1930), often heralded as the first novel written in English by a Black South African, and may be the first South African novel to prefigure the racial reconciliation embedded in the metaphor of the rainbow nation.[60] In many ways, Moele's novel is about the impossibility of national community in the face of HIV/AIDS, where the only task of the writer/historian is to record the names of the dead in tones that range from the callous to the gleeful, and incompletely at that.

How and why does HIV, as author, rewrite or write out apartheid? The novel spans the years from roughly 1970 to 2008. There is not a single explicit mention of apartheid. The only recognizable apartheid-era place name in the novel is the aforementioned "University of the North." We are told that in 2002, Khutso moves from Polokwane to Tshwane. The historicity of these dates and place names gets tricky. While Pretoria gets incorporated into the Tshwane metropolitan area in 2000, and there are ongoing debates about the renaming of the city itself as Tshwane, Pietersburg only officially becomes Polokwane in 2005, three years after Khutso leaves Polokwane. Of course, these re/namings come from long-extant indigenous names for these places, so what might be the cause of the occasionally anachronistic deployment of specific place names? Was Pietersburg always and already (to borrow a phrase) Polokwane and it is that name which is being restored after the apartheid imposition? South Africa's transition to democracy occurred in 1994—if we take the first democratic elections as the event of the transition, though obviously the time of transition is much longer than that and how democratic transition can be held under rubrics of neocolonialism or racial capitalism is still up for grabs. While apartheid was centrally concerned with the problem of racial identification and classification, the racialization of space was equally a cornerstone. Khutso and HIV, HIV in Khutso, Khutso as the soldier/agent of HIV, traverse these racialized spaces—past and present—freely and with impunity. The historical looseness of the place names in the novel strongly suggests that HIV does not care who and where you are, which belies the more specific demographic vulnerability to infection and death that the material history and geography of the pandemic would indicate.

That distant tap is clearly an apartheid-era tap.[61] That businessman selling water from that borehole is the privatized post-apartheid future. While Khutso does not return to Masekeng in the second half of the novel, given rising levels of poverty in the region and the continued lack of basic infrastructure in rural South Africa in the era of democracy, the situation is not likely to have improved. The failure of political enfranchisement to improve the everyday lives of most rural Black South Africans is a feature of post-apartheid South Africa.[62] Those people are the people Khutso is determined to leave behind.

The South African literary critic Lesibana Rafapa (mentioned earlier in this chapter) writes: "Mhlongo's and Moele's post-apartheid novels have been produced in a social context where, according to Milazzo ('Racial power' 36), 'literary imaginaries, academic scholarship, and public racial discourse in post-apartheid South Africa' have been shaped into a denialism purporting that 'economic power is primarily a consequence of individual merit and personal responsibility; and that racial categories should therefore preferably *not* be invoked.'"[63]

The novel's general evasion of the designation "Black" and the very occasional presence of "white" as a personal descriptor confirms Rafapa's and Milazzo's claims. However, it might also be possible to read the novel's evasion of Black as a racial designator as not only a liberal false color-blindness but a quietly confident assertion of Blackness as normative, of a performance of a Black universal, and a claiming of the privilege of the unmarked subject. Furthermore, the educational biography of Khutso in part I makes no mention of Bantu education, though that experience is presented as his only other experience of potentially having his own name in a book.[64] Khutso's overwhelming emotional response to the library at the University of the North may also mitigate the Bantu part of Bantu education. Here is how Khutso understands his education: "School is like a railway line, he thought to himself. The train that runs on the rails has but one destination, and if it runs smoothly, sure enough it will reach its destination at the expected time. He knew he could work hard—he'd worked hard for Leruo, shovelling sand, but he also knew that people who work hard are the worst paid of all and to get paid very well one has to have a degree."[65]

The passage above notes a core contradiction in the linkage of a work ethic to financial success. Hard work is supposed to produce financial success, but as Khutso recognizes, "people who work hard are the worst paid of all," and there appears to be a connection between class privilege indexed by access to

education (and that access under apartheid was definitively racialized) and the possibility of acquiring wealth. Khutso becomes enormously rich over the course of the novel, exactly how is never clear, but the life insurance policies Pretty takes out undoubtedly help. Those documents represent a capitalist calibration and record of the value of a human life only recently available to Black South Africans in the time span of the novel. This very recent inheritance can be usefully contrasted with what was taken from Khutso's lineage from 1840 to the present day, which cannot be written into that shadow book of the dead that lurks beneath the one we have. The origin of Pretty's life insurance policies is described as follows:

> The whole family was buried the following Saturday, but Pretty couldn't bring herself to go to the funeral. The words Tshepo had said to her at the party came back to her again and again. "Pretty, do you have life insurance?" he had asked her. "If you don't have any, you should get some. And if you don't get that, then you should get yourself a good sangoma." He had paused to take a sip of beer. "Black people don't like educated people like you and me," he had continued. "And if you die, your children will be left naked. Get yourself some life insurance."
>
> When she finally recovered from the shock of Tshepo's death, Pretty took out four life insurance policies—two for herself and two for Khutso. The monthly payments were costly, but at least every time Tshepo's question floated into her head she could answer it. "I have four," she would say. "Tshepo, I have four." (61)

Before he is killed in a car accident, Tshepo, Khutso's university roommate, offers two strategies for ensuring generational social continuity in the post-apartheid era: life insurance and/or a good sangoma, because education is seen as removing people like Pretty and Tshepo from the protections of kinship and community. Tshepo's question haunts Pretty and the invocation of "I have four . . . . I have four" becomes an almost talismanic repetition. It is a terrible irony that the wealth generated by those life insurance policies becomes part of what enables the success of HIV and Khutso as agents of death in the novel.

While there is not a single mention of apartheid history and place names like Polokwane are partially anachronistically presented, HIV presents its relationship to Khutso in military metaphors throughout. "Nkululeko thought that he was knowledgeable, that he could outwit my forces but what he didn't know that he was already on the front line—and he stayed there for a full four years, a grade-A soldier working for me tirelessly day and night" (138).

While HIV claims that it is without human attributes besides will, it frequently stages itself as the military commander of legions, and its operations are those of war. Here is the moment when HIV bids Khutso farewell: "It was an honour knowing you, I tell him. I have had great soldiers, I have seen their great deeds, but you, you come second to none. But now Khutso, your time is done, I tell him. You are dying but I have to move on, I have to find another soldier of the highest grade" (165). While the novel never explicitly claims that AIDS is a national defeat, like Catherine Njeri asserts in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* in chapter 4, these military metaphors can invoke both the era of apartheid wars and the armed struggle in the fight for national liberation—especially evident in the repetition of "the cause"—and occasionally gesture toward the possibilities of civil war: "The second execution took place in Khutso's car. But this execution turned out to be a reinfection in both directions. It was a war between two great soldiers of the cause, and needless to say it was full of mind-blowing thrills" (100). If HIV continually writes himself into the book of the dead as an always successful military commander, what enables his continued success?[66]

THE FAILURES OF HIV PREVENTION, TREATMENTS, AND CURES

In the stories of the characters whose names get written by the composite of Khutso and the personified HI virus into the "book of the dead," readers find parodies and indictments of nearly every epidemiological account of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa from theories of concurrency and transactional sex to imagined solutions like god-condom, "traditional" medicine, and antiretroviral drug treatments. The novel is set on the cusp of the South African state's massive antiretroviral rollout and its depiction of antiretrovirals felt, at least to this reader, as deeply cynical, given the remarkable success of the South African government's rollout initiatives. The state is counting now. HIV/AIDS-related deaths dropped from 681,434 in 2006 to an estimated 150,375 in 2017. In 2007, the second to last year in the time span of the novel, South Africa had an HIV-positive population of 5.7 million people and an estimated 350,000 people died from AIDS.[67] While these numbers were and still are staggeringly high, there can be no question that they would be significantly worse without the massive state intervention beginning in 2003.[68] HIV in *The Book of the Dead* seems unaware of its diminishing powers.

The novel may be too early to register the success of the antiretroviral rollouts but holds out no anticipatory hope. Here is what HIV has to say about antiretrovirals: "ARVs. I like them. In fact, I love them. I want my soldiers to live as long as they can. I want them to have the freshest faces for the longest time, so that no one ever suspects that they are sick. That is the reason I love ARVs so much. And that is the reason I forced Khutso to take them."[69] ARVs are rendered not as the enemy combatant of HIV but as his enabler in a brutal setting up of prevention and treatment as a kind of zero-sum game. ARVs emblematize modern medicine's best attempt at fighting AIDS, and Moele's narrator HIV sees them as co-optable to his cause.[70] Quite simply, this is bad medical information. The possibility of the transmission of HIV essentially disappears when the taking of ARVs results in an undetectable viral load. Here, idiosyncratically, the novel refuses the pedagogical function of providing correct and up-to-date information about HIV/AIDS to its readers. To inspire terror by hearing the voice of HIV seems closer to the point.

So-designated "traditional" cures are subjected to even greater satirical treatment: "The cure: during a full moon Nkululeko had to go find a spotless white female goat that had never given birth, then he must drink the potion that Tshiane had given him, have sex with the goat and then leave it to its fate. Following this, he mustn't talk to anybody else until he had looked directly at the midday sun. 'Then you must go and have another HIV test,' Tshiane told him. 'And only after you have seen the results can you come back and thank me for the service. You must pay what you think I deserve.'"[71]

The long and contested history of the institutions of customary law cannot be fully explored here, but so-called "traditional medicine" was at the heart of much public discourse around HIV/AIDS during the years that the novel brings into representation. Before we broach the specific problem of the novel's representation of "traditional medicine," we need to situate the question of "tradition" in the broader crises of democratic sovereignty for the post-apartheid state: a set of crises that invoke the category of the "custom." Achille Mbembe provides a useful genealogy: "Later, the colonial state went on to use this concept of custom—that is, the thesis of nonsimilarity, in a revised edition—as a mode of government in itself. Specific forms of knowledge were produced for this purpose; such was the case of statistics and other methods of quantification, as deployed in censuses and various other instruments like maps, agrarian surveys, and racial and tribal studies. Their objective was to canonize difference and to eliminate the plurality and ambivalence of custom."[72]

It is important to note that in the transition to democracy, the South African Law Commission saw the "harmonization of the common law and the indigenous law" as a particularly important and challenging task in the bringing about of a post-apartheid future, and the role of what could be called legal liberalism was significant in forcing the government's hand in reversing the AIDS denialism of the opening years of the 2000s and instituting a free and comprehensive HIV/AIDS drug treatment plan. This legal liberalism, most evident in the document of the South African constitution and its subsequent deployment in key cases, was often in tension with the attempts to revivify customary forms of authority, which the novel sees as quite useless in the face of HIV. The new national constitution of 1996 asserted the legitimacy of customary law.[73]

However, exactly how this recognition can be incorporated into national and/or provincial legislation has been an often controversial and contested process, particularly in relation to the status and treatment of women and sexual minorities. Gender activists in and outside of South Africa tended to see the Traditional Courts Bill of 2012, for example, as an attempt to move many South Africans living in rural areas outside the protections of the national constitution. Here is Graeme Reid, founder of GALA and now head of the sexuality desk at Human Rights Watch in *The Guardian*:

> It is no accident that some of the most vociferous public debates in South Africa and sites of the most violent conflict have concerned the role of women and the legal equality of sexual and gender minorities. These have sometimes been adjudicated by traditional authorities but, contrary to the way the chiefs are presenting it, the traditional courts bill elevates the role of chiefs and threatens to ossify traditional law. Tradition, too, must evolve, and, indeed, it has done. The constitution holds that customary law should be recognised, respected, and—most importantly—subject to the constitution. Yet Contralesa and the National House of Traditional leaders have consistently rejected LGBT people as "un-African", recently recommending that "sexual orientation" be removed from the bill of rights. The very essence of our democracy is the protection of vulnerable people. This bill, if enacted, would effectively remove that protection for millions of South Africans. For women, gays, lesbians and transgender people, in particular, the protection of the bill of rights is necessary armour against traditional authority. If South Africans keep traditional leaders in a modern democracy, these figureheads should play a role consistent with the constitution, not one that tampers with our rights.[74]

This difficulty that an emerging democracy has had with the embracing of the "customary" has not been limited to questions of law. Customary law

under apartheid was the domain of often state-appointed "chiefs," with a history of collaboration with the apartheid regime.

In the early 2000s, under the pressure of a burgeoning HIV/AIDS pandemic, the field of medicine became another ongoing site of contestation around questions of the customary, as did policing with the release of a leaked memorandum from South African Police Services that showed that provincial commissioners were now instructed to appoint two detectives in every province to investigate "harmful occult-related crimes," a reanimation of the apartheid-era "Occult Crimes Unit." Indigenous healers and their practices are particularly vulnerable to both additional police and public scapegoating. Would criminalizing the fictional Tshiane in the incident of the attempted cure cited above accomplish anything in the fight against AIDS? What would be gained in the rebranding of Nkululeko as a suspect of "harmful occult-related crimes"?[75]

A plethora of "traditional" cures for a distinctly nontraditional illness emerged in the early 2000s across South Africa. Some of these "cures" had support from the highest levels. President Thabo Mbeki's health minister, Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, whom he supported to the hilt throughout her tenure, made the following incendiary remarks at an HIV/AIDS conference on June 30, 2005: "Nutrition is the basis of good health and it can stop the progression from HIV to full-blown Aids, and eating garlic, olive oil, beetroot and the African potato boosts the immune system to ensure the body is able to defend itself against the virus and live with it. I am sure that loveLife will continue to raise that."[76] (I discuss loveLife more extensively in chapter 4, and Minister Tshabalala will make another appearance in the coda to this book.) While, to her credit, Minister Tshabalala never publicly recommended goat-fucking as cure, the desire to find a cure that could pass as indigenous undoubtedly deformed the state's public health initiatives during the AIDS denialist years, ideologically connected to then president Mbeki's African Renaissance project.[77] Like in the discussion of the film *Yesterday* in chapter 3, the novel sees so-called traditional medicine cures as entirely useless, if not risible.

And then there is god-condom as a satirical shorthand for safer sex practices. The opening section of "The Book of the Dead"—the second part of the novel that HIV relates—tells the story of a wealthy group of respectable married men who worship god-condom—and whom HIV desperately wishes to seroconvert. Eventually Khutso successfully seduces one of their wives. HIV appears in this section as the comeuppance of a predatory,

ultra-consumerist, westernized/"nontraditional" Black bourgeoisie, but the novel as a whole will not easily be contained as a newish national allegory of sorts. It initially appears that the safer-sex practices invented in the earlier North Atlantic incarnation of the pandemic have some traction. Khutso/HIV have to work hard to overcome a commitment to safer-sex practices by a group of wealthy associates. The phrase "god-condom" strongly implies safer-sex practices are kin to a religious belief, which also ultimately fail to protect like the "traditional" religious beliefs that drive the failed promises of a cure described in the entry on Nkululeko mentioned above. The phrase "god-condom" has broken homonymic echoes of "thy kingdom come," adding to the overwhelming and brutal fatalism produced by the malevolence of HIV as a powerful, transcendent, and all-powerful adversary to Khutso and all the characters in the novel who suffer under its rule.

What the novel does give credence to are two of the contemporaneous sociological/epidemiological explanations for the rapid spread of HIV in the subcontinent: transactional intimacy and concurrency.[78] Transactional sex as the root cause of the spread of HIV is broached in the book of the living through the sexual biography of Khutso's wife, Pretty. Pretty is initially seduced by her schoolteacher: "'Please don't tell anybody,' he said afterwards as he put money in her hand. . . . There were always men who wanted to be part of her life, and when they found that they fell short of her expectations they came with currency, and for a poor girl the currency was what mattered."[79]

In a country where unemployment rates hovered between 20 and 30 percent in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, with youth unemployment rates often much higher, making ends meet or what we could call a crisis in livelihood or basic provisioning was and continues to be intense.[80] Attractive young women like Pretty could and did supplement their minimal or nonexistent incomes through intimate relationships that never quite rise to the formality of sex-work. The conventional wisdom can be parsed as follows: One man for the rent, one man for clothes, one for the cellphone bill, and so on. I find something redundant or even oxymoronic about the coinage "transactional intimacy" because I struggle to imagine intimacy without forms of exchange, and unequal exchange at that. There are compelling arguments for how these kinds of transactional intimacy, produced by the ongoing crisis in securing livelihood in the face of the paucity of waged labor and the relative weakness of South Africa's informal economy, facilitated the spread of HIV/AIDS.[81] There is also no doubt that these transactional

intimacies participate in sentimental and libidinal economies as well as material ones.[82] Obviously, the imagination of solutions cannot just posit moral or moralizing ones but needs to address the crisis in livelihood. The novel, at least, makes gestures in that direction.

Pretty is rendered somewhat sympathetically in the novel.

> Her father's money had finally come through, but it wasn't even enough to keep her going for a month, and the student fund was only available for the next study year. The truth of it was that without Sport's financial support she would have to abort her studies. . . . She made a list of all the men she had got naked with, then separated them into three categories: Grade A, Grade B and Grade C.
>
> Grade A men were those who were family men with financial power. Herbert was the first on the list. . . . After Herbert, Pretty tried the next man on the list and then the next. Almost all the men put something towards her education, and that was how she put herself through the University of the North. They had used her and she was using them in turn.[83]

Like HIV, the imputed narrator of "The Book of the Dead" in the second part of *The Book of the Dead*, Pretty makes lists, and her education has taught her to grade. However, her list is made in the service of her survival and educational advancement, not a list of people to be killed.

The novel gives very little credence to the theories of the migrant-labor vector of infection, unlike the feature film *Yesterday* discussed in chapter 3. As Mark Hunter writes, "The male migrancy model did not adequately address what I call the changing political economy and geography of intimacy."[84] While Khutso moves from the countryside to the city, he cannot be categorized as a migrant worker, and the novel maintains that Pretty transmits HIV to Khutso rather than vice versa.

One of the most disturbing aspects of the novel is its refusal to bring any of the activist or civil society initiatives around HIV/AIDS into representation. In this way, it echoes *Yesterday*. There is no mention of the vital political activism that drove the massive antiretroviral rollout through the educational, anti-stigma campaigns and the multiple lawsuits brought by the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC).[85] Under the influence of HIV or arguably entirely subsumed by it/him in the second part of the narrative, Khutso appears as entirely alone with only HIV as company, guide, or occasionally an interlocutor. For the novel, HIV appears to transcend the political, except for the brief acknowledgment of Thapelo's political humanizing of the agency of the virus discussed earlier.

One of the very few extant prevention strategies/fantasies that the novel does not explicitly engage is the optimistic fervor around male circumcision as a possible preventive practice in the early 2000s. The pressure the pandemic placed on medical infrastructure was deeply felt in the attempt to mobilize so-called traditional medicine and other practices in the fight against it.[86] The mid-2000s saw an optimistic kind of mass hysteria about the possibilities of male circumcision as a prophylactic against the further spread of the disease, even though the most cursory glance at the macro data would have rendered such hope suspect.[87] Xhosa men undergo circumcision. Mostly, Zulu men do not. King Shaka is reputed to have abolished the practice some two hundred years ago. While prevalence rates in the Eastern Cape lagged behind those in KwaZulu Natal, at its height a prevalence rate of over 25 percent clearly suggests that circumcision was hardly a magic bullet against HIV.[88] Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini announced on December 4, 2009, that he hoped to revive the practice of circumcision among young Zulu men because a few small-scale recent studies had suggested that circumcised men were 60 percent less likely to become infected with HIV through sex than uncircumcised men. Close to 20 percent of the then estimated 5.5 million HIV-positive South Africans lived in KwaZulu-Natal, the South African province with the highest HIV prevalence.[89] This attempt to reinvigorate a lapsed traditional practice is coherent with other such attempts by the Zulu king, including his support of retraditionalizing "virginity testing" for Zulu women as an additional prophylactic against the spread of HIV/AIDS.[90]

While the novel does not explicitly mock "male circumcision," like it does ARVs, condoms, and "traditional" medicine, early in the novel we are told of Khutso and his friends, Ngwan'Zo and Maoto: "They had gone to komeng together and komeng—as men—together."[91] *Komeng* is circumcision school. Being circumcised clearly did nothing to prevent Khutso and his friends from becoming HIV-positive, and in the case of the former, dying from AIDS.

The "book of the dead" opens and closes with two pages, each with a single line of cited text. The opening reads "And every bitch I ever loved, I wish an Aids-related death"—Goodenough Mashego; and closes with "Aids is no longer just a disease, it is a human rights issue"—Nelson Mandela. Mashego is an artist, blogger, editor, journalist, poet, publisher, and short story (script) writer based in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga. I suspect I don't need to tell you who Nelson Mandela was. I struggle with the tonalities of both these bracketing quotes that seem to wish to frame the text of the "book of the dead." The quotes appear to be parts of the text of the "book of the

dead" that were not written by HIV, but as parts of the "book of the dead," were they assembled by him? What might it mean to have to read Mandela's exhortatory piety as the satirical equivalent of Goodenough's murderous sexism? That is the order of question that Kgebetli Moele's novel as a whole asks us to ask as we think about the documentation of life, sex, and death in a time of pandemic.

In a series of paradoxes tending to contradictions, Moele's *The Book of the Dead* argues that books—reading or writing them—are powerless in the face of HIV/AIDS, even if they might be written by HIV himself. On the one hand, HIV as personified author of "The Book of the Dead" can be allegorized as the vicious or enabling ghost of someone like Eben Dönges, the literary embodiment of the desire to control life and death through sex in a recording practice that looks more like the fantasy of a biblical book of judgment than anything else. This ghost has none of the pedagogical or redemptive aspirations of the ghost of Gaetan Dugas in the John Greyson film discussed in chapter 1.

On the other hand, HIV appears as the ghastly apotheosis of neoliberal subjectivity: entirely self-actualizing and self-responsibilizing. HIV improvises a to-do list, and checks items off, even as by its own account, the record keeping, like that of the apartheid state before it, is shoddy and incomplete. While HIV can put on the faces of people, there is no conception of community or grasp of the common good. Collective action or shared projects are entirely subsumed by personal goals. HIV is the dystopian culmination of enlightened self-interest, a huckster, hustler, entrepreneur, master of his destiny, military commander, the sole writer of its book—Ayn Rand gone to South Africa in a time of pandemic—*the* symbol of life under internally led structural adjustment, the betrayal by Black elites in a time of democracy, and the haunting of the apartheid state's refusal to adequately count, document, and value Black life.

Coda

JABS IN THE DARK

Speculations on the Affective Politics of Pandemics

AS THE LITERARY AND CULTURAL ARCHIVE of the COVID-19 pandemic emerges, what, if anything, can be learned by thinking and imagining the COVID-19 and HIV/AIDS pandemics in tandem? While the HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 pandemics are both global phenomena in their causes, reach, and attempts to ameliorate them, I am parochial, so what follows is largely confined to the two national spaces I know best: South Africa and the United States. Although these two national spaces share bedrock as key spaces in the ongoing histories of settler-colonialism and racial capitalism, there are legion and salient differences between the two. That said, I like to remind people that when the new National Party government in South Africa in 1948 wished to implement the legal system that came to be known as apartheid, they sent a group of lawyers and state functionaries to North Carolina to study Jim Crow. These national histories diverge: South Africa, along with Algeria, is arguably the only country to see a political, albeit not an economic, reversal of settler-colonialism—something difficult to imagine in the context of the United States. In the context of South African and US experiences and imaginaries of these two pandemics, certain temporally disjunct convergences emerge.

At some point in 2020, COVID-19 became a lens/frame for thinking and seeing that felt all-encompassing even though, despite all the talk of the COVID-19 pandemic as the Great Equalizer (if only), or even the Great Revealer (closer), in terms of global structuring power cleavages, it was always going to be more like the Great Exacerbator, though not entirely.[1] The United States, as the world's richest and most powerful country, has endured a higher COVID fatality rate than many poorer and smaller nation-states.[2] This is true even as richer nations tend to hoard vaccines and vaccine equity has been an issue both within and between countries. But as I attempt to think the HIV/AIDS pandemic alongside the COVID one, I need to remember

that for many people, the experience of both pandemics is neither sequential nor comparative but simultaneous, and one of compounding vulnerability and precarity in the more general and terrifying medical euphemism of comorbidity.[3]

In the US, the comparisons of the arrival of COVID-19 with the early onset years of the HIV/AIDS pandemic were inevitable. The respective *New York Times* responses to the first 100,000 deaths from COVID-19 and HIV/AIDS respectively can be taken as emblematic of a deep incommensurateness in terms of urgency and the value placed on those who died. On May 24, 2020, on its front page, under the headline of "An Incalculable Loss," the *NYT* published the names of a thousand Americans who had died from coronavirus infection.[4] In stark contrast, the soi-disant newspaper of record had reported on January 25, 1991, that 100,000 Americans had died from AIDS, running an Associated Press story on page 18, below the fold, without pictures or the mention of a single name.[5]

On September 17, 2021, some 600,000 white flags were placed on the national mall in Washington, DC, to memorialize the US COVID dead.[6] On October 11, 1987, some 1,924 panels of the AIDS memorial quilt were unfolded on the national mall.[7] The AIDS quilt was placed on the mall by a group of volunteers. The COVID memorial was produced as a public art installation by Suzanne Brennan Firstenberg, funded by a wide range of business, philanthropic, and institutional sponsors. There may be something to learn about the pitfalls and potentials of the professionalization of US social movements in those differences, but the primary point is about disparities in scale, symbolism, and support.

While both memorial events took place on the national mall in the nation's capital, the differences in style and affect should be noted. The COVID flags suggest a more military remembrance. The quilt, in contrast, is both a more feminine and rustic form, each panel made by an individual quilter and telling an individual story in a mass assemblage. The white flags mark numbers, not names and life narratives. Paradoxically the absence of individual details may allow an easier assimilation into the fantasy of the national body than the mourning and memorial details of the quilt.

However, to risk the obvious, while many Americans received considerable, if insufficient, federal financial assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic, almost none was forthcoming during the height of the ongoing US HIV/AIDS pandemic. As Steven Thrasher argues: "The United States *could* have made sure everyone with HIV had medication freely and easily,

FIGURE 7. COVID Memorial on the National Mall, Washington, DC, 2021. Amaury Laporte, "COVID-19 Memorial Field of White Flags on the Mall 57—Washington Monument," Flickr, September 26, 2021. https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaporte/51735260440/. CC BY 2.0 DEED

FIGURE 8. The AIDS Quilt in front of the Washington Monument, Washington, DC. National Institutes of Health. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NAMES_Project_AIDS_Memorial_Quilt#/media/File:Aids_Quilt.jpg

as it did with the COVID-19 vaccine. Equally important, the United States *could* have given people living with HIV the housing and economic support they needed to keep that virus tamped down."[8] While I wish to avoid what Betita Martinez in 1983 termed the "oppression Olympics," and despite the truly heroic efforts of generations of AIDS activists, some American lives are clearly more valuable than others.

We did, however, see representational matters line up more congruently in the persistent and intransigent discourses of what cultural critics used to call "othering." The racism and Orientalism of then president Trump's Chinavirus and its populist joking variant of the Kungflu provided uneasy echoes of the racist, homophobic, and ableist characterization of HIV as the disease of the four H's: homosexuals, heroin addicts, hemophiliacs, and Haitians.[9] The imagined purity of the national body politic continues to insist that disease comes from outside and elsewhere or from the most despised elements within. There may be good public health reasons to close borders, but xenophobia always both precedes them and travels in their wake.

The top brass of the US wanted to ignore HIV/AIDS in the 1980s—Ronald Reagan notoriously managed to serve out seven of his eight years as president without mentioning the word AIDS publicly, even once.[10] That was not the case with Donald Trump and COVID-19. Trump produced a series of spectacularly incoherent pronouncements, sometimes with the intention of minimizing the risks of this new coronavirus, but also using the virus to stir the mix of xenophobia and economic protectionism central to the populist tenor of his presidency generally. Since the threat of COVID was perceived as universal and less containable to marginal populations, ignoring the disease was not an option for Trump as it was for Reagan. The cultural and symbolic differences between a disease whose mode of transmission is mostly airborne and one that is mostly sexually transmitted are at play here, particularly in terms of the moral logics of guilt and innocence. In relation to the two very different pandemics, and in terms of an ill-defined phenomenon named denialism, Trump began to look to me more like an earlier South African president, Thabo Mbeki, whom he could not resemble less stylistically or temperamentally. While he subsequently claimed to be joking, when Donald Trump suggested the injection of disinfectants as a possible treatment for the coronavirus—he did not actually say the word "Lysol"—I had an unpleasant flashback.[11]

Thabo Mbeki's health minister, Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, whom he supported to the hilt throughout her tenure, made the following incendiary

remarks at an HIV/AIDS conference in Durban on June 30, 2005: "Nutrition is the basis of good health and it can stop the progression from HIV to full-blown Aids, and eating garlic, olive oil, beetroot and the African potato boosts the immune system to ensure the body is able to defend itself against the virus and live with it."[12]

Instead of pushing "garlic, olive oil, beetroot and the African potato," Trump took to hailing the virtues of hydroxychloroquine and then the horse de-wormer Ivermectin: "I've received a lot of positive letters and it seems to have an impact. And maybe it does; maybe it doesn't. But if it doesn't, you're not going to get sick or die. This is a pill that's been used for a long time—for 30, 40 years on the malaria and on lupus too, and even on arthritis, I guess, from what I understand."[13] Hydroxychloroquine, unlike "garlic, olive oil, beetroot and the African potato," is, however, known to have direct serious adverse side-effects. And it is yet to be explained how an antibacterial like Ivermectin would work against a virus.

A refusal to trust or deploy scientific studies and imagine how science should drive public health policy appeared to be shared by the Trump and Mbeki regimes. Minister Tshabalala-Msimang articulated this plainly in 2006: "There is this notion that traditional medicine is some quack thing practised by primitive people. . . . [U]nfortunately 80 percent of our people don't care about 'scientifically proven.'"[14] From a range of responses to the pandemic from a variety of sectors of the American populace, it appears "scientifically proven" has as little currency in the United States today as it had in South Africa twenty or so years ago.

Trump's anti-science agenda was visible from the absence of scientists, bar Fauci, on the president's coronavirus taskforce. Trump relied initially on Alex Azar, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), who is a lawyer and former drug company boss; followed by Mike Pence, a career politician and evangelical Christian; and then Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law, whose expertise lies in real estate.[15] But let us remember here that science is useful on the terrain of politics, and vulnerable populations have and continue to be used for scientific experimentation and drug dumping.

Mbeki's denialism tragically used science's racist history to embark on a serious, but disastrously misplaced and contradictory critique of the racialization of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, both trying to find an African cure and revivifying the careers of some of the most visible white AIDS deniers such as German American molecular biologist Peter Duesberg.

Under the Zuma presidency, AIDS denialism in the realm of public policy disappeared, and to his undying credit, the largest national antiretroviral rollout in the world took hold. Superficial similarities notwithstanding, AIDS denialism in South Africa sprung from a very different political set of commitments to COVID denialism in the US, though the false choice between lives and livelihoods seems to drive COVID minimalizing in both spaces. Primarily, through its disruption of global supply chains, the COVID-19 pandemic poses a threat to global capitalism in a way that the HIV/AIDS pandemic did and does not. In key ways, the dominant register of the global response to HIV/AIDS remains humanitarian in contrast to the response to COVID-19, which has been more explicitly political.

To conclude with the most significant fact in terms of treatment. Within a year of the advent of this new coronavirus, there were a number of effective vaccines. After forty years, we are still waiting for one for HIV. Advances in medical science are only a small part of the story. Retroviruses may very well indeed be trickier than coronaviruses, but the bigger story is one of political will, pharmaceutical industry profit margins, international intellectual property law, and the ways the powerful differentially value human life. There is also much to be learned here about the affectively saturated nature of public health and life, but that is a topic for another time, and would require a descent into the interminable rabbit-hole of the vernacular hermeneutics of the proliferating "conspiracy theories" around these two pandemics.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

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4. Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 68–85.

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7. Aimé Césaire, *Lyric and Dramatic Poetry, 1946–1982* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), xlii.

8. Neville Hoad, "Public and Private Spheres," in *Burnt Orange Britannia*, ed. Wm. Roger Louis (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 799–811.

9. See Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's formative "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2, "Intimacy" (Winter 1998): 547–66.

10. Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (London: MacMillan, 2007), 147.

11. W. H. Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," in *Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 76–79; Muriel Rukeyser, *The Book of the Dead*

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12. https://www.hiv.gov/events/awareness-days/world-aids-day/.

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CHAPTER ONE

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37. Jonny Steinberg, *Sizwe's Test: A Young Man's Journey through Africa's AIDS Epidemic* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 1–2.

38. For the historical tracing of this relationship between access and stigma, see William R Wolfe, Sheri D. Weiser, et al., "The Impact of Universal Access to Antiretroviral Therapy on HIV Stigma in Botswana," *American Journal of Public Health* 98, no. 10 (2008): 1865–71. See Klaus Geiselhart, *The Geography of Stigma and Discrimination: HIV and AIDS-Related Identities in Botswana* (Germany: Verlag für Entwicklungspolitik, 2009), for a wider study of stigma and HIV/AIDS in Botswana during the time of the pageant. On the Botswana campaign against stigma, see Neil Renwick, "Global Society's Response to HIV/AIDS: Botswana's Experience," *Global Society* 21, no. 2 (2007): 133–53; Sheri D. Weiser, Michele Heisler, et al., "Routine HIV Testing in Botswana: A Population-Based Study on Attitudes, Practices, and Human Rights Concerns," *PLoS Medicine* 3, no. 7 (2006): e261. For the imagining of the pageant as a resource in the fight against other stigmas, see Karen Engle and Annelies Lottmann, "The Force of Shame," in *Rethinking Rape Law* (London: Routledge-Cavendish, 2010), 76–91.

39. Flo Radull-Gorobo, "A Peak into the Life of Miss HIV Stigma Free," *Mmegi* 222, no. 38 (March 10, 2005). Cynthia Leshomo is also one of the twenty-eight stories in Stephanie Nolen's revised and updated *28: Stories of AIDS in Africa* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2010), 135–47.

40. Hanon, *Miss HIV*. See also Nora Demattio, "'I'm Beautiful and HIV-Positive': 'Miss HIV Stigma Free'–Wettbewerbe und andere unkonventionelle Wege in Afrika das Schweigen zu brechen," GRIN Verlag, 2012; "A True Activist," *HIV Plus Magazine*, December 2003, 12; Crépin Djemna, Asunta Wagura, and Chouchou, "Living Positively Is Accepting Your HIV Status, Loving Yourself," *Sexuality in Africa Magazine* 3, no. 4 (2006): 7–9.

41. A comprehensive historical account of beauty pageants in their staggering diversity in Southern Africa has yet to be written. Graeme Reid points out the centrality of beauty pageants to small-town gay life in South Africa: "Nobuhle explained to me her rationale for planning to stage a beauty pageant, several months after Miss GAY 10 Years of Democracy 'in which gays and girls would compete against each other.'" Graeme Reid, *How to Be a Real Gay: Gay Identities in Small-Town South Africa* (Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013), 133.

Both Botswana and South Africa have seen innumerable church beauty pageants, suggesting the ideological diversity of the form and its importance to a variety of constituencies. See, for example, Nnasaretha Kgamanyane, "Double Crowning for Christian Queens," *The Monitor*, October 19, 2020, https://www.pressreader.com/botswana/the-monitor-4753/20201019/281758451772707.

42. Barnaby Phillips, "I'm Beautiful and HIV-Positive," *BBC News*, last updated March 3, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4311807.stm. See also Heidi Nass, "Women and HIV: A Global Inequality," *AIDS at the Crossroads: Perspectives on Research, Treatment, and Advocacy* 12, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 33–35, for an account of Leshomo as a figure of empowerment.

43. Rebecca L. Upton, "Fat Eggs or Fit Bodies," *Contexts* 15, no. 4 (2016): 24–29, provides a fascinating account of the impact of HIV and HIV treatment on norms of female embodiment in Botswana during the era of the pageant.

44. Ingeborg Kleppe and Marylouise Caldwell, "Walking the Talk, Talking the Walk: Embodied Health Activism in Developing Nations," in *ACR European Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 9, ed. Alan Bradshaw, Chris Hackley, and Pauline Maclaran, 310–15 (Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, 2011). See also Marylouise Caldwell and Ingeborg Kleppe, "Early Adopters in the Diffusion of an HIV/AIDS Public Health Innovation in a Developing Country," *ACR North American Advances* (2010), https://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/v37/acr_v37_15423.pdf.

45. For a take on this problem in relation to the COVID crisis, see "Africa Spends More on Debt Servicing than on Healthcare, Secretary-General Tells High-Level Policy Dialog, Urging Financing, Investment in Continent," *United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases*, May 24, 2023, https://press.un.org/en/2023/sgsm21809.doc.htm. Emma Camp, in "Thabo Mbeki's AIDS Denialism: Neoliberalism, Government and Civil Society in South Africa," *Leeds African Studies Bulletin* 77 (2015/16): 84–108, writes: "However, the most significant way that international organisations have impacted the ability of a state in responding to HIV/AIDS is through debt servicing, an obligation created by structural adjustment. . . . [D]ebt repayments were the 'poison pill of neoliberal institutional reforms' and it is evident that these repayments have undermined efforts to combat social issues, including HIV/AIDS." The relative success of ARV rollouts comes at some cost. See Mark S. Blecher et al., "HIV and AIDS Financing in South Africa: Sustainability and Fiscal Space," *South African Health Review* 2016, no. 1 (2016): 203–19. "The annual additional costs of ART expansion consume a significant portion of the available additional funds in the national health budget, which faces considerable limitations. The rising short-term costs of the HIV programme (ART being the largest contributor to HIV and AIDS spending, accounting for between 56% and 77% of total cost), together with ever-rising personnel costs resulting from the 2015 wage agreement, imply pressure on the rest of the health service with a likely continued focus on efficiency savings and more cost-efficient service platforms."

46. Glynis Clacherty and Ntsepo Kgalalelo, *I'm Positive: Botswana's Beauty Queen* (Oxford: Heinemann, 2004).

47. Daniel C. Brouwer, "Risibility Politics: Camp Humor in HIV/AIDS Zines," in *Public Modalities*, ed. Radha S. Hegde and Stephen P Depoe (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010).

48. Clacherty and Kgalalelo, *I'm Positive*.

49. See the "naming and shaming" statements on the website of international human rights organizations like Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org) and Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org).

50. The archive of these debates is overwhelmingly massive, but there is no doubt that *Miss HIV* is firmly on the side of homosexuality and gender diversity as decadent western imports. For a description and analysis of the long history of homosexuality as un-African, see Marc Epprecht, *Heterosexual Africa? The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008). Compelling arguments and evidence for western funding and prompting of "African homophobia" can be found in the extensive writings of Kapya Kaoma. See particularly "Colonizing African Values: How the U.S. Christian Right is Transforming Sexual Politics in Africa," Political Research Associates, July 24, 2012, https://politicalresearch.org/2012/07/24/colonizing-african-values.

For an argument that the imposition of the gender binary is central to colonizing epistemes and practices, see Maria Lugones, "The Coloniality of Gender," in *Globalization and the Decolonial Option* (London: Routledge, 2013), 369–90. For a more specifically African case study, see Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). For a current engagement with debates around the provenance of gender diversity and racial, national, and cultural authenticity, see Jenny Andrine Madsen Evang, "Is 'Gender Ideology' Western Colonialism? Anti-gender Rhetoric and the Misappropriation of Postcolonial Language," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (2022): 365–86, doi: https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-9836036.

I concur with the late Cameroonian activist Joel Gustave Nana's deployment of the African proverb "When elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers" as a response to these debates. Mark Canavera, "Not in Our Name: African Human Rights Activists Reject UK Aid Conditionally," *HuffPost*, last updated January 29, 2012, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/not-in-our-name-african-h_b_1119261.

51. Hanon, *Miss HIV*.

52. Clacherty and Kgalalelo, *I'm Positive*, 12.

53. Unity Dow, *Far and Beyon'* (Melbourne: Spinifex, 2001). See also Machiko Oike, "A New African Youth Novel in the Era of HIV/AIDS: An Analysis of Unity Dow's *Far & Beyon'*," in *ALT 27 New Novels in African Literature Today*, ed. Ernest N. Emenyonu, Nana Wilson-Tagoe, et al., NED-New ed. (Martlesham, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), 75–84.

54. Southern Poverty Law Center, "Family Watch International," accessed August 8, 2023, https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/family-watch-international.

55. "EthnoGraphic Media," LinkedIn, accessed August 10, 2023, https://www.linkedin.com/company/egm———EthnoGraphic-media.

56. Jolene Gross, "Sell Your Home in Record Time: Proven Strategies for a Quick and Lucrative Sale," *EGM Films*, July 31, 2023, https://www.egmfilms.org.

57. "EthnoGraphic Media," LinkedIn, accessed August 10, 2023, https://www.linkedin.com/company/egm———ethnographic-media.

58. Peter Montgomery, "Right-Wing Evangelicals in Uganda: Telling the Whole Story," Political Research Associates, accessed August 8, 2023, https://politicalresearch.org/2014/03/07/guest-post-right-wing-evangelicals-in-uganda-telling-the-whole-story. See also Kapya Kaoma, "Uganda's New Anti-Gay Law A Copy of U.S. Right-Backed Laws in Russia/Nigeria," *Political Research Associates* (2014), https://politicalresearch.org/2014/11/13/ugandas-new-anti-gay-law-copy-us-right-backed-laws-russianigeria.

59. UNAIDS, "Uganda Leads the Way for High HIV Burden Country Certification on the Path to Eliminate Vertical HIV Transmission," July 8, 2022, https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2022/july/20220727_botswana-leads-way-eliminate-vertical-HIV-transmission.

60. *Botswana Country Report* (Botswana: United Nations in Botswana, 2004); *The HIV/AIDS Challenge in Africa: Botswana* (Ethiopia: Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa, 2007).

CHAPTER TWO

Epigraphs: Ruth Benedict, epigraphed in Lily King, *Euphoria* (New York: Grove Press, 2014); Oscar Wilde, *"The Decay of Lying" and Other Essays* (London: Penguin, 2010), 26; Levin, *Aidsafari*, xiii.

1. Levin, *Aidsafari*.

2. See Jing-Bao Nie, Adam Gilbertson, Malcolm de Roubaix, Ciara Staunton, Anton van Niekerk, Joseph D. Tucker, and Stuart Rennie, "Healing without Waging War: Beyond Military Metaphors in Medicine and HIV Cure Research," *American Journal of Bioethics* 16, no. 10 (2016): 3–11, for an account of the "Africanizing" of HIV as journey rather than war.

3. Levin's memoir sees its value in terms of imagining speaking out as the counter to stigma in the claim that speaking out will remove stigma and lead to social and political change. That assumption is shared by many critics of both Cameron and Levin's memoirs. See Sabine Coelsch-Foisner, *The Human Body in Contemporary Literatures in English: Cultural and Political Implications* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), 24–27; Grünkemeier, *Breaking the Silence*. Levin in a 2007 interview expresses ambivalence about the kind of attention he received from *Aidsafari*: "I'd rather see myself as an author who happens to have AIDS, than someone who has AIDS and has written a book." Fred de Vries, *The Fred de Vries Interviews: From Abdullah to Zille* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008), 294–300.

4. Sam Okoth Opondo, *Diplomatic Para-Citations: Genre, Foreign Bodies, and the Ethics of Co-Habitation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), argues

that Levin's memoir "presents AIDS as both a world-constituting and self-constituting phenomenon . . . and one of the prime mediators of our world" (176).

5. Republic of Namibia, Abuse of Dependence-Producing Substances and Rehabilitation Centres Act 41 of 1971 (RSA), Annotated Statutes, accessed January 24, 2024, https://www.lac.org.na/laws/annoSTAT/Abuse%20of%20Dependence-Producing%20Substances%20and%20Rehabilitation%20Centres%20Act%2041%20of%201971.pdf. See also Thembisa Weatjen, "Weed in South Africa: Apartheid Waged a War on Drugs that Still Has Unequal Effects Today," *The Conversation*, February 5, 2023, https://theconversation.com/weed-in-south-africa-apartheid-waged-a-war-on-drugs-that-still-has-unequal-effects-today-198011. For the most scintillating and comprehensive study of gay men and "drugs," see Kane Race, *Pleasure Consuming Medicine: The Queer Politics of Drugs* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

6. Philippa Garson, *Undeniable: Memoir of a Covert War* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2020).

7. Lauren Beukes, "The Snake Charmer: Glenda Kemp," in *Maverick: Extraordinary Women from South Africa's Past* (Cape Town: Umuzi, 2015).

8. "A State of Emergency," *Commemorating the End of the Conscription Campaign: South African History Archive*, accessed September 19, 2023, https://www.saha.org.za/ecc25/ecc_under_a_state_of_emergency.htm.

9. Carl Andre Van der Merwe, *Moffie: A Novel* (New York: Europa Editions, 2006).

10. Paul Gilroy, "Rhythm in the Force of Forces: Music and Political Time," *Critical Times* 2, no. 3 (2019): 370–95.

11. José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 1.

12. Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 8.

13. Andie Miller, *Slow Motion: Stories about Walking* (Pretoria: Jacana Media, 2010), 98–107, at 99.

14. "State of Emergency—1985," *South African History Online*, accessed September 19, 2023, https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/state-emergency-1985.

15. Levin, *Aidsafari*, 94.

16. Belinda Bozolli, *Theaters of Struggle and the End of Apartheid* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

17. See Adam Levin, *The Wonder Safaris* (Cape Town: Random House Struik, 2003); Adam Levin, *The Art of African Shopping* (Cape Town: Random House Struik, 2005).

18. Kareem Khubchandani, "Cruising the Ephemeral Archives of Bangalore's Gay Nightlife," in *Queering Digital India: Activisms, Identities, Subjectivities*, ed. Rohit K. Dasgupta and Debanuj DasGupta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); Kane Race, *The Gay Science: Intimate Experiments with the Problem of HIV* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2017). For Debbie Gould on the emotional life of ACT UP, see *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

19. Andrew Chandler, "Celebration: In Remembrance of Adam Levin," *Mamba Online*, June 19, 2019, https://www.mambaonline.com/2019/06/19/celebration-in-remembrance-of-adam-levin/.

20. Douglas Crimp, "How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic," *October* 43 (Winter 1987): 237–71.

21. Levin, *Aidsafari*, x.

22. Treichler, "AIDS, Homophobia and Biomedical Discourse."

23. See, for example, Derek Jarman, *Modern Nature* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992); Monette, *Borrowed Time*; Arenas, *Before Night Falls*; Guibert, *To the Friend Who Did Not Save My Life*.

24. Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*.

25. Mpe, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. See Lizzy Attree, "Reading for Ruptures: HIV & AIDS, Sexuality & Silencing in Zoë Wicomb's 'In Search of Tommie,'" in *ALT 36: Queer Theory in Film & Fiction: African Literature Today*, ed. John C. Hawley, Ernest N. Emenyonu, et al. (London: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), 135–50, for an elaboration of the imagining of silence in HIV discourse in the early 2000s.

26. For a consideration of Levin and Cameron's memoirs side by side, see John C. Hawley, "Reconciling Citizenship, AIDS, and Gayness in Post-Apartheid South Africa" in *Trauma, Resistance, Reconstruction in Post-1994 South African Writing*, ed. Rajendra Chetty and Jaspal Kaur Singh (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), and Grünkemeier, *Breaking the Silence*.

27. Levin, *Aidsafari*, 8.

28. Ken Cage, *Gayle: The Language of Kinks and Queens—A History and Dictionary of Gay Language in South Africa* (Houghton: Jacana Media, 2003), 81.

29. Jean and John L. Comaroff, *Theory from South Africa: Or, How Euro-America Is Evolving toward Africa* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2015); note Levin's claim that "the world has Aids" and his further claim that "the entire planet is implicated in its spread, and caught up in its effects"; Levin, *Aidsafari*, 41.

30. Levin, *Aidsafari*, 17. On the shifting understandings of sex/sexuality in the post-apartheid moment, see Posel, "Sex, Death and the Fate of the Nation"; Andries Visagie, "Wit mans, swart vroue: Johan van Wyk se Man-Bitch (2001) en Kleinboer se Kontrei (2003) as seksuele outobiografieë," *Tydskrif vir Nederlands en Afrikaans* 12, no. 2 (2005): 225–53, https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/20325/Visagie_Wit%282005%29.pdf.

31. Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

32. Levin, *Aidsafari*, 154.

33. Adam Levin, "Rest in Pearls Sharon Bone," in *Cracks in the Pavement, Mamba Online*, March 23, 2011, https://www.mambaonline.com/2011/03/23/the-cracks-in-the-pavement/; Chandler, "Celebration: In Remembrance of Adam Levin."

34. Levin, "Rest in Pearls Sharon Bone."

35. I am not going to attempt a real translation/definition/theory of "joll" or "jollers" here beyond noting that while Levin unavoidably romanticizes it/them, this loosely affiliated group of scenesters or partygoers provides a sense of transcendence that Levin strongly invokes as a resource for his healing. The joll has been around for

a while and bubbles beneath the level of organized politics. It was already obliquely and brilliantly (and nastily) satirized by J. M. Coetzee in the figure of Colonel Joll in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (New York: Penguin, 1980).

36. Therapy continued, not as a brick-and-mortar location in Braamfontein but as a roving party—the "Therapy brand." This confirms how a place like Johannesburg was on the cutting edge of the neoliberalization of gay nightlife, and how the city in many ways became a city of events rather than venues: a fabulous party goes back to being an abandoned lighting warehouse the next day. Roberto Igual, "20 Years on Therapy Returns for a Love Injection," *Mamba Online*, October 19, 2016, https://www.mambaonline.com/2016/10/19/20-years-therapy-returns-love-injection/.

37. Michael Warner, ed., *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xxxi.

38. Grassroots Justice Network, "Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT)," accessed September 21, 2023, https://grassrootsjusticenetwork.org/connect/organization/sex-workers-education-and-advocacy-task-force-sweat/.

39. Levin, *Aidsafari*, 116.

40. Levin, *Aidsafari*, xi.

41. Moore, *Fabulous*, vii.

42. South African performer and cultural commentator at large Bongani Madondo is one of the few readers of the memoir to recognize the importance of personal style in Levin's representation of himself as an AIDS patient. See Bongani Madondo, *Hot Type: Icons, Artists, and God-Figurines* (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2007), 146–48.

43. South African literary critic Hedley Twidle notes: "At the time (the early years of the millennium), only two memoirs by HIV-positive people had been published in the country: *Aidsafari* (2005) by Adam Levin and *Witness to AIDS* (2005) by Constitutional Court judge Edwin Cameron, joint winners of the Alan Paton award in 2006. Yet, Steinberg remarks, as accounts by gay white men in the midst of a pandemic transmitted largely between black heterosexual men and women in South Africa, neither could be said to come from the heart of the crisis." Hedley Twidle, "Unknowable Communities: Necessary Fictions and Broken Contracts in the Heart of the Country," in *Experiments with Truth: Narrative Non-fiction and the Coming of Democracy in South Africa* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2019), 159–84.

44. Some have argued that Levin's racial, class, and sexual orientation identities mean that his memoir cannot be taken as representative of the South African HIV/AIDS pandemic, and Levin is careful not to speak for others. See Grünkemeier, *Breaking the Silence*, 13; Craig Demmer, "AIDS Memoirs from South Africa," *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 12, no. 3 (2007): 295–302.

45. Steinberg, *Sizwe's Test*, 111.

46. Levin, *Aidsafari*, 4.

47. Levin, *Aidsafari*, 209.

48. De Vries, *Fred de Vries Interviews*, 299.

49. Levin, *Aidsafari*, ix.

50. Steinberg, *Sizwe's Test*, 2.

51. Edwin Cameron, *Witness to AIDS* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 73.

52. Neville Hoad, "Sovereign Feeling: The South African Constitution, HIV/AIDS, and the Right to Sexual Orientation and Dignity," *UCLA Journal of International Law and Foreign Affairs* 18 (2013): 125.

53. Levin, *Aidsafari*, 12–13.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Darrell James Roodt is a leading South African filmmaker with a long history of collaboration with Anant Singh, arguably South Africa's leading film producer. Roodt came to prominence with the important anti-apartheid film *Place of Weeping* (1984)—the first anti-apartheid film shot solely in South Africa. On the funding of *Yesterday*, see Martin Botha, *South African Cinema 1896–2010* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2013), 184. Astrid Treffry-Goatley, "Digital Cinema: An Alternative Model for Post-apartheid Cinematic Production and Consumption?," *Ilha do Desterro: A Journal of English Language, Literatures in English and Cultural Studies* 61 (2011): 315–53, notes the rarity of IsiZulu-language films made in South Africa. For problems with the IsiZulu in the film and the English subtitling, see Keyan T. Tomaselli, *Encountering Modernity: Twentieth-Century South African Cinemas* (Rosenberg: Rosenberg, 2006), 49–51.

2. Loren Kruger, "Theatre, Crime, and the Edgy City in Post-Apartheid Johannesburg," *Theatre Journal* 53, no. 2 (2001): 223.

3. Felicity June Horne, "*Yesterday*, AIDS and Structural Violence in South Africa," *Communication* 31, no. 2 (2005): 172–97, disputes the notion that the film can be seen as representative of people living with HIV in South Africa in the early 2000s. For a critique of the film's representation of rural women's agency, see Norita Mdege, "'Your Husbands Are Bringing It to You': South African Rural Women and HIV in Darrell Roodt's *Yesterday* (2004)," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 22, no. 1 (2020): 96–110.

4. For an appraisal of *Yesterday* in relation to Roodt's oeuvre and his place within South African independent cinema, see David Murphy and Patrick Williams, *Postcolonial African Cinema: Ten Directors* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 205–38.

5. This chapter takes its inspiration from a range of discussions on the place of affect in the public and private life of the AIDS pandemic, particularly Douglas Crimp's "Mourning and Militancy" and its subsequent rewrite, Ann Cvetkovich's *An Archive of Feelings*, and more broadly Lauren Berlant's *Intimacy*. It struggles to set such predominantly US-based texts in dialogue with mostly anthropological and epidemiological discussions of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Southern Africa.

6. Rudi Bleys does the work of establishing the diversity of behaviors that may now be called homosexual, in *The Geography of Perversion: Male-to-Male Sexual Behavior Outside the West and the Ethnographic Imagination, 1750–1918* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

7. Increasingly, forms of sexual intimacy such as homosexuality are laying claim to the couple form as a route to legitimacy. The gay marriage debates in a range of national contexts contemporaneous with the film are a case in point. See, among others, George Chauncey, *Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today's Debate over Gay Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

8. Here is Raymond Williams's classic definition of a structure of feeling: "Characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity." *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 132.

9. For a consideration of the film in the context of the role of gendered violence in the lives of rural women most affected by the pandemic, see Danielle Tran, "Visible and Invisible Trauma: Locating AIDS within a Gendered Framework in Darrell James Roodt's *Yesterday*," *Safundi* 17, no. 4 (2016): 434–46.

10. Many critics of the film have noted the absence of political activism or community organizing in its representation of South Africa in the early 2000s. *Yesterday*, further, for example, does not participate in any of the emergent genres of memory books or boxes—mentioned in the introduction to this book. How might Beauty remember or mourn her parents remains an unanswered question. The literature on the memory book phenomenon across the continent is extensive; see Annet Burtetega, "The Memory Project in Uganda," *Bulletin of Medicus Mundi Switzerland*, no. 97 (2005): 1–5; Victoria Engstrand-Neacsu, "Memory Books Help Orphans Remember Parents," Deutsche Presse-Agentur, November 28, 2004, 1–2; UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Africa: Memory Boxes to Help Say Goodby," http://irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=37492 (page no longer available).

11. Es'kia Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959). For a situating of *Yesterday* within the cinematic history of urban migration, see Jordache A. Ellapen, "Geographies of the Black African Masculine in *Tsotsi* and *The Wooden Camera*," *Black Camera* 9, no. 2 (2018): 235–55. For the film's repetition of prior cinematic representations of Johannesburg as a cruel and corrupting place, see Alexandra Parker, *Urban Film and Everyday Practice: Bridging Divisions in Johannesburg* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 54. See also Jacqueline Maingard, *South African National Cinema* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2012), 162, on the stakes of the rural location of the film. Rebecca Hodes, "'Diseased Dystopias'?: HIV/AIDS and the South African City in *Yesterday* and *Tsotsi*," *Postamble* 4, no. 2 (2008): 1–16, notes a similarly negative portrayal of the city in *Yesterday*. For a more a sympathetic reading of *Yesterday*'s cinematic agency, see Martin P. Botha, "The Cinema of Darrell James Roodt," *Kinema: A Journal for Film and Audiovisual Media* (2013), https://openjournals.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/kinema/article/view/1295.

12. Monica Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936); Eileen Jensen Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, 2nd ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter, 1965).

13. Alan Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country* (New York: Scribners, 1995), 33–34.

14. Sydney Pollack, dir., *Out of Africa* (1984; Los Angeles: Mirage Enterprises, 1985), DVD. For a more cinematic, formal appreciation of *Yesterday*, see Sawadogo Boukary, "Cinematography: Space, Time, and Rhythm," in *African Film Studies* (London: Routledge, 2022), 53–58. Pier Paolo Frassinelli, in "Intersecting Temporalities, Cultural (Un)Translatability and African Film Aesthetics: Ntshavheni Wa Luruli's *Elelwani*," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 29, no. 3 (2017): 331–44, calls *Yesterday* neorealist.

15. For a virtuosic reading of the opening of *Yesterday* in an environmental frame focusing on the lack of basic infrastructure in the South African countryside, particularly access to water, see Nghana Lewis, "An Issue of Environmental Justice: Understanding the Relationship among HIV/AIDS Infection in Women, Water Distribution, and Global Investment in Rural Sub-Saharan Africa," *Black Women, Gender + Families* 3, no. 1 (2009): 39–64. Not all viewers respond to the opening landscapes of the film critically. Alessandra Stanley in the *New York Times* review writes prose that would make Isak Dinesen cringe: "The vast African sky fills the screen, ending in the sculptured mountainscape of a remote horizon across the veld. The numinous beauty of that timeless empty Eden marred by only one thing: a string of sharp-toothed barbed wire that constricts the people within." Alessandra Stanley, "Brave Spirit under the Unsheltering Sky," *New York Times*, November 28, 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/28/arts/television/brave-spirit-under-the-unsheltering-sky.html.

16. Thomas Blom Hansen, "Sounds of Freedom: Music, Taxis and Racial Imagination in Urban South Africa," *Public Culture* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 186.

17. Robert Sember, "Is Yesterday History?," HIVAN—Center for HIV/AIDS Networking, http://www.hiv911.org.za/edit_essays/October%202004.asp (page no longer available). See also Keely Macarow, "Transmission Routes: The Global AIDS Epidemic in South Africa and France," *Global South* 2, no. 2 (2008): 92–111, doi: https://doi.org/10.2979/gso.2008.2.2.92. Shaun de Waal and Matthew Krouse in their review of the film cite Sember's and other observers' critiques of the realist failings of the film in its moment of release in 2004; "Big Hit or Big Miss," *Mail and Guardian*, January 28, 2005, https://mg.co.za/article/2005-01-28-big-hit-or-miss/.

18. Cara Moyer-Duncan summarizes critiques of the film's realist failures in *Directory of World Cinema: Africa (Vol. 39)*, ed. Shelia Petty and Blandine Stefanson (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2014), 173–74.

19. Jonathan Crush, Vincent Williams, and Sally Peberdy, *Migration in Southern Africa*, paper prepared for the Policy Analysis and Research Programme of the Global Commission on International Migration, September 2005, https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/2018-07/RS7.pdf.

20. Mandisa Mbali and Mark Hunter, "Yesterday's Stereotypes Are a Thing of the Past," *Sunday Tribune*, October 17, 2004, 24.

21. Sarah Brophy notes that this "strategy of universal identification is complicit in denialism"; see "Troubled Heroism: Public Health Pedagogies in South African Films about HIV/AIDS," *Scrutiny2: Issues in English Studies in Southern Africa* 13, no. 1 (2008): 33–46, at 33.

22. For a strong critique of the gendered representation in the film, see A. Yolisa Kenqu, "Fraught Starts, Fragmented Twists, and Forged Endings: (Re)Imagining and (Re)Imaging Black Womanhood in *Zulu Love Letter* and *Yesterday*," *Black Camera* 9, no. 2 (2018): 277–94; Gilbert Motsaathebe, "South African Cinema and Its Depiction of Race, Gender, and Class: Portrayals of Black Women in Post-Apartheid South African Films," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 45, no. 3 (2018): 381–95. For a Black feminist reading of the film, see Thatayaone Gilbert Motsaathebe, "Presence as Absence: A Black Feminist Analysis of the Depiction of Black Women in Three Post-Apartheid South African Films (2004–2008)" (PhD diss., University of the Witwatersrand, Faculty of Humanities, 2013), 144–50.

23. James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 167.

24. Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity*, 167.

25. Roodt, *Yesterday*.

26. Chris Barron, "The Filmmaker Whose Internationally Acclaimed Film *Yesterday* Was Nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the Oscars but Just Missed Out," *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), March 6, 2005.

27. Janice Rhoshalle Littlejohn, "Anti-Apartheid Film Duo Confront South Africa's AIDS Pandemic," *Tulsa World*, November 26, 2005, https://tulsaworld.com/archive/anti-apartheid-film-duo-confront-south-africas-aids-pandemic/article_081d7983-6cd8-52ab-8a0b-fa3708f803dc.html.

28. John Samuel, CEO of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, stated: "What we are aiming to do is get this on the back of trucks and go from village to village to show the movie, and in the evening have discussions with the community about what we can do," https://web.archive.org/web/20050421041436/http://www.yesterdaythemovie.co.za/frameset.asp?pageName=press_release (accessed June 11, 2024). For a mention of the showing of the film in schools in Zanzibar, see Martin Mhando, "The Zanzibar International Film Festival and Its Children Panorama: Using Films to Socialize Human Rights into the Educational Sector and a Wider Public Sphere," in *African Cinema and Human Rights*, ed. Mette Hjort and Eva Jørholt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 125–42. See also Astrid Treffry-Goatley, "Narratives of Illness in South African Cinema: What Can Popular Culture Teach Us about HIV," in *Popular Culture as Pedagogy: Research in the Field of Adult Education*, ed. Kaela Jubas Nancy Taber and Tony Brown (Rotterdam: Sense, 2015), 103–18. For using the film to educate eleventh-grade learners about gendered violence, see Nokukhanya Ngcobo, "The Use of Film as an Intervention in Addressing Gender Violence: Experiences in a South African Secondary School," *Agenda* 29, no. 3 (2015): 32–41, and "*Yesterday* as a Study for Tomorrow: On the Use of Film Texts in Addressing Gender and HIV and AIDS with Secondary School Youth in KwaZulu-Natal," *Educational Research for Social Change* 1, no. 2 (2012): 71–83. For more on the pedagogical uses of the film, see Gary Marquardt, "Answering the 'So What' Question: Making African History

Relevant in the Provincial College Classroom," in *Teaching Africa: A Guide for the 21st-Century Classroom*, ed. Brandon D. Lundy and Solomon Negash (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 53–60; DaKysha Moore, Elijah O. Onsomu, and Benta A. Abuya, "Entertainment-Education for Starting HIV/AIDS Discussions and Reducing Stigma: African American College Students' Reactions to the Film 'Yesterday,'" *Journal of Best Practices in Health Professions Diversity* 4, no. 1 (2011): 563–73; Tony Brown, "Using Film in Teaching and Learning about Changing Societies," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 30, no. 2 (2011): 233–47.

29. Michael S. Barrett, *Foreign Language Films and the Oscar: The Nominees and Winners, 1948–2017* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2018), 167–68.

30. For a discussion of the national and international reception and box-office returns of the film, see Cara Moyer-Duncan, *Projecting Nation: South African Cinemas after 1994* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2020), 49–52. Ebrahim Haseenah, in "Traversing the Cinemascape of Contemporary South Africa: A Peripatetic Journey," *Black Camera* 9, no. 2 (2018): 197–215, resists the perception of the film as "screaming" South African identity.

31. Brian Bergen-Aurand, "Of Redemption: The Good of Film Experience," in *Ethics and the Arts*, ed. Paul Macneill (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2014), 70, argues for sympathetic extension as the value of using film in medicine in the case of *Yesterday*.

32. Stanley, "Brave Spirit under the Unsheltering Sky."

33. Mark Hunter, "Masculinities, Multiple-Sexual-Partners, and AIDS: The Making and Unmaking of Isoka in KwaZulu-Natal," *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* 54 (2004): 124. These arguments are expanded upon in Hunter, *Love in the Time of AIDS*.

34. Hunter, "Masculinities, Multiple-Sexual-Partners, and AIDS," 1–3.

35. Hunter, "Masculinities, Multiple-Sexual-Partners, and AIDS," 123–53.

36. Just because this is too painfully delicious, from a web-based magazine called *Travel Lady*:

> Southern Africa's Favorable Exchange Rates Combined With World Class Expertise in Cosmetic and Opthalmic Surgery Make Physical Enhancements More Pleasant Than Ever.
>
> Orient-Express Hotels' Africa Collection, in conjunction with Surgeon & Safari, has introduced a personalized rejuvenation program, including either surgical or non-surgical procedures, with recuperation packages at the company's Westcliff Hotel in Johannesburg and Mount Nelson in Cape Town.
>
> Established to provide a personalized program of cosmetic surgery in complete privacy, Surgeon & Safari combines recuperation packages featuring pampering health and beauty treatments with opulent surroundings. Guests have the option of embarking on an exciting safari following their treatment as well at Orient-Express' Gametrackers camps in Botswana.
>
> (https://web.archive.org/web/20060207034416/http://www.travellady.com/articles/article-surgery.html, accessed June 11, 2024)

37. Martin Botha, *Marginal Lives and Painful Pasts: South African Cinema after Apartheid* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2007), 328, usefully contrasts the sangoma with the IsiZulu-speaking white doctor in the film.

38. Bheki Kha Mncube, "Film Review: *Yesterday* (2004)," *Passages*, no. 2, June 2005, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/passages/4761530.0010.006/—film-review-hi1-rendiyesterdayhi1-2004?rgn=main;view=fulltext.

39. Steven Robins, "Khululeka—From Social Movement to Men's Support Group," *Participatory Governance?: Citizens and the State in South Africa* (2007): 9–24, discusses the implications of this silence.

40. Claire Keeton, "'Yesterday' to Take South Africa by Storm," *Sunday Times*, n.d., accessed June 11, 2024, https://web.archive.org/web/20050421041436/http://www.yesterdaythemovie.co.za/frameset.asp?pageName=press_release.

41. Katarina Jungar and Elina Oinas, "Beyond Agency and Victimisation: Re-reading HIV and AIDS in African Contexts," *Social Dynamics* 37, no. 2 (2011): 248–62, uses *Yesterday* to offer a particularly nuanced account of the difficulties of raced and gendered agency in South African AIDS activism.

42. While Lindiwe Dovey only glancingly references *Yesterday* in an article primarily concerned with the adaptation of Athol Fugard's 1980 novel *Tsotsi* by Gavin Hood's 2004 film of the same name, she provides a more generalized critique of representations of "patriarchal violence" that resonates with this scene in *Yesterday*. Lindiwe Dovey, "Redeeming Features: From 'Tsotsi' (1980) to 'Tsotsi' (2006)," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 19, no. 2 (2007): 143–64.

43. Mbali and Hunter, "*Yesterday*'s Stereotypes," 24.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984). For key works in the transformation of public sphere theory through the claim of the centrality of feeling in public life, see in reverse chronological order: Zizi Papacharissi, *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Gould, *Moving Politics*; Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); and Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (London: Routledge, 2004), in addition to the Berlant, Crimp, and Cvetkovich cited below.

2. Berlant, *Intimacy*; Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012) and *An Archive of Feelings*; Lorde, "Poetry Is Not a Luxury"; Crimp, "Mourning and Militancy"; Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism*.

3. Rhetorics and rubrics of "public feelings" can additionally be found in a variety of scholarly inquiries and political projects including environmental humanities,

US history, queer studies, studies of racialization, and their intersections. It is too soon to attempt a genealogy of "public feelings" as an object and method of study, but the thinking in this book is deeply influenced by my participation in a network of scholars who organized under that rubric. I think particularly of events coordinated by Feel Tank, Chicago, particularly their "Depression: It Might Be Political" project, as well as the "Public Feelings" salons convened by Ann Cvetkovich and Katy Stewart in Austin in the first decade of this century. See Lauren Berlant, "Feel Tank," *Counterpoints* 367 (2012): 340–43, http://www.jstor.org/stable/42981415. For public feelings work in the environmental humanities, see Joshua Trey Barnett, "Ecological Grief: A Rhetorical Achievement," in *Mourning in the Anthropocene: Ecological Grief and Earthly Coexistence* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2022), 1–32; Nicole Seymour, "The Queerness of Environmental Affect," in *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*, ed. Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 235–56; Heather Houser, *Infowhelm: Environmental Art and Literature in an Age of Data* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020). It is plausible to claim that important studies on the public feelings of racialization were inaugurated by José Esteban Muñoz, "Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Affect, the Performativity of Race, and the Depressive Position," *Signs* 31, no. 3 (2006): 675–88, and David Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). See also Lisa M. Corrigan, *Black Feelings: Race and Affect in the Long Sixties* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2020); Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* (New York: Random House, 2020; Michael Epp, "Durable Public Feelings," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 41, no. 2 (2011): 179–97. For a sustained investigation of the role of feeling, particularly sentimentality, in US public and private life, see Lauren Berlant's national sentimentality trilogy: *The Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); and *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); as well as *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011). The literature on queer studies engagement on the terrain of public feelings and/or the difficulties of political emotions is vast. In addition to the Berlant, Crimp, Cvetkovich, and Muñoz sources mentioned above, see Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); and the immensely generative work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick on queer affect, particularly *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

4. The scholarship on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission is enormous, both for and against. Paul Gready, *The Era of Transitional Justice: The Aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2011), provides an excellent historical overview of the debates around the achievements and efficacy of the TRC. More specifically, for the TRC's

impact on South African literary production, see David Atwell and Barbara Harlow, "Introduction: South African Fiction after Apartheid," *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* 46, no. 1 (2000): 1–9, doi: https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2000.0006. Shane Graham, *South African Literature After the Truth Commission: Mapping Loss* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), remains a particularly comprehensive account of the impact of the TRC on South African literature. Sanders, *Ambiguities of Witnessing*, interrogates the limits and possibilities of witnessing in human rights praxis.

5. Lizzy Attree, *Blood on the Page: Interviews with African Authors Writing about HIV/AIDS* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 21–32.

6. For the most germane deployment of an idea of public feelings in the relevant South African context for this chapter, see Helene Strauss, "Managing Public Feeling," in *Wayward Feeling: Audio-Visual Culture and Aesthetic Activism in Post-Rainbow South Africa* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022): 84–111; Duane Jethro, "Transgressive Touch: Ruination, Public Feeling, and the Sunday Times Heritage Project," in *Public Art in South Africa: Bronze Warriors and Plastic Presidents*, ed. Kim Miller and Brenda Schahmann (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 166–90.

7. Hunter, "Materiality of Everyday Sex," 99–120; Hunter, *Love in a Time of AIDS*; Campbell, *"Letting Them Die"*; Fassin, *When Bodies Remember*.

8. Temba John Dawson Middelmann shows how the public feelings of democratic transition play out in civic spaces in "Public Memory and Transformation and Constitution Hill and Gandhi Square in Johannesburg," in *Falling Monuments, Reluctant Ruins: The Persistence of the Past in the Architecture of Apartheid*, ed. by Hilton Judin (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2021), 40–61.

9. Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats."

10. Erica Kelly, "Strangely Tender: An Interview with Ingrid de Kok," *Scrutiny2* 8, no. 1 (2003): 34–38.

11. See, for example, Mark Morrisson, "Performance Poetry and Counter-Public Spheres: Geoff Goodfellow and Working-Class Voices," *Labour History*, no. 79 (2000): 71–91, doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/27516730.

12. See Kylie Thomas, Meg Samuelson, and Nobantu Rasebotsa, eds., *Nobody Ever Said AIDS: Poems and Stories from South Africa* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2004), for a collection of South African poems that tackle HIV/AIDS.

13. For an analysis of Mpe's poetry in terms of its social critique, see Carsten Albers, "Between Sadness, Sarcasm, and Subversion: Linguistic Strategies of Social Representation and Criticism in Post-Apartheid South African Poems by Phaswane Mpe," in *Pragmatic Perspectives on Postcolonial Discourse: Linguistics and Literature*, ed. Christoph Schubert and Laurenz Volkmann (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2016).

14. Callen and Berkowitz, "How to Have Sex in an Epidemic"; Crimp, "How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic."

15. Phaswane Mpe, *Brooding Clouds*, ed. E. Bregin (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008): 149. For a reading of this poetry collection in relation to Mpe's novel, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, see Annika McPherson, "Tracing

the Rural in the Urban: Re-Reading Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* through *Brooding Clouds*," in *Reinventing the Post-Colonial (in the) Metropolis*, ed. Annika Bauer and Cecile Sandten (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 57–71; Elena Bregin, ed., "Editor's Preface," in *Brooding Clouds* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2018), xi–xiv.

16. Xoliswa Nduneni-Ngema, *Heart of a Strong Woman: A Memoir* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2020).

17. Hoad, *African Intimacies*.

18. Albers, "Between Sadness, Sarcasm, and Subversions," 203, 216.

19. Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, "loveLife: South Africa's National HIV Prevention Program for Youth," accessed June 28, 2024, www.kff.org/about/lovelife.cfm.

20. loveLife, "loveLife," accessed June 28, 2024, www.lovelife.org.za.

21. Patrick Bond, *Looting Africa: The Economics of Exploitation* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2006).

22. Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Cambridge: Zone Books, 2002).

23. AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), *ACT UP: International Action Reports*, http://www.actupny.org/reports/tac4–03.html (page no longer available).

24. Meg McLagan, "Human Rights, Testimony, and Transnational Publicity," *S&F Online* 2, no. 1 (2003), accessed June 11, 2024, https://sfonline.barnard.edu/ps/printmmc.htm.

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26. Levin, *Aidsafari*, 226; Attree, *Blood on the Page*, 26.

27. William Blake, *The Complete Poems*, ed. W. H. Stevenson and D. V. Erdman (London: Longman, 1971), 59. South African writer and literary scholar Michael Green has written movingly and brilliantly on the language politics in the split narrative voice in Mpe's first and only novel, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001), in "Translating the Nation: From Plaatje to Mpe," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34, no. 2 (2008): 325–42.

28. José Esteban Muñoz's "Theorizing of a Brown Commons," in *The Sense of Brow* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

29. See Campbell, *"Letting Them Die."*

30. Mbe, *Brooding Clouds*, 147–48.

31. Melissa Zeiger, *Beyond Consolation: Death, Sexuality, and the Changing Shapes of Elegy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

32. Gerald Shaw, "Obituary: Peter Mokaba," *The Guardian* (London), July 12, 2002, http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2002/jul/12/guardianobituaries.aids.

33. Fassin, *When Bodies Remember*; Gevisser, *A Legacy of Liberation*; Hoad, *African Intimacies*.

34. Adam Smith, "Obituary: Parks Mankahlana," *The Independent* (London), October 28, 2000, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4158/is_20001028/ai_n14359331/.

35. Wooten, *We Are All the Same*.

36. Comaroff, "Beyond Bare Life."

37. Cited in Lindsay Graham, et al., "American Generosity Has Saved 25 Million Lives and Counting: Let's Reauthorize PEPFAR Now," *The Hill*, April 28, 2023, https://www.boozman.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2023/4/the-hill-american-generosity-has-saved-25-million-lives-and-counting-let-s-reauthorize-pepfar-now.

38. Mpe, *Brooding Clouds*, 19, 39.

39. Ingrid de Kok, *Terrestrial Things* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2002), 59.

40. UNAIDS, *UNAIDS Country Reports: South Africa*, accessed June 16, 2024, https://data.unaids.org/publications/fact-sheets01/southafrica_en.pdf.

41. Eduardo Galeano, *The Book of Embraces*, trans. C. Belfrage with M. Schafer (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991).

42. Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*.

43. Chris Ellis, "HIV in Africa Demands Complex Cultural Responses," *BMJ* 346 (2013), https://www.bmj.com/content/346/bmj.f2517.full.pdf+html.

44. For a reading of the poem in relation to de Kok's poem, "In My Mother's Household," see Denise Gray, "The Challenge of the Lyrical Voice in 'Unlyrical' Times: A Study of Ingrid de Kok's Poetry" (master's thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2010).

45. For a discussion of Ingrid de Kok's poetry in the gendered representation of HIV/AIDs in South African letters, see Felicity Horne, "Angels of Mercy or Sullied Whores: Towards an Alternative Vision of Women and AIDS in South Africa," *Scrutiny2* 17, no. 1 (2012): 12–27; and for de Kok's poetry in the context of South African AIDS poetry more generally, see Felicity Horne, "What Does AIDS Mean? Dominant Metaphorical Models in a Selection of Southern African AIDS-Related Poetry," *Scrutiny2: Issues in English Studies in Southern Africa* 14, no. 1 (2009): 31–48. See also Lizzy Attree, "Women Writing AIDS in South Africa and Zimbabwe," in *Rites of Passage in Postcolonial Women's Writing*, ed. Gina Wisker and Pauline Dodgson-Katiyo (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 65–93.

46. Chielozona Eze, "Narrating Ubuntu: The Weight of History and the Power of Care," in *Race, Decolonization, and Global Citizenship in South Africa*, NED-New edition (Martlesham, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), 158.

47. Sarah Brophy and Susan Spearey, "'Compassionate Leave?': HIV/AIDS and Collective Responsibility in Ingrid de Kok's *Terrestrial Things*," *Literature and Medicine* 26, no. 2 (2007): 324.

48. Eve Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; Or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction Is about You," in *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 1–37.

1. Christian Höller and Achille Mbembe, "Africa in Motion: An interview with the Post-colonialism Theoretician Achille Mbembe," *Mute*, March 17, 2007, accessed June 22, 2022.

2. The idea and implementation of "best practices" are part of the massive ensemble of discourses around modernity and development and may mark the neoliberal phase of these much longer ideological forces. For a glimpse into those wider debates and histories, see W. W. Rostow's arguably inaugural "The Stages of Economic Growth," *Economic History Review* 12, no. 1 (1959): 1–16, doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/2591077. See also James Ferguson, *The Anti-politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), for a powerful counter to the modernization and development paradigms more generally in another South African context, and obviously the work of underdevelopment theorists: Walter Rodney, Andre Gunder Frank, and Samir Amin.

3. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 48.

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5. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Righting Wrongs," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2 (2004): 523–81, muse.jhu.edu/article/169150.

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7. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, "Committed Grants: International AIDS Day (IAS)," accessed September 22, 2023, https://www.gatesfoundation.org/about/committed-grants/2020/07/inv004364.

8. "The Samaritans: Synopsis," *Xenium*, accessed September 22, 2023, http://www.aidforaid.org.

9. See Melinda Gates, *The Moment of Lift: How Empowering Women Changes the World* (New York: Flatiron Books, 2019); Julia Crawford, "Does Bill Gates Have Too Much Influence in the WHO?" *Swissinfo*, May 10, 2021, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/does-bill-gates-have-too-much-influence-in-the-who-/46570526; Trevor Neilson, "The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Announces New HIV/AIDS Grants at World AIDS Conference," Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, accessed September 24, 2023, https://www.gatesfoundation.org/ideas/media-center/press-releases/2000/07/a-comprehensive-approach-to-the-hivaids-pandemic.

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13. Rose Wangui Koma, "Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Fiction" (MA diss., University of Nairobi, 2005), http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/6279/Komu_Treatment%20of%20HIVAIDS%20in%20fiction.pdf.

14. Taiye Selasi, "Bye-Bye Barbar," *LIP Magazine*, March 3, 2005, https://thelip.robertsharp.co.uk/2005/03/03/bye-bye-barbar/.

15. Adalla, *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, 2.

16. "The History of Email: Major Milestones from 50 Years," Email on Acid, January 28, 2021, https://www.emailonacid.com/blog/article/email-marketing/history-of-email/.

17. "Why Postal Corporation of Kenya Should Be Privatized," *Nation*, last updated June 28, 2020, https://nation.africa/kenya/blogs-opinion/blogs/dot9/why-postal-corporation-of-kenya-should-be-privatised-900048.

18. Steve Nguru, "Constitution of Kenya Explained," Constitutions of Kenya, last updated April 6, 2014, http://ustawi.info.ke/index.php/24-devolution/county-of-muranga/41-county-of-murang-a-detailed.

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37. In an historical irony, fifteen years or so after the publication of the novel, male circumcision was heralded as a prophylactic. See chapter 6. Adalla, *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, 78.

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40. Karin Chubb and Lutz Van Dijk, *Between Anger and Hope: South Africa's Youth and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2000).

41. See the front pages of Van Dijk, *Stronger Than the Storm*. The website of HOKISA provides a more detailed description: https://hokisa.co.za/about/. As the Ingrid de Kok poem "The Head of the Household" discussed in chapter 4 indicates, child-headed households in the countryside and homeless children in the cities were a feature of South African life long before the ravages of HIV/AIDS. "Our Aims," *Hokisa: Homes For Kids in South Africa*, accessed September 27, 2023.

42. Van Dijk, *Stronger Than the Storm*, front matter.

43. Van Dijk, *Stronger Than the Storm*, front matter.

44. Writing on the Grootboom case, Justice Albie Sachs notes the limits of even the highest court in the land to honor the provisions around housing and the economic and socials rights enshrined in the South African Constitution more generally: "How to provide a principled analysis and remedy that would be consonant with our limited institutional capacity, and yet be capable of meaningful enforcement." Albie Sachs, *The Strange Alchemy of Life and Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 177.

45. Van Dijk, *Stronger Than the Storm*, 2.

46. Clint Eastwood, dir., *Invictus* (2009; Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers, 2009), DVD.

47. Lutz Van Dijk, *Themba: A Boy Called Hope* (London; Aurora Metro Press, 2012).

48. Van Dijk, *Stronger Than the Storm*, 3.

49. See the controversy around McGregor, *Khabzela*.

50. Van Dijk, *Stronger Than the Storm*, 62.

51. The literature on the TAC's organization and strategies in terms of social mobilization on legal, political, and medical fronts is vast. For something of an overview, see Nadia Oshry, "Is the Treatment Action Campaign Effective? A Literature Review," University of Cape Town, 2008, https://open.uct.ac.za/handle/11427/19631; Jonathan Klaaren, "A Remedial Interpretation of the Treatment Action Campaign Decision: Notes and Comments," *South African Journal on Human Rights* 19, no. 3 (2003): 455–68. Zackie Achmat, a founder and key leader of the TAC, provides an insider's account of the political strategies of the organization: "The Treatment Action Campaign, HIV/AIDS and the Government," *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* 54, no. 1 (2004): 76–84, as does Mark Heywood in "South Africa's Treatment Action Campaign: Combining Law and Social Mobilization to Realize the Right to Health," *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 1, no. 1 (March 2009): 14–36. Nathan Geffen, *Debunking Delusions: The Inside Story of the Treatment Action Campaign* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2010), offers the most lucid book-length discussion of the TAC. See also Mandisa Mbali, "The Treatment Action Campaign and the History of Rights-Based, Patient-Driven HIV/AIDS Activism in South Africa," in *Democratising Development*, ed. Peris Jones and Kristian Stokke (Amsterdam: Brill Nijhoff, 2005), 213–43. Wiebe Nauta, "Mobilising Brazil as 'Significant Other' in the Fight for HIV/AIDS Treatment in South Africa: The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and Its Global Allies," in *African Engagements*, ed. Ton Dietz, Kjell Havnevik, Mayke Kaag, and Terje Oestigaard (Amsterdam: Brill, 2011), 133–62, considers the global impact and reach of the TAC.

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55. Van Dijk, *Stronger Than the Storm*, 45.

56. Van Dijk, *Stronger Than the Storm*, 91–92.

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Logic of Dispute in an African Context (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), on the customary as "the undifferentiated repertoire of the normative" (78); Hylton White, "Custom, Normatively and Authority in South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41, no. 5 (October 2015): 1005–17.

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CHAPTER SIX

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8. Steinberg, *Sizwe's Test*.

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55. Fredric Jameson contends: "All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call national allegories, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel." Along with many others, I would dispute the *all* in Jameson's claim. This particular novel invites national allegorical readings. See Jameson, "Third-World Literature," 65–88.

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