THE CHANGING FACE OF RHODES UNIVERSITY

exploring aspects of visuality, sexuality and protest between the apartheid and post-apartheid periods

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to provide an historical overview of changing trends within specific spheres of the institutional and student culture of Rhodes University between the apartheid and post-apartheid periods. In particular, this thesis seeks to examine changes and developments within the visual and aesthetic culture of the university, and within the sphere of sexual norms and relations within the Rhodes student community. The historical dimensions of these two spheres of the university's culture will be explored in light of the #RhodesMustFall protest of 2015 and the #RUReferenceList protest of 2016, which drew attention to a perceived lack of institutional transformation related to these two areas.

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INTRODUCTION:

Art, Sex and Protest: some introductory reflections on a tumultuous time for Rhodes University

It is customary, in works of academic writing, to maintain a certain sense of distance between author and subject matter. The scholar is expected to present him- or herself as an impartial observer, one with no personal stake in or opinion on the matter at hand, thereby fostering an illusion of complete neutrality. This is not without purpose. Keeping up a mask of detachment is one means of trying to strip away the author's own personal biases and value judgments from the work in question, in an effort to ensure that the finished piece of writing hems as close to the truth of the matter as is humanly possible, though all acknowledge, of course, that total objectivity is not achievable and that any piece of writing is always to some degree or another going to be influenced by and reflective of its author, no matter how valiantly the author attempts to excise himself from the work. This level of objectivity and neutrality becomes especially difficult to maintain when the author is him or herself close to or, as is the case here, embedded within the subject matter on which they are attempting to write. For myself – and here I step out, briefly, from behind the façade of academic third-person neutrality – writing academically about Rhodes University, an institution that I have been a part of for the last seven years of my life and the place in the world that is the closest thing I feel I have to a "home", has proved to be surprisingly challenging. With this in mind I would like, in this introductory chapter, to drop the pretence of objectivity briefly and speak more directly about my experiences, process and goals in the writing of this thesis.

When I began working on this thesis in 2014, my remit was fairly broad: I could write on anything that I wanted to, provided it related to the history of Rhodes University or tertiary education in the Eastern Cape more broadly. For some time, I struggled to find a suitable thesis topic. I knew, vaguely, that I wanted to examine the ways in which the culture of the university had shifted and changed over time; I was interested in questions of institutional identity and how that identity had been challenged and re-formulated in the wake of the seismic shift in national identity that had been the transition from apartheid to the 'New South Africa'. My attention was particularly drawn to what I perceived as a tension that existed within the university,

between the idea or perception of Rhodes as a transformed, multiracial institution committed to carving out a space for itself within a post-apartheid society, and residual echoes of Rhodes as a predominantly white, colonial and fundamentally exclusionary institution which continued, in subtle ways, to reproduce and perpetuate problems of what could be deemed "normative whiteness" within its framework.

I had, at the back of my mind, a story that a friend had told me shortly before I came to Rhodes in 2010 to commence my undergraduate studies. My friend had also intended to apply to Rhodes following the completion of her Matric, but before she was allowed to do so by her family – who held extremely racist views – her father had phoned the university and reportedly demanded to know how many black students were studying at Rhodes. When being informed as to the number of black as opposed to white students, the man was supposedly shocked, exclaiming "but I thought it was a white university?". My friend's family refused to allow her to study at Rhodes, because they did not want her mixing with so many students of colour.

As I pondered this anecdote a question began to form: why was it that, almost twenty years after the demise of the apartheid regime and the advent of multiracial democracy in South Africa, Rhodes could still be perceived as a "white university" by some? What was it about the image that Rhodes projected or the culture of the university that made it so that this man had been shocked to discover that Rhodes' student populace comprised a black majority, as is the case with every other university in the country? As I began to delve into readings around institutional culture and critical material concerning the history, institutional identity and potential futures of Rhodes University, I discovered that I was (unsurprisingly) not the only person thinking along these lines. In a 2011 paper entitled 'Am I just a white-washed black woman? What transformation means to a privileged young black woman', Nomalanga Mkhize of the Rhodes History department notes that, attempts at transformation and decolonization notwithstanding, "there is no doubt that Rhodes is a 'white' university in terms of its discursive construction and orientation... Rhodes 'feels' white: a place where the notion of a privileged white status quo is the invisible, naturalised norm".[1] In a similar vein, a politics masters student, Safiyya

[1] Mkhize, N., 'Am I just a white-washed black woman? What transformation means to a privileged young black woman'. *Agenda,* 65, 2005, 120.

Goga produced a thesis in 2009, 'The Silencing of Race at Rhodes: ritual and anti-politics on a post-apartheid campus'. In this thesis Goga makes the argument that the image of transformation, tolerance and liberalism that Rhodes has sought to promulgate in the post-apartheid period is only achieved through the selective "silencing" of certain problematic facets of the institution's history and culture.[2] These critiques, alongside others such as the papers presented at the 2004 Critical Colloquium held as part of the university's centenary commemorations, are indicative of a strong (albeit relatively recently established) tradition within the university of "continuing critical engagement with issues surrounding the ethos, practice and functioning of Rhodes University... [that is] vital to the institution's well-being".[3] It was within this pre-existing tradition of critical self-reflection that I wished for my own work to fall, and to this end my initial research proposal centred around an investigation into the perpetuation of what I had interpreted as a culture of "normative whiteness" at Rhodes University that had continued beyond the colonial and apartheid eras and into the present day, seeking to understand the historical dimensions behind the prevailing consensus that Rhodes remained, despite changes in student and staff demographics and significant steps taken to transform the culture of the institution, in some fundamental ways a "white" university.

In what would prove to be simultaneously a blessing and a curse from the point of view of my research, it was around this time that Rhodes University began to enter into one of the most tumultuous and politically charged periods in its recent history. The years 2015 and 2016 bore witness to a wave of protests on Rhodes campus – the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall protests in 2015, and the #RUReferenceList and #FeesMustFall (again) protests in 2016. Though this spate of protests must be understood as iterations of a broader, national sense of frustration, dissatisfaction and anger on the part of students at South Africa's universities, the protests of 2015 and 2016 occurring at Rhodes University also took on a particular localized character and were in response to specific issues and problems particular to Rhodes itself. These events acted as a kind of catalyst for deeper and more difficult conversations around the nature of Rhodes as an institution, its institutional culture and the space

[2]Goga, S., 'The silencing of race at Rhodes: ritual and anti-politics on a post-apartheid campus'. Unpublished MA thesis, Rhodes University, 2009.
[3] Maylam, P., 'Rhodes University: Colonialism, Segregation and Apartheid, 1904-1970'. *African Sociological Review* 9, 1, 2005, 14.

it had attempted to forge for itself in the challenging landscape of higher education in the new South Africa, to emerge. It had swiftly become clear, given the events of 2015 and 2016, that large segments of the student population bore numerous deep-rooted grievances against the institution and that some of these grievances cut right to the heart of Rhodes' sense of institutional identity.

Inevitably, as a scholar doing work on the history of Rhodes University, I took a significant interest in the protests going on around over the course of the last two years – indeed, at several points I became an active participant in the protests. It began to occur to me that the events taking place around me as I attempted work on my thesis could, quite naturally, be easily incorporated into the thesis itself; I was interested, after all, in tracing changes and developments in the institutional culture of Rhodes between the apartheid and post-apartheid periods, and here were a sequence of protests all concerned, either directly or indirectly, with challenging and questioning the prevailing institutional culture. The nature of my work therefore shifted, becoming an attempt to examine, from an historian's point of view, from whence these protests had arisen – to provide some context with regard to the historical dimensions of the events of 2015 and 2016 so that I could better understand their causes and trajectories, and in the process hopefully produce work which would help others to understand, as well. In this way, as mentioned before, the sudden and unexpected upsurge in student political activity at Rhodes proved to be both a blessing and a curse; a blessing because it provided much-needed inspiration, direction and relevance to my work, and a curse because in an attempt to sketch out such a "history of the now" I was obliged to constantly alter and re-work my ideas and concepts as around me the situation on campus shifted rapidly from week to week, day to day and hour to hour.

Paying attention to the faultlines in the "Rhodes façade" exposed by different protest movements over the last two years also provided a useful avenue through which to approach what has proven to be a surprisingly opaque and difficult-to-pin-down subject, that is, the question of the "institutional culture" of Rhodes University. "Institutional culture" has become something of a buzzword in certain academic circles but its precise meaning is difficult to define with any measure of exactitude, and the term seems to have come to mean many different things to many different

people.[4] In the Equity Policy document released in 2004 Rhodes defines institutional culture as the '"Way things are done" within an organisation, specifically the traditions, customs, values, and shared understandings that underpin the decisions taken, the practices engaged in and those practices that are rewarded and supported'.[5] This same document also recognizes that

> To ensure the effective implementation of the policy, change in the culture, values and practices of the University are necessary. Such change recognises that certain inequities do exist within the University as a result of Apartheid practices and that these have contributed to a culture that is experienced by some staff and students as alienating[6]

and also emphasises "the need to realise the institution's vision in our everyday activities".[7]

This attempt to codify the nature of institutional culture at Rhodes and to define and delineate the challenges faced by the institution's attempts at transforming this institutional culture was criticized by Goga as indicative of a narrow and one-dimensional approach to a complex social problem, an oversimplification which in effect externalized the source of inequities and tensions that beset the university (as simply "a result of apartheid practices") and trivialized those who felt marginalized within it's institutionalised environment ("a culture that is experienced by *some* students and staff as alienating").[8] Though Goga's tone is strident and she is highly critical, to the point of cynicism, of the efforts made on the part of the university to transform its institutional culture, I find myself inclined to agree with her. While the "problem-solution" approach taken by the university in attempting to enact policies of equity and transformation in the institution has had several major successes, a quick perusal of the Office for Equity and Institutional Culture's six-year review on transformation initiatives, published in 2011, reveals that by and large the focus of transformation efforts at Rhodes has been on shifting student and staff demographics and extending financial aid to students from disadvantaged

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[4] Vincent, L., 'Tell us a new story: a narrative take on institutional culture', 2011. Available at: https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/Institutional%20Culture%20-%20Louise%20Vincent%2023June2011.pdf. Accessed March 2016.
[5] Rhodes University Equity Policy, 2004, 4. Rhodes University: Grahamstown. Available at: www.ru.ac.za/administrative/hr/Policies_and_Forms/Training&Development/Equity_Policy.doc. Accessed March 2015.
[6] *Ibid*, 5.
[7] *Ibid*.
[8] Goga, 'The silencing of race at Rhodes', 14.

backgrounds.[9] Efforts such as these, with a more concrete, material focus and measurable outcome, are critical to attempts at transformation, and it is easy to see why the university has focused its attention on them (they are, in a sense, a lot more "attackable" than other, less directly addressable problems), but they do not the tell the whole story. The *culture* of the university extends far beyond simple demographic makeup and is something that is influenced not only (or even primarily) by the university authorities but by all members of the broader Rhodes community. This is not to say that there have not been commendable attempts on the part of the university to enact changes in more nuanced facets of the institution's culture – indeed, an examination of those efforts shall form the bulk of much of this thesis – but rather that such efforts often go unnoticed or do not receive the recognition or support that they deserve.

The student protests of 2015 and 2016, when understood in this light, were attempts on the part of the student body (or parts thereof, at least) to actively challenge and attempt to influence the student culture of the organization in various ways and in various spheres. While the #FeesMustFall protests can be said to have addressed more material concerns (the high cost of tertiary education in South Africa), the #RhodesMustFall and #RUReferenceList protests can both be understood as expressions of dissatisfaction and frustration with aspects of Rhodes' institutional culture. In the case of #RhodesMustFall, the protests coalesced around what some students perceived as a lack of transformation in terms of the fundamental identity of the university: the perpetuation of normative whiteness within the elite space of the university, the entrenched racism of the university's institutional culture, the Eurocentric nature of university curricula, and the university's ongoing problematic association with and valorisation of colonial history and ideologies as exemplified in the institution's name. In the case of the #RUReferenceList protests, student anger and activism was directed against what many students experienced as an undercurrent of misogyny, against a rape culture perceived to be prevalent within the student culture of the university which adversely impacted upon the lives of female students. While both of these protest events were very different, in their causes, execution and participants, they were similar in the sense that both addressed and

[9] Hashatse, T., 'Rhodes University 2006-2011: Review of transformation-related strategies, plans and initiatives'. Rhodes University, 2013, 54-55.

attacked various aspects of the university's institutional culture, and drew attention to a perceived lack of adequate transformation.

With this in mind, I decided to use the various protests as a starting point from which to explore different aspects of what could be called the "cultural history" of Rhodes University. To examine different spheres of the university's institutional culture with a critical eye, and from a historian's perspective trace the ways in which the culture of the institution has altered and changed over the years, particularly in relation to the dramatic shift between the apartheid and post-apartheid periods. The choice to focus my analysis on two broader facets of the culture of Rhodes – aesthetics/visual culture and sexuality – has been informed by the experiences of 2015 and 2016. Thus the #RhodesMustFall protests inspired a deeper investigation into representation and the ways in which visual representational forms – art, architecture, décor, heritage objects and the like – relate to the maintenance and perception of an institutional identity.

The #RUReferenceList protests, on the other hand, brought to mind questions of the role played by sex and sexuality within the framework of the institutional culture and identity of the university, not only just in terms of rape and sexual assault but in relation to the way sexual concerns in general have been understood and articulated within the Rhodes community – in brief, how Rhodes relates to sex and how sex relates to Rhodes. These two areas of interest – art and sex – may seem to have only tangential connections between them, but both are vital facets of human culture, and therefore of the culture of the institution. Given the events of the preceding two years, it seems appropriate at this point to examine both aspects of the university's complex culture in more depth and detail, given the way in which the protests of 2015 and 2016 have indicated that these are areas of the university's culture currently undergoing a state of rapid and accelerating change and turmoil.

The focus on visuality and sexuality as aspects of the institutional culture of Rhodes University is also intended as a means by which to approach the notion of transformation from a different angle. While much academic and popular discourse around transformation is centred on certain key issues – most notably the various challenges and debates relating to race and questions of access – transformation as both an ideological imperative and as an actual historical process has had far wider-ranging implications for South Africa. The transition between the apartheid and

post-apartheid periods did not only alter relations between racial groups, but affected changes across a wide variety of spheres of South African life, everything from gender relations to broadcasting corporations, tertiary education to the art world, and everything in between. These thesis will thus attempt to dissect, in microcosm, the manner in which this period of intense social and political change has altered things in less obvious, less written and talked about areas of post-apartheid culture and endeavour.

The decision to approach this thesis as a work of cultural history was inspired in part by the observations of Bill Readings who in 'The University without Culture?' makes the argument that the nature of the university in the capitalist Western world – its purpose, its perception, and its place in society – has undergone a fundamental shift in recent decades. The university during the zenith of European nationalism in the 19th century was conceived of as an institution whose social mission was "the production of a national subject", that is to say, to create an educational environment conducive to moulding individuals who would embody and further the best aspects of particular national identities.[10] Within this interpretation of the social function of university education questions of culture were of paramount importance, with the *production* of culture framed as one of the primary purposes of the university itself. This vision of the university, Readings argued, no longer holds much sway in relation to how such institutions are conceived of in the contemporary world; the decline of nationalism as an ideological driving force and the different demands made on education by the rise of global capitalism in the late twentieth century resulted in the emergence of a different perspective on the role and purpose of universities, one in which education began to be seen as yet another commodity among others, aimed at inculcating skills and preparing their alumni for positions within the global economic apparatus. Such market-oriented, pragmatist models of education left little room for the romantic notion of the university as a space which can "make the nation and its ideals available to the people; and... simultaneously provide the people who can carry and embody these ideals".[11]

For post-apartheid South Africa – a country faced within the unenviable task of engaging in nation-building in an era where "the nation" as a concept seems to be

[10] Readings, 'The University without Culture?', *New Literary History* 26, 3, 1995, 466.
[11] Docherty, T., *For the University: Democracy and the Future of the Institution*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2001), 22.

rapidly becoming a thing of the past – this notion of the social mission of the university is perhaps not quite as outdated as Readings asserts it has become in Europe and North America. Indeed, much of the discourse around the role and purpose of higher education in South Africa that emerged in the wake of the 1994 transition centred on ways and means by which the higher education sector could further the broader national project of transformation; the Higher Education White Paper states that part of the vision of higher education in South Africa is to "support a democratic ethos and culture of human rights" and to "create an enabling institutional environment and culture that is sensitive to and affirms diversity", among other concerns.[12] This ideal of the university as a space in which national ideals can be disseminated and realized, though it exists in tension with other, more recent conceptualisations of higher education as a commercialised and commodified phenomenon, continues to fuel much of the discussion and debate around the role of universities in post-apartheid South Africa. The idea that the university in some fundamental way ought to be a space in which the nation articulates itself to itself has come once more to the forefront, it seems, in the wake of the student protests of 2015 and 2016, events which brought the role of the university under close scrutiny once again. Viewed through this lens, the particular cultures that arise within the seemingly hermetic bubbles of the nation's universities become not only interesting but also *important* subjects of study; they both reflect and have the capacity to influence trends and patterns within the broader national culture. For this reason, an examination of changes and developments within the micro-context of particular aspects of university culture has implications for the culture of the country on a grander scale. To this end this thesis will attempt to demonstrate some of the ways in which Rhodes University's internal institutional culture has changed in order to reflect the changing cultural landscape of South Africa, as a means of ascertaining in what ways and to what extent the ideologies of the new South Africa and "Rainbow Nationism" have left their mark on the institution.

Because this thesis is intended to be a work of history, and not, say, political theory, sociology or anthropology, the focus will be on attempting to map out the historical dimensions of these twin facets of Rhodes' institutional culture, to show how things *were then* and contrast them with how things *are now*, and to attempt to

[12] Department of Education, *Education White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education* (Notice 1196 of1997), 7.

demonstrate the path from one to the other. Because this thesis is focused on demonstrating changes in attitudes and cultural praxis between the apartheid and post-apartheid periods, the primary focus is on the decades immediately preceding and following the watershed moment of 1994. However, because historical trends in actuality rarely follow such a neat chronology, it became necessary in the writing of certain sections to delve further back into the past – sometimes as far back as the 19th century – in order to explain and contextualize certain things. The aim here is to demonstrate the ways in which in these particular facets Rhodes' culture has changed (or remained the same) between apartheid and the present day, to provide deeper historical context to the events of 2015 and 2016 and to observe, in particular, the way in which the immense political, social and cultural watershed of 1994 and the ideological imperatives of transformation have impacted upon the institutional culture (in a broad sense) of Rhodes University. The two spheres of Rhodes' culture to be explored – visuality and sexuality – are both essential components in the complex interplay of human culture, and both deliver fascinating insight into the manner in which cultures shift and change according to the whims and necessities of historical circumstance. It is by a careful examination of these changes, the ideologies driving them, the contexts preceding them and the consequences following them, that I hope to provide a slightly deeper and richer picture of the cultural history of Rhodes as a community and as an institution.

CHAPTER 1:

"Our campuses are not apartheid museums": Thinking university transformation and colonial aesthetics through the lens of #RhodesMustFall.

Beginning in March 2015, South Africa's universities found themselves gripped by a wave of student protests, originating at the University of Cape Town and swiftly spreading to other universities around the country, including the University of the Witwatersrand, Stellenbosch University, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and Rhodes University. Though they subscribed to no single overarching ideology, and differed wildly in their aims, tactics, discursive positions and degrees of influence, at their core each of the various student movements that sprung up on campuses throughout the country in the early months of 2015 were united by a set of common grievances centring around questions of transformation, or the perceived lack thereof, within the context of university education in post-apartheid South Africa. A cacophony of voices, amplified and accelerated by the viral nature of information and opinion in the post-social media era, sought to take South Africa's formerly white universities to task for failing to live up to the promises of transformation. Issues such as institutionalized racism, Eurocentric curricula, and the predominance of white academics within the upper echelons of the South African university system were subject to fierce critique, and characterized as indicative of the ways in which higher education in South Africa had failed to throw off the legacies of colonialism and apartheid. These accusations were not new; historically white universities in South Africa had long faced criticism for managing by and large to avoid questions of guilt and culpability regarding their role in supporting, failing to challenge, and actively benefiting from the unjust racialized power structures of apartheid, with some even declaring that the universities ought to have been made subject to inquiry by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.[13]

[13] Makgoba, W., cited in Southall, R., and Cobbing, J., 'From racial liberalism to corporate authoritarianism: The Shell affair and the assault on academic freedom in South Africa'. *Social Dynamics: A journal of African studies* 27, 2, 2001, 7.

Of particular interest in relation to this thesis is the way in which visual symbols of South Africa's colonial past came to play a central role in the genesis of the student movements of 2015. On 9 March, students at the University of Cape Town staged a protest in front of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes below the steps leading to Jameson Hall, demanding that the statue be removed.[14] One of the students involved in the protest, Chumani Maxwele, threw a bucket of human excrement over the statue of Rhodes, an act that provoked a furore amongst students and staff at UCT and garnered both national and international media attention.[15] Over the next month, the statue of Rhodes on UCT campus became a rallying-point for student activists campaigning for transformation at the university, with the student movement coalescing around the hashtag #RhodesMustFall. For politically active students at UCT the statue of Cecil John Rhodes had become a metonym for all of the problems they perceived to be present in their institution, and within the South African academy as a whole: the absence of meaningful transformation in higher education, the perpetuation of normative whiteness within the elite space of the university, the entrenched racism of the university's institutional culture, the Eurocentric nature of university curricula, and the university's ongoing problematic association with and valorisation of colonial history and ideologies, evident in both statues such as that of Rhodes and in the names of various buildings on campus.

Though the #RhodesMustFall movement sought to address issues far beyond the "superficial" question of the Rhodes statue, the call for the statue's removal remained a core priority of the movement, and the Rhodes statue, as well as other statues and monuments on UCT campus, became a constant target for politically motivated interventions and vandalism over the course of March 2015. Images shared by the #RhodesMustFall movement on their Twitter feed and Facebook page depict the Rhodes statue covered in black plastic bags and duct tape, with the slogan "RHODES MUST FALL" written on a large cardboard sign attached to Rhodes' chest.[16] Other pieces of statuary, including, controversially, the University of Cape Town war

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[14] Kamanzi, B., ' "Rhodes Must Fall"- Decolonisation Symbolism- What is happening at UCT, South Africa?'. *The Postcolonist*, 29/03/2015. Available at: http://postcolonialist.com/civil-discourse/rhodes-must-fall-decolonisation-symbolism-happening-uct-south-africa/. Accessed March 2015.

[15] *Ibid*.

[16] UCT: Rhodes Must Fall, post made to Facebook (UCT: Rhodes Must Fall group) 19 March 2015. Available at: https://scontent-lht6-1.xx.fbcdn.net/v/t1.0-9/11082561_1556852124590280_1598453935381430563_n.jpg?oh=192d502f539c71ea256d3f92015a6c49&oe=58DB31C2. Accessed March 2015.

memorial, were subject to graffiti and poster-bombing.[17] In a similar vein, some of the students involved in #RhodesMustFall staged a performance art protest entitled *Saartjie Baartman*, in which they donned blackface and chains and walked through the campus to the statue of Saara Baartman on display in the University library.[18] After a month of such protests, and following heated debate during a two-hour University assembly on March 25, 2015, UCT decided to remove the statue of Cecil John Rhodes from the foot of the Jameson Steps.[19]

It should be noted that this was not the first time that the statue of Rhodes on the UCT campus has been the target of politically motivated vandalism. On 24 September 2008 - Heritage Day - the statue was defaced by a person or persons unknown, who spraypainted the phrase "Fuck Your Dream of Empire" on the statue's base. This incident is significant, as it demonstrates that as sudden and unexpected as the protests of 2015 may have appeared to the general public, they were in reality yet another expression of a sentiment that has long been seething beneath the surface. The uneasy co-existence of colonial symbols and imagery alongside 'new South African' rhetoric that emphasized the miracle of 'peaceful revolution', 'rainbow-nationism' and transformation, coupled with the awareness amongst young South Africans that the troubling legacies of colonialism continue to impact upon the mentalities and lived experiences of South Africans in post-liberation South Africa, form part of a narrative of dissatisfaction with the current status quo. The resort to vandalism and graffiti directed against colonial symbols is an example of the ways in which the visual and the aesthetic becomes enfolded within this narrative; the same imperialist symbols with which colonial South Africa sought to visibly and materially solidify their hold over the representation of the country have in turn become sites of resistance, the targets of a justified anger.

As student protests at UCT gained momentum, similar acts of vandalism and iconoclasm, seemingly inspired by Maxwele's defacement of the Rhodes statue, began to take place throughout South Africa. Many such "statue attacks" were

[17] UCT: Rhodes Must Fall, post made to Facebook (UCT: Rhodes Must Fall group) 18 March 2015. Available at: https://scontent-lht6-1.xx.fbcdn.net/v/t31.0-8/11046188_1556449614630531_8649319861958743924_o.jpg?oh=23bdc06b028b4f68481da2ba2b4d8a12&oe=591BDA7F. Accessed March 2015.
[18] UCT: Rhodes Must Fall, post made to Facebook (UCT: Rhodes Must Fall group), 25 March 2015. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/RhodesMustFall/videos/1559324747676351/. Accessed March 2015.
[19] Ramoupi, N., 'Lessons from the Rhodes statue's fall'. *Mail & Guardian (Education Supplement)*, April 17 2015.

perpetrated by affiliates of the radical political party, the Economic Freedom Fighters: acts of statue vandalism accredited to the EFF included the dismantling of the Horse Memorial outside of Port Elizabeth, the "necklacing" of the war memorial in Uitenhague's Market Square, and the dousing of green paint over the statue of Afrikaner leader Paul Kruger in Church Square in Pretoria.[20] This last incident provoked a furious response from Pretoria's Afrikaner community. Following the vandalism of the Paul Kruger statue, members of Afriforum, an organisation dedicated to preserving and promoting white Afrikaner rights and heritage, mounted a guard in front of the memorial to deter any further vandalism, and Afrikaner folk singer Sunette Bridges chained herself to the statue in protest against calls for its removal.[21] At the University of Kwazulu-Natal, the statue of King George V on the university's Howard College campus was splattered with white paint and adorned with a sign reading "End White Privilege", prompting the University to convene a special committee to "review the status quo" of statues and monuments on campus.[22] Curiously, even such a seemingly uncontroversial figure as Mahatma Gandhi became the target of iconoclastic ire; a statue of Gandhi in the Johannesburg CBD was smeared with white paint.[23] The prevailing zeitgeist that gripped South Africa during these "statue wars" was perhaps best encapsulated by the South African political cartoonist Zapiro, who in a cartoon depicted Rhodes' statue toppling backwards and knocking over statues of Paul Kruger, Queen Victoria and Jan van Riebeeck like a row of dominoes.[24]

Thanks to the rapid dissemination of images and information around South Africa's "statue wars" through social media and the internet, movements like

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[20] De Swart, D., 'Horse Memorial vandalised'. *The Herald*, April 8 2015; Spies, D., 'War Memorial in Uitenhague 'necklaced''. *News24*, April 2 2015. Available at: http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/War-memorial-statue-in-Uitenhage-set-alight-20150402. Accessed April 2015; Anonymous, "Pretoria Paul Kruger statue defaced', *The Citizen*, April 6 2015. Available at: http://citizen.co.za/357352/pretoria-paul-kruger-statue-defaced/. Accessed April 2015.

[21] Wakefield, A., 'AfriForum: Action needed on Paul Kruger Statue'. *News24*, April 6 2015. Available at: http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/AfriForum-Action-needed-on-Paul-Kruger-statue-20150406. Accessed April 2015; Thamm, M., 'Afrikaner singer chains herself to vandalised South African statue'. *The Guardian*, April 10 2015. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/10/afrikaner-singer-chains-herself-to-vandalised-south-african-statue. Accessed April 2015.

[22] Mlambo, S., and Nxumalo, M., 'UKZN Statue row rages on'. *IOL News*, March 27 2015. Available at: http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/kwazulu-natal/ukzn-statue-row-rages-on-1.1838072#.VX_6dvmqqko. Accessed March 2015.

[23] Bendile, D., and Kekana, M., 'Gandhi statue vandalised' *Eyewitness News* April 12 2015. Available at: http://ewn.co.za/2015/04/12/Ghandi-statue-vandalised. Accessed April 2015.

[24] Zapiro, cartoon published in *Mail and Guardian*, April 15 2015.

#RhodesMustFall gained international attention and support, with small student groups around the world staging solidarity protests and marches, including one such protest in front of Rhodes House in Oxford.[25] Interestingly, in the wake of the statue controversies in South Africa a handful of similar interventions, perhaps inspired by the events on UCT campus, took place in the United States of America. At Chapman University in California, for instance, busts of famous but controversial figures on the campus, such as Milton Friedman, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, were strewn with hazard tape and plastered with posters accusing the memorialized figures of crimes such as "racism", "homophobia" and "neo-liberalist ideology".[26] Months later, in a manner reminiscent of the statue vandalism in South Africa, activists in Charleston, South Carolina spraypainted the phrase "Black Lives Matter" over the base of a statue commemorating Confederate soldiers, presumably in reaction to the killing of nine African American churchgoers by white supremacist gunman Dylann Roof on June 17, 2015.[27] The link between acts of civil disobedience directed against symbols of white supremacy in America in the wake of the Charleston shooting and earlier acts of symbolic vandalism directed against colonial icons in South Africa was explicitly stated by American activist Bree Newsome, who was arrested on June 27 2016 for removing the Confederate flag from the South Carolina state capitol building's flagpole. In a statement published shortly after her arrest, Newsome claimed that her actions were "in solidarity with the South African students who toppled a statue of the white supremacist colonialist, Cecil Rhodes".[28]

At Rhodes University, a group of students adopting the moniker the Black Student Movement [29] emerged as a political presence on Rhodes University campus, expressing solidarity with the students at UCT and agitating for institutional transformation at Rhodes. Whereas their counterparts at UCT had used the statue of Cecil John Rhodes as a focal point for protest and discussion, the Black Student

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[25] "Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford". Facebook page. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Rhodes-Must-Fall-In-Oxford/1599672910303410?sk=info&tab=page_info. Accessed March 2015.
[26] Cabot, P., 'Reagan, Thatcher busts defaced at Chapman University'. *Campus Reform*, April 9 2015. Available at: http://www.campusreform.org/?ID=6433. Accessed April 2015.
[27] Hensley, N., 'Bronze statue honoring Confederate soldiers defaced at Charleston, S.C., park'. *New York Daily News*, June 21, 2015. Available at: http://www.nydailynews.com/news/crime/statue-honoring-confederacy-defaced-charleston-park-article-1.2266043. Accessed June 2015.
[28] Newsome, B., 'Now is the time for true courage'. *Blue Nation Review*, June 29 2015. Available at: http://bluenationreview.com/exclusive-bree-newsome-speaks-for-the-first-time-after-courageous-act-of-civil-disobedience/. Accessed June 2015.
[29] Inspired in part by a similar organization, the Black Students' Movement, which had been active on Rhodes University campus in the 1980s.

Movement's campaign centred on a much more sensitive issue: the university's name. The name Rhodes University, it was argued, was indicative of a valorisation of colonial culture that ought to be unacceptable within a supposedly transformed institution, and was seen as emblematic of the University's perpetuation of normative whiteness and an elitist climate of exclusion within Rhodes' institutional culture.[30] As was the case with the #RhodesMustFall movement at UCT, the Black Student Movement at Rhodes made extensive use of visual media, both physical and digital, to promote their agenda. One of the first such campaigns, orchestrated by student and BSM activist, Lihle Ncgobozi, made use of the hashtag #RhodesSoWhite to draw attention to problematic aspects of Rhodes' campus culture: posters were put up around campus bearing phrases and observations such as "#RhodesSoWhite you puke all over the bathroom floor in Res because you know 'Mama' or 'Sisi' will clean it up" or "RhodesSoWhite you can pronounce 'Gert' but not 'Radebe'".[31] These posters, as well as debates on social media platforms such as the Rhodes University SRC Facebook page sparked off a furious dialogue between students, staff and alumni, with a significant proportion of the Rhodes community expressing anger and offence at the proposals and tactics of the BSM, and identifying themselves as extremely opposed to the idea of a name change. A significant minority of students, however, were vocal in their support of the Black Students Movement at Rhodes and the #RhodesMustFall movement at UCT. LLB student Aphiwe Tumana pithily summed up the sentiments of these students in a comment on the Rhodes SRC Facebook page: "our campuses are not apartheid museums". On 19 March, 2015, a day after the #RhodesSoWhite posters had gone up around Rhodes campus, the Rhodes SRC called an emergency student body meeting to discuss the #RhodesMustFall campaign. This attracted such a significant number of students that the meeting had to be moved at the last minute to a larger venue.[32] Following the meeting the Rhodes SRC officially adopted a stance of neutrality with regard to the issue of the name change, but the debate continued in various forms throughout the first half of 2015, with the Black Student Movement continuing to stage various

[30] Ghedi Alansow, J., 'What about 'Rhodes (University) must fall'?'. *The Daily Maverick,* March 23 2015. Available at: http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2015-03-23-what-about-rhodes-university-must-fall/#.VbYFOPmqqko. Accessed March 2015.
[31] John, V., '#RhodesSoWhite: is the race revolution here?'. *Mail and Guardian*, March 18 2015. Available at: http://mg.co.za/article/2015-03-18-rhodessowhite-is-the-race-revolution-here. Accessed March 2015.
[32] Majali, A., 'A Call for Transformation at Rhodes'. *Activate* March 22 2015.

marches and protests, including an intervention at that year's graduation ceremony at which they were joined by former Vice-Chancellor Saleem Badat, and another poster campaign in which BSM members placed caricatures of Cecil John Rhodes at various locations around campus.[33] At the time of writing, this situation is still unfolding, and is thus difficult to evaluate in its entirety from a historical point of view; it feels strangely inappropriate to even speak of it in the past tense. As of July 2015, the most significant recent development in the ongoing saga has been the SRC's decision to renounce its neutral stance with regard to the name change in favour of officially endorsing the stance of the BSM - that the name of Rhodes University ought to change.

The student protests of 2015 provide one with a useful starting point from which to launch an exploration of the manner in which the visual culture and aesthetics of Rhodes University can be used as a lens through which to understand the way that the ideological imperative of transformation has come to shape and re-shape the landscape of higher education in post-apartheid South Africa. As the #RhodesMustFall campaign has amply demonstrated, images are not merely images. They are sites of power and contention, deeply embedded within and indicative of our understandings of ideology, identity and history. Chumani Maxwele and his fellow student activists at UCT were sufficiently cognizant of the power that images and aesthetics hold in shaping our sense of ourselves that they felt the existence of a statue of an infamous colonialist to be incompatible with the university's stated goals of transformation, an incompatibility grievous enough to spark off one of the largest waves of student protests in post-apartheid South Africa; and the chief medium through which these political and ideological concerns were articulated was a visual one - graffiti, vandalism, defacement. It seems instructive, therefore, at this juncture, to take a moment to look more carefully at the imagery that surrounds us, to try and tease out the hidden meanings and histories that lie beneath the surface of the images and objects that have often been rendered invisible by their mundane and quotidian nature.

History is, after all, in part an aesthetic phenomenon; and one of the fundamental suppositions of this chapter is that our understanding of particular historical periods

[33] Maharaj, N., post to Facebook (Rhodes SRC Facebook Group), 14 May 2015. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=794662160611474&set=pcb.981614058525222&type=3. Accessed May 2015.

and events is informed as much by imagery, art and visual culture more generally as it is by more conventional historiographic tropes - dates and records, eyewitness accounts of 'great events', historical narratives and counter-narratives, and so forth. This is not a new proposition: historians have long recognized the valuable role played by photography, artwork, architecture, artefacts and other such visual materials in the process of writing history. As some theorists have contended, visual culture and imagery play an even more important role in popular understandings of history, and it is this primacy of the visual that would appear to form the basis of much thought around the relationship between history and heritage - another important buzzword for post-apartheid South Africa. Waterton and Watson note that "The processes that constitute meaning, that frame, reveal and construct the past we see around us, are essentially visual. Our connections with the past are largely tangible, or have a materiality upon which they depend".[34] As time moves on, as the past recedes into memory and memory begins to fade, historical understanding, particularly in popular culture, becomes more and more synonymous with a generalised "image" of the past, a hazy constellation of photographs, posters, portraits and film-reels. Defined as much by exclusion as they are by inclusion, these loose visual fields become the foundation of historical understanding, providing a groundwork upon which the historical imagination can make sense of the often disjointed narratives constructed through the formal processes of historical writing and education. Thus "apartheid", in the mind's eye, is not only conceived of as a political and legal system under which white minority rule was enforced through the segregation, dehumanisation and brutal suppression of the black majority; it is also (and importantly) a mosaic of images - "Whites Only" signs, passbooks, the grim edifice of John Vorster square, the broken swastika of the AWB, the sight of Saracen armoured vehicles rolling through townships, the corpses of protesters felled by apartheid bullets in Sharpeville, in Soweto. All of these images, and dozens more, supplement, inform and shape the contours of what "apartheid" means. One can make a similar visual inventory of images associated with "the struggle against apartheid": the faces of iconic struggle heroes - Mandela foremost among them - loom large in this imaginal, as do other images of resistance - protesters clashing with police, clandestine meetings held in dark rooms, marches and *toyi-toyis*,

[34] Waterton, E., and Watson, S., "Introduction". In Waterton, E., and Watson, S., (Eds.), *Culture, Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and the Past*. (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), x.

women wearing the Black Sash, End Conscription Campaign posters and Jane Alexander's *Butcher Boys*, and finally, the nation reunited before the ballot box in 1994. Indeed, one can argue that the struggle against apartheid can be read not only as a political and ideological battle, but also as the triumph of one aesthetic, one set of representations, over another. The significance of this aesthetic dimension of the struggle becomes all the more apparent when one considers that race, as a social category, is an intrinsically visual phenomenon; as Richard Dyer has noted, "in a culture which gives primacy to the visual... social groups must be visibly recognisable and representable, since this is a major currency of power and communication".[35]

Approaching South African history through the lens of visual culture and historical aesthetics offers an intriguing perspective on the momentous changes that have gripped the country over the past two decades. South Africa's transition from an authoritarian regime premised upon racial segregation and institutionalised discrimination to a fragile fledgling democracy has been marked as much by shifts in the nation's aesthetics as it has been by shifts in politics and society. These shifts have been gradual, rather than radical. Unlike many other post-colonial states in Africa and elsewhere, South Africa did not experience a general wave of state-sanctioned iconoclasm following the slow demise of the apartheid government; Colonial statues were left in place by the newly triumphant ANC government, in line with the doctrine of reconciliation and acceptance of the multicultural nature of the South African state that came to characterize South Africa's "negotiated revolution". This approach, Sabine Marschall suggests, was motivated in part by a desire for "stability, reconciliation and a peaceful transition", but also "as a visible reflection of the country's policy of multicultural diversity and tolerance, in line with the rainbow-nation paradigm".[36] Annie Coombes has examined some of the ways in which public art in the post-apartheid period has been used as a mechanism for articulating transformationist ideals, while still working with and within the aesthetic field left behind by colonial and apartheid regimes. Sometimes, a simple act of re-interpretation can be enough. Coombes demonstrates this using the example of the Voortrekker monument, located south of Pretoria. Focusing on remarks made by

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[35] Dyer, R., *WHITE*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 44.
[36] Marschall, S., 'Articulating Cultural Pluralism through Public Art as Heritage in South Africa'. *Visual Anthropology* 23, 2010.

prominent businessman and Struggle activist Tokyo Sexwale during a visit to the monument in 1996, Schmahmann notes how Sexwale chose to interpret the gates of the monument, which are topped with assegais, not as symbols of the Afrikaner conquest of the Zulus, as they were intended to be, but rather as symbols of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the armed forces of the liberation struggle: 'It was precisely the assegai at its height that turned the tide. *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the spear of the nation, opened up the path of civilization'.[37] Such a radical re-interpretation, a reading "against the grain" of the monument's intended message, resonates with Mills and Simpsons' understanding of monuments as palimpsests upon which history can be layered, where "the old message is not erased, but new language is written on or beside it".[38]

University campuses are obviously a different nature of thing to monuments. Monuments, statues and other pieces of public commemorative art are explicitly ideological, established, in the words of Sabine Marschall,

> with the intention of preserving selected memories for eternity, thus enshrining a specific set of (present) values as normative for future generations... the values encoded in the officially endorsed memory landscape serve as a basis upon which the dominant socio-political order rests.[39]

University campuses, by contrast, are functional spaces rather than purely aesthetic or commemorative ones; places of learning, teaching, work and research, with all of the limitations and considerations that this entails. Thus any ideological messages encoded into the visual culture of university spaces are by nature more implicit and less explicit than the monuments and public artworks that scholars such as Marschall and Coombes have made their subject of study. Nonetheless, there are certain parallels that bear drawing, and many of the same techniques and analytic lens that are employed in the study of explicitly ideological aesthetic phenomena can be applied here. Indeed, the examination of the impact of ideology on these less obviously ideological aspects of visual culture can prove particularly illuminating, as it allows one to explore the ways in which ideological positions inform and penetrate

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[37] Cited in Coombes, A., *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2004), 37.
[38] Mills, C., and Simpson, P., *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), xxv.
[39] Marschall, S., 'Transforming the Landscape of Memory: The South African Commemorative Effort in International Perspective'. *South African Historical Journal* 55, 2006, 77.

the mindset of society as a whole, beyond the relatively narrow confines of state-produced visual media. By exploring the deeper implications of what is considered beautiful or visually appealing, and by tracing the ways in which these aesthetic notions change and develop over time, one can hope to achieve a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which value systems shift and change at a subconscious societal level. In particular, I am concerned here with trying to interpret the manner in which the university's stated ethos of transformation has been incarnated within the visual culture of the institution, in many and manifold different ways. Transformation, after all, is not restricted to policy documents, shifting student and staff demographics, academic articles, and the minutes of committee meetings, but rather is an all-encompassing project whose impact can be seen in every conceivable aspect of life at Rhodes University. The aesthetic and visual facets of the institution, the ways in which it represents itself to the world, constitute one of the arenas in which transformation is most easily demonstrated.

The impact of transformation on the aesthetic and visual culture at formerly white universities in South Africa has already been the subject of exhaustive analysis by Brenda Schmahmann. In her 2013 book *Picturing Change: Curating visual culture at post-apartheid universities*. Schmahmann, formerly a professor in the Rhodes University Department of Fine Art, analyses several instances of "aesthetic transformation" at Rhodes, including the university's deployment (and re-deployment) of the image of Cecil John Rhodes and imagery associated with him, the symbolic value of university insignia and graduation attire, the thinking behind new artworks commissioned for the university's Centennial celebrations, and other such examples. The following two chapters seek to provide a broader historical context for the emergence and re-imagining of the visual culture of Rhodes University and to examine a few examples of attempts on the part of the university to "decolonize" its visual culture, as well as the ways in which the realm of the aesthetic has been utilized in recent years by student protesters as a means of venting their frustrations and dissatisfactions with the institution.

CHAPTER 2:

"Oxford in the Bush": understanding the historical context of imperialist imagery on Rhodes University campus

> It may have been strategic for Rhodes in the state of emergency eighties to have removed itself from the real world, but it will be impossible for us to pretend that we are Oxford-in-the-bush in the negotiation nineties. It should be painfully clear that past recruitment strategies of building fountains, planting flower-beds, giving bursaries to talented rugby players and rowers and highlighting our beautiful colonial setting and heritage will not be sufficient to sustain Rhodes in a far less nostalgic South Africa.[40]

The above quotation, taken from a report written in 1992 by Rhodes' president of the Student Representative Council, Daryl Lee, seems in hindsight almost prophetic given the tumultuous events of 2015. As Lee's admonitions demonstrate, the criticisms levelled against Rhodes University by the Black Student Movement in 2015 are by no means new ones. Many of the institution's critics have raised questions about what can be thought of as a certain unsettling sense of anachronism underscoring the ways in which the institution is both perceived and perceives itself, the feeling that for many Rhodes appears to be, in the words of Dr. Nomalanga Mkhize, 'a white *colonial* vestige in a predominantly *black* South Africa'.[41] The image of Rhodes as a kind of 'Oxford-in-the-Bush' is a strong one, one that has prevailed for many years, as can be seen in some of the other observations made about the institution. Kathleen Satchwell, for instance, has remarked how in the 1970s Rhodes "prided itself on the extent to which it modelled itself upon and succeeded in mimicking the Oxford and Cambridge experience", while Monty Roodt has noted how on a visit to Oxford he was struck by the uncanny resemblance of Oxford's dining halls to those of Rhodes.[42]

The term "perception" is important here; this phenomenon can be understood as an aesthetic one, as much as a political or social one. The problem is not - or rather, is not only - one of policy, but one of appearances. Rhodes *seems* white; it *appears* to

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[40] Lee, D., 'A Vision of Rhodes: The University in the eyes of one of its pupils'. *Comment (Special Supplement)* 10, 1992, 25.
[41] Mkhize, 'Am I just a white-washed black woman?', 119.
[42] Satchwell, K., 'Students at Rhodes under Apartheid'. *African Sociological Review* 9, 1, 2005, 175; Roodt, M.J., 'Rhodes University: From Apartheid Vastrap to African Swing'. *African Sociological Review* 9, 1, 2005, 235.

be a colonial institution, as opposed to a transformed one. The question then arises: what does this mean? Why do things appear to be one way, and not the other? Wherein are those perceptions rooted? This following section constitutes an attempt to answer some of these questions, by examining the historical conditions out of which these perceptions - which can be understood as manifesting themselves within a particular visual rhetoric, a set of imperialist aesthetics - have arisen.

Rhodes University and the city of Grahamstown are intimately and inextricably connected; thus in order to understand the historical context out of which the perception of Rhodes as a "colonial institution" has arisen, it is first necessary to devote some time to exploring the social and cultural history of Grahamstown itself. Initially founded in 1812 as an outpost of the Cape Regiment under the leadership of the notorious John Graham, Graham's Town formed an integral part of the British effort to secure the Cape colony's eastern frontier against the Xhosa. The original outpost was built upon the ruins of an abandoned farm, Die Rietfontein, previously the property of one Lucas Meyer.[43] The location was chosen for its easy access to water, timber, arable land and land suitable for grazing, as well as for its strategic significance; the hills surrounding the area afforded the British with a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside, making it an ideal defensive position. Following the defeat of Makana's Xhosa forces at the Battle of Grahamstown in 1819 and the arrival of the 1820 settlers the following year, the outpost began to expand into a settlement in its own right, swiftly developing into the principle urban centre of the Albany region. Over the course of the nineteenth century Grahamstown continued to grow, its development fuelled by the establishment of a free port at Port Elizabeth in the early 1830s and the concomitant growth in the eastern Cape wool industry, upon which much of the early economy of the town was founded. This expansion was in turn both accompanied and reinforced by the parallel development of a distinctly British settler colonial identity. For colonial communities, particularly those on the edges of European expansion, the formation of a strong and unified identity played an important role, helping to alleviate the psychological strain of quotidian existence in an often hostile and strange environment far from home. The need for the conscious construction of a collective colonial identity arose out of the intersection of a variety of complex causal factors that shaped and characterized imperial society on

[43] Maclennan, B., *A Proper Degree of Terror: John Graham and the Cape's Eastern Frontier*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), 15.

the frontier. These factors are too complex to be explored in any depth here, but can briefly summed up as the unstable class relations that existed within the Settler populace itself, the increasingly difficult and violent interactions between Settler and native communities, and the ambivalent relationship between the colonial periphery and the imperial British metropole. These economic, social and political conditions gave rise to the pressing need for a unifying and legitimizing British colonial identity, the discursive construction of which was premised upon a central narrative of the supposedly progressive power of British imperialism, within which the Cape frontier was presented as a "wild" and "savage" landscape made subject to civilisation and improvement through the collective effort of the colonists. "Civilization", in this instance, was tacitly understood to mean "society and culture as it is in Britain"; and many of the colonists' efforts were geared towards trying to create a facsimile of England within the vastly different context of the Eastern cape. It should be noted that this phenomenon was by no means unique to the Cape frontier; indeed, similar instances of replication and mimicry were to be found throughout the entirety of the British Empire. David Cannadine has termed this process "imperialism via ornamentalism".[44] Cannadine argues that in order for the British Empire to function as it did over such a vast area, and to achieve any kind of social and political cohesion and coherency, British imperialism necessarily entailed a certain drive towards sameness, verisimilitude, homogeneity and familiarity.[45] The resulting vision- of a unifying sense of Britishness that transcended geographical boundaries and united Britons the world over within a single imagined community operating along the same societal and cultural parameters as were to be found within the British metropole itself - provided a powerful ideological foundation for the continuing expansion of British political and economic control on a global scale, and came to shape and define much of colonial British society on the imperial periphery (and, by extension, continues to impact upon the post-imperial societies that have arisen out of the ashes of the Empire).[46] This was to result in a pan-Imperial phenomenon of heterogeneity, similarity and sameness, the establishment of a unifying British imperial culture that served to override and undermine the increasingly apparent divisions of class, privilege and gender that threatened to destabilize the workings of Empire both at

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[44] Cannadine, D., *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire*, (London: Penguin Press, 2001), 122.
[45] *Ibid,* xix.
[46] *Ibid.*

home and abroad and that had only been exacerbated by the rise of industrial capitalism. This unifying imperial identity was made manifest via the continuous deployment of ritual and spectacle, and by the conscious re-shaping of colonial landscapes into replicas or facsimiles of the British metropolitan heartland. Thus over the course of the Imperial period one bears witness to the ever-accelerating proliferation of gentlemen's clubs and grand hotels, schools and universities, provincial legislatures and Anglican Cathedrals, typically built in 'Scottish Baronial or Gothic Revivalist styles redolent of history, antiquity, hierarchy and tradition'.[47]

This process of "imperialism via ornamentalism", of colonialism as a process of mimesis and replication, is amply demonstrated by the cultural and aesthetic history of Grahamstown. From the earliest days of sustained settlement the town received much praise from visitors for the way in which it approximated the appearance of an English country town, and for its particularly British "character". In 1826 the missionary Rev. Shrewsbury waxed lyrical on the comforts and character of Grahamstown, delighting at

> The houses, the farm-yards, the cross-barred gates, the inhabitants in manners, dress and appearance are thoroughly English, and while looking at every object I met, and the fields of oats and barley, and the gardens with abundance of vegetables of the same kind as are met in my native country, it seemed almost a reverie to conclude that I was in Africa. It certainly is pleasing to think that from my circuit in the heart of Caffraria I can at any time ride on horseback in the short space of five days to Graham's Town and *behold England in miniature* [emphasis added].[48]

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the city (a title which, as Ben Maclennan archly notes, Grahamstown gained by virtue of having a cathedral rather than by virtue of its size) had therefore become not only a major commercial centre of the erstwhile frontier, but also an important node within the broader network of British cultural imperialism in the eastern Cape. [49] Between the 1840s and 1870s, improvements in the Cape colony's infrastructural network and the subsequent economic development of the eastern frontier led to a kind of cultural renaissance in Grahamstown, made manifest by the establishment of numerous cultural and

[47] *Ibid,* 28.
[48] Maclennan, B., *A Proper Degree of Terror*, 231.
[49] *Ibid,* 232.

intellectual institutions which swiftly came to characterize the city: the founding of a botanical garden (the first of its kind in the Cape colony) in 1850, the founding of St Andrews College (consciously and conspicuously moulded along the lines of an English public school) in 1855, the establishment of the Albany Museum in the same year, and the founding of a new magazine, the *Eastern Province Monthly Magazine*.[50] Through the establishment of such institutions, the white colonial elite of Grahamstown were able to construct and enforce an image of the city as an important centre for British culture, far removed from the far-flung frontier outpost it had once been. Visitors from the Victorian metropole were struck by how seemingly charming and pleasant Grahamstown had become; the following passage, written by the English novelist Anthony Trollope after a visit in 1877, captures this sentiment well:

> The stranger is invited freely to admire its delights, the charm of its position above the heat and the mosquitos, the excellence of its water supply, the multiplicity of its gardens, the breadth and prettiness of its areas, its salubrity- for he is almost assured that the people of Grahamstown never die- the perfection of its institutions- in truth, Grahamstown is a very pretty little town, and smiles kindly on those who enter it.[51]

By the 1870s, however, Grahamstown had begun to enter into a state of relative economic deterioration. The discovery of precious minerals further into the South African interior, the removal of the imperial garrison and the moving of the frontier had shifted economic focus further away from the eastern Cape, resulting in a decline in trade and a steady dwindling of Grahamstown's population.[52] Davidson has suggested that the Grahamstown Settler elite sought to combat this growing crisis of economic marginalization through the promotion of the city as a centre of British imperial culture and heritage, thus giving further incentive to the projection of the city's image as a familiar and comforting oasis of Englishness nestled within an otherwise exotic landscape.[53] For instance, in 1887 the medical practitioner, naturalist and geologist W.G. Atherstone, who had played an important role in the promotion and establishment of many cultural and intellectual institutions in Grahamstown, published a piece in *Guest's Souvenir* in which he sought to promote

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[50] Lester, A., *Imperial Networks: Creating identities in nineteenth-century South Africa and Britain*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 170.
[51] Cited in Maclennan, B., *A Proper Degree of Terror*, 231.
[52] Davidson, J., 'Coping with Marginality: Tourism and the Projection of Grahamstown, 1870-1955'. *South African Historical Journal* 42, 1, 2000, 176.
[53] *Ibid.*

the idea of Grahamstown as a health resort in a bid to attract visitors to the area. Grahamstown, according to Atherstone, was not only 'the prettiest and healthiest' town in the country, but also 'the most English', the British motherlands 'young offshoot here in the sunny south'.[54] This construction of Grahamstown as the physical articulation of the imperial dream of an England transplanted was further reinforced through the use of commemorative and celebratory events and festivals, spectacular in their scale and grandiosity. The jubilee celebrations held in the city in 1870 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the 1820 Settlers involved military parades, art exhibitions, public lectures, orchestral performances, sporting events, a ball, a bazaar, and firework displays, and attracted some 2000-3000 visitors from all over the Cape.[55] In 1887, the city was to play host to the Queen's Jubilee South Africa Exhibition, itself part of a broader pan-Imperial programme intended to extol the virtues of Empire by means of celebration, festivity and spectacle. The event was widely considered to be a great success for Grahamstown, with attendance figures somewhere in the vicinity of 86 000 people- far in excess of the two previous South African Exhibitions that had been held in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth.[56] Other such events and exhibitions, such as the South African Industrial and Arts Exhibition held in 1898, served both to attract much needed attention and capital to the town, and to further cement Grahamstown's image of itself as a cultural hub - culture in a decidedly British mode. These events can be seen, in a sense, as the genealogical antecedents of today's National Arts Festival, one of the most important events- culturally and economically- in the contemporary Grahamstonian calendar.

Thus through the construction of a unifying, quintessentially British sense of settler identity, premised upon the reproduction and repetition of metropolitan cultural and aesthetic forms and norms, the colonial elite in Grahamstown and on the Cape frontier more broadly attempted to combat the manifold crises threatening to destabilize power structures within the settler community. The narrative of the civilization of a "savage" landscape achieved through collective endeavour and premised upon an ideology of metropolitan mimicry and verisimilitude provided a legitimizing framework that sought to justify or elide the fundamental violence and

[54] Cited in Davidson, J., 'Coping with Marginality', 178.
[55] Davidson, J., 'Coping with Marginality', 178-179.
[56] *Ibid,* 180.

inhumanity of the colonial project, promoted the notion of a central colonial identity that obscured the many class antagonisms that riddled the settler community, and allowed the colonial elite to secure a certain degree of respect and legitimacy in the eyes of the broader British imperial social order. These developments were to have material as well as ideological benefits. During the first half-century following the arrival of the 1820 Settlers in South Africa, new immigrants felt more comfortable coming to an area in which the appearance of "Britishness" had been maintained and entrenched, and so the Anglicization of the eastern Cape can be understood in part as a means to attract new settlers and their capital to the otherwise harsh and foreboding frontier; and when the changing landscape of the South African economy shifted capital away from Grahamstown after the 1870s, the promotion of the city as a centre of British Settler culture and heritage became a way for the colonial elite of Grahamstown to maintain a degree of relevance in the face of marginalisation.[57]

This ideology of "Englishness" can be seen reflected to this day within the visual landscape of the city. Grahamstown is characterized by an abundance of settler cottages patterned after English country houses, stately Victorian and Georgian manors, Gothic Revivalist churches; it is a place of turrets and towers, neo-classical facades, filigree and gables. In terms of architectural heritage, Grahamstown is arguably one of the most well-preserved examples of Regency and Georgian architecture outside of England, while the cottages and farmhouses dotting the surrounding countryside provide an excellent example of, in the words of Rex and Barbara Reynolds, "time the varied wealth of domestic architecture in rural England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland in the early nineteenth century".[58] One of the more striking examples of architectural exuberance in Grahamstown can actually be found on Rhodes campus, in a building that today is home to Rhodes' Department of Anthropology. Originally the home of Captain Charles Selwyn, commandant of the Cape Corps of Royal Engineers, the building has been dubbed "Selwyn's Castle" due to its imposing façade of battlements and lancet windows, and is considered by architectural aficionados to be one of the earliest examples of the Gothic Revivalist style in South Africa, utilizing the same architectural vocabulary (on, obviously, a

[57] Lester, A., *Imperial Networks*, 179; Davidson, 'Coping with Marginality', 179.
[58] Reynolds, R., and Reynolds, B., *Grahamstown from Cottage to Villa*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 1974), 10.

much more modest scale) as the Houses of Parliament and Law Courts in London.[59] A promotional pamphlet jointly composed by the City of Grahamstown and the South African Railways Company in 1913 drew readers' attention to the "old-world atmosphere" of its buildings, "suggestive of the romance and chivalry of the age in which the town was built".[60] Its contemporary equivalent, *The Grahamstown Handbook* describes Grahamstown as "one of the best preserved Victorian towns outside of England".[61] This, in a sense, was the dream of Empire made manifest; the replication of an idealized version of English life out on the far-flung South African frontier. It is in this act of replication and mimesis that the identity of Grahamstown came to be forged, and this imperial identity continues to have a certain resonance throughout the post-colonial city.

By the early 1890s, when the idea of establishing an institute of higher education in the Eastern Cape first came under discussion, the need to strengthen and reinforce British colonial culture and identity in Southern Africa had been lent new impetus by the escalation of tensions between the British colonial government and their Afrikaner counterparts. In the aftermath of the South African War fears of a rising Dutch/Arikaner nationalism that could potentially threaten British supremacy in the region spurred on a renewed interest in policies of Anglicisation in the Cape.[62] The chief proponent of this new wave of cultural Anglicisation, the British High Commissioner Lord Milner, considered education to be the cornerstone upon which British imperial culture was founded, and the establishment of a new English university in the eastern Cape was seen as a much-needed means of bolstering British cultural and intellectual hegemony in the region.[63] From its inception, therefore, the university was envisioned as a crucial component existing within the broader machinery of cultural colonialism in the Eastern Cape, a British-style institution of higher learning fashioned along the lines of Oxford and Cambridge. This sentiment was not simply implied, but explicitly stated by early proponents of the university. Charles Boyd, secretary of the Rhodes Trust in 1904, saw in the fledgling university an institution that was to be lauded for its capacity "to

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[59] *Ibid*, 89.
[60] Cited in Davidson, J., 'Coping with Marginality', 185.
[61] Bothma, A., 'Architecture', *Grahamstown Handbook* [website], ?, http://www.grahamstownhandbook.co.za/grahamstown3.asp. Accessed April 2015.
[62] Maylam, P., 'Rhodes University', 15.
[63] *Ibid*.

contribute... to extend and strengthen the imperial idea in Africa".[64] In a similar vein, John Darwin has described Rhodes University during the age of empire as having been intended to become "the engine room of English cultural ascendency in South Africa, much as Trinity College, Dublin, had been in Ireland".[65]

The idea that a university in the eastern Cape could serve as a medium through which British imperial culture could be further articulated and reinforced in the region makes more sense when one considers that the idea and ideal of the university as an institution in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries operated according to very different ideological assumptions than those of the contemporary university. The nationalist ethos that characterized much of European thought during the halcyon days of imperialism had given rise to a conception of the university that Bill Readings has termed "the University of Culture".[66] Readings traces this conception of the university to Wilhelm von Humboldt and the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810.[67] According to this ideal of university education, the university was to be considered a space in which the processes of teaching and scholarship were geared towards "the production of national subjects under the guise of research into and inculcation of 'culture', a 'culture' which has always been thought... in terms inseparable from national identity'.[68] The function of the university, then, was thought of in terms of the constitution of national character, suffusing the individuals that pass through its halls with "culture" and thus transforming these individuals into living embodiments of particular nationalistic ideals.[69] The influential nature of this conception of the University - as a crucial mechanism of the constitution and reproduction of nationalist ideals and national identities - can be seen amply demonstrated in the imperialist rhetoric utilized by the early proponents of Rhodes University, as mentioned above. This notion of what it meant to be a University must be kept in mind, therefore, when one considers the early history of the institution, for it was to play an important role in the way in which the institutional culture and

[64] Maylam, P., *The Cult of Rhodes: Remembering an Imperialist in Africa*, (Cape Town: David Phillips Publishers, 2005), 65.
[65] *Ibid*, 66.
[66] Readings, B., 'The University without Culture?', 466.
[67] *Ibid.*
[68] *Ibid.*
[69] Docherty, *For the University*, 21-22.

identity of Rhodes University has come to develop over the last one hundred and fifteen years.

At this juncture, it seems appropriate to address a certain elephant in the room; that is, the University's name. The name of Rhodes University has recently - but not for the first time - become the subject of much controversy, and so much has already been said and written about this controversy that it seems almost superfluous to re-hash some of the details around the debate once again. Nonetheless, given the content and context of this thesis it seems that to avoid giving at least a brief examination of the significance and history of the name of the institution would be altogether too glaring an omission.

As Maylam (2005) has argued, the decision to name the institution after the arch-imperialist Cecil John Rhodes was made more for pragmatic reasons than for ideological or commemorative ones. Naming the fledgling university college after Rhodes, it was believed, would prove to be a useful bargaining counter, a means of leveraging financial support from the Rhodes Trust.[70] The ploy was successful; thanks to the support of Rhodes trustees George Perkin and Leander Jameson, the Trust elected to grant the college an endowment of £50 000 in the form of De Beers shares, along with an additional sum of £10 000, thus providing the initial capital investment that allowed the college to get off the ground.[71] Over the course of the twentieth century, the institution was able to make further use of the Rhodes name as a source of financial support from the Trust. In 1920, the college was awarded a further grant of £20 000, and from 1924 to 1932 was the recipient of an annual donation of £1000, alongside an additional grant of £10 000 in 1930 to help finance the construction of a new library.[72] The Trust came to the College's aid again in the late 1940s, pledging a sum of £20 000 in order to restore financial stability to the College, which had been undergoing severe financial difficulties at the time.[73]

A further significant windfall had come the college's way in 1907, when the College was bequeathed the sum of £25 000, as well as a marble bust of Cecil John Rhodes,

[70] Maylam, *The Cult of Rhodes*, 64-65.
[71] *Ibid.*
[72] *Ibid*, 66.
[73] *Ibid.*

in the will of the late Alfred Beit, one of Rhodes' business associates and the man after whom Rhodes University's Beit residence is named.[74] The bust, the work of British sculptor Henry Alfred Pegram, was placed at the entrance of the old Drostdy Building, and unveiled on 6 November 1907 by Leander Starr Jameson.[75] A year later, the university was the recipient of yet another Pegram bust, this one a depiction of Alfred Beit himself that had been donated by Beit's brother, Otto, which was duly placed on a pedestal alongside the Rhodes bust and unveiled in a ceremony held on 16 February 1909, again lead by Jameson.[76] The displaying of the Rhodes bust and, later, the Beit bust at such a central location had the effect of further emphasizing the rather nebulous links between the college and Cecil John Rhodes and his associates, eliding the fact that Rhodes himself had had nothing to do with the founding of the university.[77] Thus the pervasive myth that Rhodes was the "founder" of the university began to circulate, even in the earliest days of the institution: a report written on the unveiling of the bust for the *Grahamstown Journal* notes that "the work is permanently placed in the Entrance Hall, where it stands a silent reminder to all who go in, of who the founder of Rhodes University was".[78]

The symbolic association between Rhodes, the man, and Rhodes, the institute of higher learning, therefore continued to be a fruitful one for the college and, subsequently, the university over the years - though that same association has now come to take on a somewhat skeleton-in-the-cupboard quality in post-apartheid South Africa. Although it is undoubtedly true that the naming of Rhodes University was far more a pragmatic manoeuvre than it was a commemorative one, one must be careful not to read the decision to draw a symbolic link between the college and one of the most iconic and notorious figures in the history of British imperialism in Africa as a purely pragmatic one. The founders of Rhodes University may, at the end of the day, have been more interested in the Rhodes money than in the Rhodes name, but the association drawn between the institution and Cecil John Rhodes certainly went

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[74] Schmahmann, B., *Picturing Change: Curating visual culture at post-apartheid universities*, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2013), 44.
[75] *Ibid.*
[76] *Ibid*, 47.
[77] *Ibid*, 45.
[78] Cited in Schmahmann, *Picturing Change*, 45.

some way towards cementing Rhodes University College's position as an embodiment of British imperialist ideals.

If the university was to be the cornerstone of British cultural dominance in the region, it would have to look the part. In 1904 the fledgling University College was granted use of the abandoned Drostdy Barracks complex. There is something intriguing about the way in which the same site which had once been the locus of British military power in Grahamstown now became the centre of British cultural - and over time, social and economic - dominance over the town. The Drostdy itself, previously the office and court of the landdrost, is described by Currey as "a heavy, rather lumpish building in two stories, of a depressing mustard colour", lent "some dignity" by four Doric columns.[79] Currey also notes that at the time of the college's founding, and for a long time afterwards, the barracks buildings which made up part of the college were widely considered to be "ugly examples of purely utilitarian building, to be demolished as soon as ever funds allowed".[80]

In 1906, the architectural firm of Baker and Kendall approached the University College Council requesting permission to draw up plans for a new university building to replace the old Drostdy.[81] The Council responded by holding an architectural competition, with the names of the architects submitted in sealed envelopes alongside their designs.[82] The first prize - together with an award of £200 - ended up being awarded to Baker and Kendall after all, although the financial constraints of the College meant that plans to construct the new building were deferred for several years.[83] It was only in 1936, following a national economic recovery in the wake of the Great Depression, that Rhodes was able to commence the construction of Baker and Kendall's vision, with the aid of government grants. The original design, published in *The African Architect* in 1911, was described as "was one of great character, dictated very greatly by the use of the local stone: A hard, fine-grained blue quartzite sandstone for the walls and, in a lighter colour, a Bathurst stone for columns, balconies and dressings".[84] The prohibitive cost of Baker and Kendall's

[79] Currey, R.F., *Rhodes University 1904-1970: A Chronicle*, (Cape Town: Rustica Press, 1970), 14.
[80] *Ibid*, 15.
[81] *Ibid*, 33.
[82] *Ibid.*
[83] *Ibid.*
[84] Grieg, D.E., *Herbert Baker in South Africa*, (Cape Town: Purnell, 1970), 246.

design, however, meant that several compromises had to be made in the construction of the building, and it is one of the less impressive works associated with Baker. Currey describes the building's Clock Tower as "regrettably stark and bare and lacking in almost all that architectural enrichment which in its grand situation would seem to be so greatly needed", while Grieg dismisses it as "a poor, watered-down version" of Baker and Kendall's original design.[85] "Poor and watered down" though it may be, however, the building is undoubtedly one of the most recognizable symbols of Rhodes University, and the Clock Tower, standing in counterpoint to the spire of the Cathedral of St. Michael and St. George on Grahamstown's High Street, is today not only the focal point of the Rhodes campus, but of all of Grahamstown west. The two busts of Beit and Rhodes that had flanked the entrance of the old Drostdy building were relocated to the new premises, placed first in the lobby on the south side of the building and later moved to the entrance lobby, thus continuing to establish "a forceful link between the institution and its imperialist benefactors".[86]

The relationship between Herbert Baker and Rhodes University is an illuminating one, particularly with regards to questions of the colonial or imperial elements at play within the Rhodes aesthetic, Baker (a notable protégé of Cecil John Rhodes) occupies a particularly prestigious position within the history of British imperial architecture. A literal "architect of imperialism", Baker was responsible for some of the most iconic examples of British imperial architecture, from South Africa to the Indian subcontinent, designing schools, churches, government buildings and other such eminently colonial edifices throughout the empire; in recognition of his contribution to the spread and reinforcement of British imperial culture, he was awarded the KCIE for his work on New Delhi.[87] Given the overtly imperial ethos which, as has been discussed above, played such an important role in the early history of the institution, it is perhaps only fitting that Baker be linked to the design of the University's most iconic building.

A further example of the way imperialist ideology and discourse came to influence the visual culture of Rhodes University is demonstrated in the university's insignia and iconography. Integral to the visual identity of the university is the Rhodes coat of

[85] Currey, *Rhodes University*, 78; Grieg, *Herbert Baker*, 246.
[86] Schmahmann, B., *Picturing Change,* 48.
[87] Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 89.

arms, granted to Rhodes University College in 1913, which is in and of itself a fascinating visual text.[88] Schmahmann suggests that the use of heraldry by South African universities was intended to grant the institutions an air of age and venerability that belied their actual youth, and to suggest a sense of continuity between the educational institutions of the colony and their antecedents in Britain.[89] The Rhodes coat of arms includes three scallops on a black and gold field held within an inverted triangle; these are taken from the coat of arms of the Fintri branch of the Graham family, thus emphasizing the university's connection to the colonial heritage of Grahamstown in general and to the figure of John Graham in particular. In addition, the lion and two thistles positioned above the elements taken from the Graham family heraldic arms were intended to foreground the university's (somewhat superficial and spurious) connection to Cecil John Rhodes; both are taken from the coat of arms awarded posthumously to Rhodes, and were later also used in the coat of arms used by the former colony of Rhodesia.[90] The lion positioned between the two thistles is a nod towards the three gold lions in the coat of arms of Oriel College, Oxford, Rhodes' alma mater, thereby creating a visual link between Rhodes University College and the Oxford model of university education after which it was fashioned.[91] The Rhodes connection was further visually reinforced by the decision to use the figure of *Physical Energy* as the crest or summit of the coat of arms. *Physical Energy*, a bronze sculpture by British sculptor George Watts cast in 1902, is not a literal depiction of Cecil John Rhodes but has become intimately associated with him.

A further attempt to use symbolism and iconography to suggest a connection, however tenuous, between Rhodes University College and Oxbridge can be seen in the choice of the College's colours. The original university colours were green, white and red, but in 1913 a Council resolution was passed changing the official colours to "dark amethyst and white", the colours of King's College, Cambridge - the alma mater of one of Rhodes' founding professors, Sir George Cory.[92] Once again, it appears that the university sought to use visual culture as a subtle means to foreground the image of the institution as an imitation of Oxbridge. Ironically,

[88] Schmahmann, *Picturing Change*, 75.
[89] *Ibid.*
[90] *Ibid,* 75-76.
[91] *Ibid.*
[92] Currey, *Rhodes University*, 21, 43.

however, the "dark amethyst" was found to be an ill-suited choice of colour, as it swiftly faded to purple under the heat of the eastern Cape sun, prompting the university, in the interests of pragmatism, to change the official colours to purple and white.[93] There is an analogy to be drawn here, perhaps, between this decision and the necessary modifications made to Baker and Kendall's grandiose original building designs. Practical constraints necessarily meant that the dream of making Rhodes into a replica of the Oxbridge-style universities in the north could never be fully realized.

The image that the university sought to cultivate, of Rhodes as a kind of African Oxford or Cambridge, was also projected through the many rituals, routines and customs of the institution. Well into the twentieth century students at Rhodes were expected to wear academic gowns to their dining halls every evening, where the warden would preside over the proceedings from a raised platform and students and scholars were waited upon by black servants in uniform.[94] The image of Britishness was further reinforced by the Rhodes graduation ceremony, which was (indeed, still is) modelled along the lines of those held at Oxford and Cambridge.[95] A further example of the way in which ritualistic performances were used to bolster the cultural connection between Rhodes and universities in Britain can be seen in the now defunct Rag Week celebrations. Although Rag as a phenomenon is often associated with Oxford and Cambridge, it would appear that the tradition had no historical roots in either institution, and seems to have originated at smaller provincial universities in the United Kingdom around the turn of the twentieth century.[96] Rhodes Rag, under the guise of being a charitable initiative, was a period of drunken debauchery and revelry, pranks and beauty pageants, centred on a procession through the streets of Grahamstown featuring elaborate costumes and floats.

The extent to which this idea of Rhodes as an inherently colonial space had been internalized and validated by certain segments of the student population was amply demonstrated by the responses of conservative students to the infamous "Quad

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[93] *Ibid*, 43.
[94] Roodt, 'Rhodes University', 235.
[95] *Ibid.*
[96] Dyhouse, C., *Students: A Gendered History.* (London: Routledge, 2006), 188.

Squat" protest of 1979. In May of that year, a group of about 40 students staged a protest against the forced removals of black people in the eastern Cape, particularly the relocations to the notorious Glenmore settlement camp near the Fish River.[97] The protest took the form of a symbolic occupation of the university quadrangle, in which the students erected a mock squatter camp consisting of tents and ramshackle corrugated iron structures.[98] In response, a group of five white law students staged a 'counter-protest'. Dressed in boaters and white blazers, they played bowls on the lawn, reclined in deck chairs, and were served tea by an African servant dressed in a white uniform.[99] The idea, according to one of the counter-protesters involved, was to "show how good colonialism was".[100] This incident is revealing in a number of ways. The erection of a faux squatter camp in the heart the university campus, in the shadow of the "beautiful arches" designed by Baker and Kendall, sought to drive home, through a striking and very visual demonstration, the disconnect between the Arcadian idyll so carefully fostered by the institution and the stark and brutal realities of segregationist South Africa. [101] The 'counter-protest', through the deployment of exaggerated, almost caricatured tropes of "colonialism", can be read as an attempt not only to undermine and ridicule the protesters, but also as an affirmation of the colonial identity of themselves and, by extension, of the institution. It is intriguing to note that even though this incident took place decades after the demise of formal British colonialism in South Africa, the tropes of British colonialism still had salience and power at Rhodes, which speaks, perhaps, to how thoroughly the legacies of Britishness had been maintained within the university.

The image of Rhodes as a "colonial" institution, therefore, is no accident. From the earliest days of the university, Rhodes sought to cultivate and strengthen the perception of itself as a fundamentally British institution, a concrete manifestation of English imperial ideals. This understanding of the university, its character and its purpose, ought not to be understood in isolation, but rather must be read within the broader ideological context of British imperialism in the nineteenth century and its particular articulations in the Cape colony and Grahamstown. The way in which the university sought to mould itself in the likeness of antecedent British institutions

[97] Greyling, 'Rhodes University', 135.
[98] Roodt, 'Rhodes University', 237; Cock, J., 'Reflections on the Relationship between Rhodes University and the Wider Society, 1977-1981'. *African Sociological Review* 9, 1, 2005, 93.
[99] Cock, 'Reflections', 93.
[100] *Ibid.*
[101] Roodt, 'Rhodes University', 237.

such as Oxford and Cambridge is a natural extension of the ideas and ideologies that informed the way in which the British Settler elite of Grahamstown sought to model their city and themselves along the lines of rural Victorian England, which in turn must be read as an example of a wider pattern of replication, mimicry and homogeneity that came to define much of the cultural and aesthetic expression of the British Empire as a whole. And just as for the colonial elite of Grahamstown the cultivation of the image of "Englishness" was done for material, as well as ideological, reasons, so too for Rhodes University the way in which the institution promoted itself as an "Oxbridge"-style university, a centre of British ideas and ideals, proved to have tangible, material benefits. When one speaks, therefore, of the 'heritage' of Rhodes University, one necessarily speaks of a heritage of colonialism and imperialism, a heritage of replication and mimicry. For Rhodes University in the new South Africa, coming to terms with this heritage has been an often difficult and delicate task.

This chapter has sought to demonstrate the historical context of the 'Rhodes University aesthetic, and to show how the visual culture of Rhodes University in the colonial and apartheid eras was rooted within the ideology of imperialism. The following chapter will look into three examples of "aesthetic decolonization", through which the university after 1994 has attempted to alter its visual culture in order to distance itself from its imperialist heritage and reflect its institutional commitment to transformation and the ideology of the new South Africa through the medium of visual culture and the aesthetic.

CHAPTER 3:

Aesthetic decolonization on the Rhodes University campus during the post-apartheid period, 1994 – present.

Example One: The Africa Media Matrix

The African Media Matrix (AMM), which has been home to Rhodes University's School of Journalism and Media Studies since the building's renovation in 2006, is perhaps the most overt and explicit example of aesthetic transformation/decolonization on the Rhodes campus. Built upon the remains of the defunct Leather Industries Research Institute, which closed its doors in 2000 due to a lack of funding, the establishment of the African Media Matrix came about as the result of a fundraising campaign that began in 2001, with a planning grant from the Ford Foundation.[102] The new home of the School of Journalism was intended to "act as a vibrant catalyst providing any person entering the space an opportunity to engage with media consumption, production and debate in Africa", and this ethos is seen reflected in the aesthetics of the space, devised in consultation with Art Aid Africa, a non-profit organization founded by John-Anthony Boerma in 2003 with the intention of facilitating collaborations between artists and helping to promote the South African creative industry.[103]

A key feature of the visual identity of the AMM is the way in which its designers used a variety of visual signifiers to emphasize and reinforce the School of Journalism's situatedness within several distinct, yet overlapping historical and geographical contexts. These different contexts or forms of identity can be divided into three broad categories, each representative of a varying degree of locality: the School of Journalism's situatedness within the Eastern Cape, its situatedness within

[102] Rhodes University School of Journalism and Media Studies, *A Showcase of African Media Ideas*. Grahamstown: Rhodes University, 2006, 1.
[103] *A Showcase of African Media Ideas*, 1; Art Aid Africa, 'About Us', 2013. Available at: http://www.artaidafrica.co.za/#!about/c240r. Accessed November 2015.

democratic post-apartheid South Africa more generally, and its situatedness within the wider context of a globalized, post-independence Africa. The visual rhetoric deployed within and without the Africa Media Matrix reflects a more or less even mix of acknowledgments towards this multifaceted sense of institutional identity.

The relationship between the School of Journalism and the broader history of journalism in the Eastern Cape is emphasized within the physical space of the AMM via the deployment of several historical artefacts relating to Grocott's Mail, the oldest independent newspaper in South Africa, now owned by Rhodes University and operating both as a community newspaper for Grahamstown and surrounds and as a platform for the university's journalism students to gain work experience. The two large woven pots flanking the main entrance to the building, for instance, contain strips of aluminium derived from original metal printing sheets used by Grocott's, and the pebble bed outside the building is scattered with tiles taken from the newspaper's printing room floor.[104] The visual allusions to the link between Rhodes and Grocott's continue inside the building, as well, with the inclusion of three separate wall displays made from wooden printing blocks originally used by the newspaper.[105] The use of such decoration serves to emphasize the role the Rhodes School of Journalism has come to play within the broader history of journalism and media within the Eastern Cape, suggestive of a direct link between contemporary student journalism and the newspapers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries which played a vital role in fostering an intellectual culture during the formative years of the Cape colony. Such décor, of course, also serves to subtly underscore the historical links between Rhodes University and the Grahamstown of the imperial era discussed in the preceding chapter; newspapers were, as Lester (2001) notes, an important component of the ideological and intellectual apparatus of British imperial culture in the Cape during the 19th century.[106]

By employing artefacts such as these throughout the Africa Media Matrix the designers of the space reinforce the notion that the Rhodes School of Journalism is, in many ways, simply the most recent iteration of a much older regional tradition of journalism, lending the department a sense of history and "pedigree", as well as underscoring the position of the journalism school within the local historical and

[104] *A Showcase of African Media Ideas*, 2-3.
[105] *Ibid*, 9, 15, 17.
[106] Lester, A., *Imperial Networks*, 179.

geographical context of Grahamstown and the Albany region. There are other visual nods towards the locally embedded nature of the school, though these are far more muted; one of the walls on the first level, for instance, is adorned with a collection of wire-and-bead televisions made by the craftspeople who sell their wares from underneath the Drostdy Arch, while another wall on the same level features printed cloth artworks made by learners at Victoria Girls High School.[107] In a similar vein, the inclusion in the JohnCom Conference Room of a Chris Kirchoff photograph depicting a circle of Eastern Cape aloes can also be seen as a visual acknowledgment of the school's situatedness within a particular geographic context, that of the Eastern Cape, given the way in which the aloe is often used as an iconic symbol of the region in general.

Far more prevalent than visual markers of locality are visual symbols referencing the School's position within a larger post-apartheid South African context. On the ground and first floors of the AMM, for example, can be found a wall and pillar painted in bright, colourful geometric Ndebele designs - an art form so ubiquitous and widely reproduced in post-apartheid South Africa that it has in a sense been elevated to the form of visual symbol of the country as a whole.[108] The interior decorations also incorporate traditional art forms from South African communities beyond the Eastern Cape – such as a Venda drum and wire-woven bowls from Kwazulu-Natal in the lobby of the building - in order to emphasize the nation-wide inclusivity and reach of the School of Journalism.[109] Also present within the building are visual markers alluding to the troubled history of journalism in South Africa, such as a display on the second story of headlines put out by various South African newspapers in protest against the subpoena-ing of journalists that took place during apartheid.[110] Even more prevalent are objects, artefacts and other pieces of décor that allude to and seek to emphasize a more international, pan-Africanist sense of identity. French-labelled cloth maps of Africa from Benin, depictions of Thoth, Egyptian god of writing, cloth wall hangings from Senegal, signs written in Swahili, French and Arabic – all point to a self-conscious branding of the School of Journalism as conspicuously "African", occupying a position not just within a local or

[107] *A Showcase of African Media Ideas*, 10.
[108] *Ibid*, 6-7; Marschall, S., 'Sites of Identity and Resistance: Urban Community Murals and Rural Wall Decoration in South Africa'. *African Arts* 35, 3, 2002, 44.
[109] *A Showcase of African Media Ideas*, 4-5.
[110] *Ibid*, 13.

national context, but within the wider context of journalism and media on the continent.[111] Through the use of such visual rhetoric the AMM, more than any other location on the Rhodes campus, emphasizes the position it plays within a new South Africa that is no longer insular and isolated but rather a dynamic force on the international scene, particularly within Africa itself. This can be read as a celebration of the country's recent inclusion into the African political community, a celebration of the role played by journalism as a discipline in strengthening and fostering international connection and communication, and as a canny marketing ploy. The efforts on the part of the journalism school to present itself as operating within a broader pan-African context are further reinforced by the fact that for the past eighteen years the department has played host to the prestigious Highway Africa conference. Held in partnership with the South African Department of Communications as well as several South African media associations and corporations, Highway Africa has over the years grown to become the single largest annual gathering of African journalists in the world, and thus plays an influential role in shaping journalism and media on the continent.[112] With this in mind, the decision to make use of pan-African aesthetics in decorating the AMM can be seen as not simply a cosmetic choice, but rather a reflection of the very real connections that the school of journalism has sought to carve out for itself within the greater context of African journalism.

The AMM has been singled out here as an example of "aesthetic decolonization", as the ideology evinced by the decoration and design of the building stands in contrast with that evident in the earlier, imperially-aligned campus aesthetic. Previously, the aesthetic of the university had been premised upon a reproduction and valorisation of British colonial aesthetics and the rejection of any visual recognition of contextual African locality, in line with the phenomenon of "colonialism via ornamentalism" described by Cannadine. The approach taken by the designers of the AMM, however, chose to use the space as a means of celebrating and emphasizing the locality of the university, consciously utilizing visual markers to underscore the School of Journalism's position within the Eastern Cape, within South Africa and within Africa more broadly. Such design decisions can be read as indicative of a desire on the part of the School of Journalism (and by extension on the part of the university more

[111] *Ibid.*
[112] www.highwayafrica.co.za

generally) to more fully integrate the institution within the educational and social landscape of post-apartheid South Africa, in doing so moving away from the Eurocentric and isolationist institutional culture that had dominated Rhodes University up until the end of the apartheid era. That the AMM was the physical space in which this new understanding of institutional identity was aesthetically realized is of particular significance given the prominent role played by the school of journalism within the framework of the university – given the prestige accorded to it, Rhodes' Journalism school can be considered one of the university's "flagship" departments. Though taste is subjective and not all may consider the redesigned journalism school aesthetically appealing, the ideological considerations that lie behind the design of the space are commendable, a visual commitment to the idea of a Rhodes University more suited to and integrated within the changed political and social climate of the 'Rainbow Nation'.

Example Two: Exorcising the ghost of Steve Biko

One intriguing way in which Rhodes University has sought to come to terms with its problematic past and rehabilitate the image of the institution can be seen in in its treatment of the figure of Black Consciousness thinker and struggle icon, Bantu Stephen Biko. The story behind the Rhodes-Biko connection is a shameful one. In 1967, the annual Congress of the multi-racial National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) was held at Rhodes. While prior to the Congress NUSAS had approached the university and ensured that provision had been made for black delegates to be housed on campus, this decision was abruptly reversed a scant handful of days before the congress was to begin. Council had expressed some concern over the legal dangers involved in accommodating black students in white residences, and it was decided that black delegates would have to find alternative accommodation, in this case lodgings in the township. In addition, mixed social events were also prohibited, including, absurdly, a mixed tea-party scheduled as a welcoming event for the delegates.

These developments were not entirely unsurprising; When Rhodes had previously hosted the Congress in 1962, the University had denied NUSAS' request for black

delegates to be accommodated on campus.[113] Sean Greyling points out that the university had had no problem with housing black NUSAS delegates when Rhodes had played host to the Congress in 1958, and surmises that the shift in the institution's attitude towards racial mixing on campus came about in response to the new political climate that had emerged among South African universities following the passing of the 1959 Extension of University Education Bill, through which Verwoerd's cabinet had sought to entrench apartheid segregation in the field of higher education.[114] As Paul Maylam has noted, the decision on the part of the university to enforce segregation on Rhodes campus "reflected the extreme caution of the university authorities - it is hard to believe that there would have been any legal repercussions had the April decision [to accommodate black delegates on campus] not been overturned".[115]

This incident was to have significant political ramifications. Biko, one of the delegates attending the congress, expressed dismay at the back-pedalling demonstrated by the Rhodes authorities and proposed that the proceedings of the congress be suspended in protest. NUSAS rejected this motion, leaving Biko disillusioned and embittered with the organisation. Biko then left Grahamstown and went to visit a close friend at the nearby University of Fort Hare, Barney Pityana.[116] Having come to the conclusion that the multi-racial NUSAS was not sufficiently committed to advancing the interests of black students in South Africa, Biko and Pityana went on to co-found a separate organisation, the South African Students Organisation (SASO). SASO went on to play a critical role in the history of the struggle against apartheid, and can be understood as the lynchpin of the entire Black Consciousness movement. In a moment of historical irony, the Rhodes authorities, by attempting to enforce racial segregation on the university's campus, ended up playing a role in triggering the emergence of Black Consciousness as an ideological force in South Africa.[117]

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[113] Greyling, 'Rhodes University', 96.
[114] *Ibid.*
[115] Maylam, 'Rhodes University', 19.
[116] Badat, S., 'Inauguration of Steve Bantu Biko Building'. Speech given in Grahamstown, 17 September 2008, to commemorate the renaming of the Student Union. Text available at: http://www.ru.ac.za/vice-chancellor/speechespresentations/name_57995_en.html. Accessed March 2015.
[117] Maylam, 'Rhodes University', 2005, 19; Badat, 'Inauguration', 2008.

There is another, more tragic, connection between Steve Biko and the city of Grahamstown. On 17 August 1977, Biko and his comrade Peter Jones set out on a trip to Cape Town to meet with New Unity Movement leader, Neville Alexander. They were stopped at a road block just outside Grahamstown, where Biko and Jones were briefly detained before Biko was moved to Port Elizabeth. There he was subject to torture and would eventually die in police custody as a result of extreme maltreatment.[118]

Following the collapse of the apartheid regime and the advent of the new, transformationist ideologies that swept through the country during the 1990s, Rhodes' handling of the NUSAS affair has been rightly interpreted as a particularly shameful moment in the institution's history. Within the broader narrative of transformation at Rhodes, Biko has therefore come to occupy a particularly prominent position, with the acknowledgment of Rhodes' shame in relation to the incidents of 1967 playing a central role in the ongoing rehabilitation of the university's identity and image. In 2004 Rhodes University hosted a critical tradition colloquium as part of the University's centennial commemorations, in which over 40 Old Rhodians took part. In a special edition of the *African Sociological Review* published in the wake of the Colloquium, Professors Fred Hendricks and Peter Vale begin their introductory essay by relating the details of the 1967 NUSAS scandal and reflecting on the event as a springboard for exploring the need for adeeper, more critical reflection on Rhodes, its history, identity and future.[119] In several other papers in this collection, Biko and his troubled relationship with Rhodes University are mentioned, if only in passing. In a piece entitled 'Skeletons in the Rhodes Cupboard: What Should Be Done About Them?', Barry Streek considers the university's mistreatment of Biko in 1967 in relation to several other instances in the university's history where the institution collaborated with or acquiesced to the apartheid state, while in another article Monty Roodt recalls how following Biko's death he and several other politically conscious students fasted for a week, and in yet another Ashwin Desai reflects on the impact of Biko's encounters at Rhodes in the formulation of the Black Consciousness Movement, and in turn the effect that Biko's

[118] Woods, D., *Biko – Cry Freedom*. (London: Macmillan, 2011), 277.
[119] Hendricks, F., and Vale, P., 'The Critical Tradition at Rhodes University: Retrospect and Prospect'. *African Sociological Review* 9, 1, 2005, 1-5.

writing had on his own thought.[120] Biko was, very clearly, on everybody's minds; and at least at an internal, academic level, there appears to have emerged a tacit recognition of the fact that Rhodes needed to find some way to lay the ghost of Steven Bantu Biko to rest.

In 2008, the university took a significant step towards reconciling the institution's difficult relationship with the memory of Steve Biko. On 17 September an inauguration ceremony led by Biko's comrade and confidante, Barney Pityana, was held and the Rhodes Student Union building was officially renamed the Bantu Stephen Biko Union Building. According to an official statement on the renaming of the building, "the decision of Rhodes University to rename the student union as Bantu Stephen Biko Building not only honours the champion of the black consciousness movement but also a son of the Eastern Cape. This decision importantly signals the university's commitment to redress past failings and to promote reconciliation and healing".[121] This symbolic act of reconciliation was further emphasised by the installation of two large photographs of Biko, one close-up portrait and one photograph depicting Biko together with his wife, Ntsiki, and son, Nkosinathi, gracing the building's stairwell. Dr. Saleem Badat, Vice-Chancellor of the university at the time, recounted the events of 1967 in the inauguration speech delivered in 2008, in which he related the NUSAS scandal to several other instances of shame sources of contrition in the university's history (such as the Basil Moore affair of 1968-1969, and the alleged collusion between certain university officials and apartheid-era security police).[122] In his speech, Badat noted that 'the critique of past injustices frees us to conceive how we may avoid repeating such tragedies', and expressed on the behalf of the university 'a desire to promote reconciliation and healing within ourselves and our society, to embrace new values and ways of being and acting, and to reinvent, remake and renew our University'.[123]

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[120] Streek, B., 'Skeletons in the Rhodes Cupboard: What Should Be Done About Them?'. *African Sociological Review* 9, 1, 2005, 162; Roodt, 'Rhodes University', 234; Desai, A., 'When Rhodes Met Mandela: History breaks down into images, not stories'. *African Sociological Review* 9, 1, 2005, 220.
[121] Rhodes Communications Division Official Statement, 'Inauguration of the Bantu Stephen Biko Building', 2008. Available at: http://www.ru.ac.za/oldcommunications/features/renamingofstudentunion/. Accessed January 2015.
[122] Badat, 'Inauguration'.
[123] *Ibid.*

There is a certain significance in the space chosen by the university to commemorate the memory of Steve Biko. For many students the Union building is one of the most important locations on campus. It plays host to many different spaces and facilities: The Oppidan dining hall, computer labs, the offices of the Student Representative Council, the Rhodes Music Radio studios, the offices of two student newspapers (*Activate* and *The Oppidan Press*), ATM facilities, the Counselling Centre, the Career Centre, the Rhodes University Club, the Residential Operations Division, several seminar rooms, as well as numerous other facilities. By choosing such a central and highly visible location on campus, a centre of student life, the University authorities ensured that the name and face of Steve Biko could be accorded a place of prominence in the institutional fabric of Rhodes University.

The memory of Steve Biko is also alluded to in another prominent place on campus - the Rhodes University Council chamber, located on the top floor of the main administration building. The *Rhodes University Tapestry/Keiskamma Tapestry*, commissioned at the end of 2010, and hung in the Council chamber in October 2011, was intended to be an artistic exploration of "the history of the institution in all its complexity".[124] The history and significance of the Tapestry will be examined later in this chapter, but pertinent to the subject at hand is the *Tapestry's* depiction of Steve Biko in the third panel of the piece, a portrayal of the institution's history from the point at which it obtained independent University status (1951) up until the fall of apartheid. Biko is depicted in this panel, alongside his biographer, the former *Daily Dispatch* editor Donald Woods. Brenda Schmahmann, in her explanation of the decision to incorporate Biko into the *Tapestry*, comments that

> albeit that the panel provides a generic portrait rather than showing a specific event, the representation of Biko in this panel of the *Rhodes University Tapestry*... functions as an admission of instances in which the institution thoroughly complied with and reinforced apartheid governance rather than making the slightest effort to distance itself from the state and its policies.[125]

Through both the renaming and redecoration of the Bantu Stephen Biko Union building and the incorporation of Biko into the *Rhodes University Tapestry*, the university sought to acknowledge the ignominy of its actions during the 1967 NUSAS

[124] Schmahmann, *Picturing Change*, 225.
[125] *Ibid*, 235.

affair. Imagery of Steve Biko has subsequently come to occupy a prominent role within the aesthetic transformation of the institution.

There is, however, something strange at work here. Although the university intended the renaming of the Union building to serve as an act of contrition for the treatment of Biko and the other black delegates in 1967, there is no ongoing acknowledgement of this fact sustained beyond the event of the inauguration of the building itself. While the sentiments expressed by Dr. Badat in his inauguration speech are laudable ones, and provide a commendable articulation of the ethos of transformation underpinning the decision to honour Steve Biko in the renaming of the building, the actual history behind the relationship between Biko and Rhodes University is left unclear. There are no plaques, no permanent or prominent displays serving to enlighten future visitors to the Bantu Stephen Biko building as to exactly *why* it was renamed, no descriptions of the events of 1967. There is only a pair of photographs, and a name. A similar kind of elliptical logic seems to have informed the incorporation of Biko into the *Rhodes University Tapestry*. Schmahmann notes that the inclusion of Biko in the tapestry, as well as the inclusion of apartheid state president, C.R. Swart (who was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University in 1962), can be interpreted as an acknowledgment of those instances when the University chose to comply with and willingly enforce apartheid law and ideology at Rhodes.[126] However, viewers of both the tapestry and the Union building who do not already know the history of either Biko or Swart's relationship with Rhodes University have no way of gleaning this information from the tapestry. In the case of the tapestry, the inclusion of Woods alongside Biko serves to even further confuse matters, as Woods was not present in Grahamstown during the events of 1967. A viewer ignorant of the context in which these images are meant to be viewed could draw any number of conclusions: perhaps Biko was awarded an honorary doctorate at Rhodes, as Woods was shortly before his death in 2001? Perhaps Biko was a Rhodes student? Perhaps Woods and Biko visited Rhodes to deliver a lecture or seminar, in defiance of apartheid laws? While it is perhaps unfair to read too much into the decontextualisation of history present in the Tapestry (embroidery is, after all, a limited medium), this decontextualisation, read in conjunction with the similar omission of historical narrative and detail present in the Steve Bantu Biko Union

[126] *Ibid.*

building, has troubling implications, and undermines the university's efforts to promote itself as a transformationist institution through the vehicle of visual culture. While the story of Biko and Rhodes has filtered through to some extent into the popular culture and urban legends of the university, and while it is mentioned from time to time in the odd lecture, there has been no sustained, direct attempt by the university to continue incorporate the story of the NUSAS scandal into the broader narrative of Rhodes University. In this sense the decision to rename the Union building, while an important gesture, remains an incomplete one. The absence of proper contextualization in relation to this (laudable, commendable) attempt to use visual culture as a medium through which to express transformationist goals resonates with one of the criticisms levelled against the university by Jonas Ghedi, who in a 2015 opinion piece for the *Daily Maverick* asserts that at Rhodes over the past two decades "a level of *aesthetic* transformation... has been propagated", where "aesthetic" in this sense is implied to be synonymous with superficial or superfluous.[127]

An incident that took place shortly after the renaming of the Union building serves to illustrate the complex and often divisive atmosphere within which institutional and aesthetic transformation took place on Rhodes campus during the first decade of the twenty-first century. On 19 September 2008, two days after the inauguration ceremony, the photographs of Steve Biko hung in the stairwell of the Union building were damaged by a person or persons unknown at some point on Friday night. Exact details of this incident are vague, but the way in which this event was reported on and discussed in the university media is particularly illuminating. In an editorial published in an October edition by then-editor of the student newspaper, *Activate*, the incident is interpreted as an act of vandalism, motivated by racist sentiments on the part of (presumably) white students. In the words of the editor (Kate Douglas), "this wasn't some student's drunken antics, this was people being racists... again".[128] Douglas likened the supposed vandalism of the photographs of Biko to an incident that had occurred earlier the same year at the University of the Free State, where white students at the university's Reitz residence had filmed themselves forcing five of the University's elderly black domestic staff workers to kneel in front of them and

[127] Ghedi, 'What about 'Rhodes (University) must fall?"
[128] Douglas, K., 'From the Editor'. *Activate* 29/10/2008. Available at: https://ruactivate.wordpress.com/2008/10/29/from-the-editor-10. Accessed October 2014.

eat food that had been urinated upon.[129] In a letter to the editor published in the same edition of *Activate*, third year BA student Siyabonga ka-Phindile Yonzi echoed Douglas' sentiment, characterizing the damage done to the photographs of Biko as "a venting out of racism that is deeply situated in our institution".[130] However, there is some ambiguity underscoring this interpretation of the incident. While many were quick to interpret the damage done to the photographs as an act of deliberate vandalism with racist undertones, it is also possible that this incident was accidental in nature, simply the outcome of a drunken misadventure. The Student Union was a popular drinking spot for many students (Yonzi derogatorily describes the Rhodes Club, located on the top floor of the Steven Bantu Biko Building, as a "shebeen") and it is not out of the realms of possibility to imagine that the paintings were not subject to a deliberate attack, but rather the victims of collateral damage that occurred at some point during that Friday night's drunken Union escapades.[131] Given the ambiguity of the incident, it would appear that the university did not choose to pursue the matter any further - there is no record of any form of disciplinary action against students in relation to this incident, or indeed of any attempt to track down those culpable for the damage. That being said, it is also not hard to see why Douglas and others interpreted the damage done to the photographs of Biko in such a negative light. Jako Bezuidenhout, who was a student at Rhodes in 2008, recalls that among white students in his residence, Adamson House, the renaming of the Union building was subject to much scorn and derision, as evidenced by several off-colour jokes that sprung up in the wake of the inauguration ceremony: students planning on partying at the Union would make puns along the lines of "we're going to hit the Bantu" or "we're going to club Steve", consciously or unconsciously making light of Biko's death by beating in detention in 1977. Given this kind of discourse on campus, it is not hard to see why Douglas, Yonzi and others interpreted the damaging of Biko's photographs as an act of vandalism.

Reading between the lines, it seems clear that the policy of aesthetic transformation, and by extension institutional transformation at Rhodes more generally, must have been met with considerable resistance by conservative white students and staff at Rhodes, though this resistance could not have been openly expressed given the

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[129] *Ibid.*
[130] Yonzi, S., 'Letter to Editor'. *Activate* 29/10/2008. Available at: https://ruactivate.wordpress.com/2008/10/29/letter-to-editor-2/. Accessed October 2014.
[131] *Ibid.*

intellectual and social climate of post-apartheid South Africa. The vandalising of the Steve Biko photographs, if indeed it was an act of vandalism, is an example of one way in which repressed feelings of resistance to transformation could be expressed, and highlights the way in which visual markers of transformation can potentially become targets for anti-transformation interventions, given their material, physical nature.

Beginning in 2011 the image of Biko was also utilized by certain unknown students in more subversive ways. That year various walls on campus were spraypainted with a small graffiti stencil featuring Biko's face together with the caption "...where leaders learn?". By juxtaposing the image of Biko (a recognized "leader" of the intellectual struggle against apartheid) with the motto of the university, the artist(s) were able to both draw students attention to the problematic relationship between the university and Biko, and to raise questions about the state of transformation at the institution. Once again, the ghost of Steve Biko continued to haunt the university.

In 2015 the Rhodes SRC decided to once more utilize the physical space of the former union building to commemorate the life and achievements of Steve Biko. At a commemoration ceremony held on 15 September, shortly after the anniversary of Biko's death, the SRC unveiled a new artwork commissioned for the building; a black and white portrait of Biko spread over four canvases by student artist Stace Scallan, and a timeline highlighting significant events in Biko's life created by student artist Thabiso Mafana. The artwork, which currently occupies the space over the stairwell of the building between the existing two photographic portraits of Biko, was, according to SRC Activism and Transformation councillor Japhta Lekalakala, intended to "stand as a visual representation of our attempt to transform this space in one of but many countless ways visually".[132] The decision to once more make use of the image of Steve Biko, this time to highlight the commitment of the Rhodes SRC to transformation, is interesting in light of the events of 2015, when the #RhodesMustFall protests had brought perceived problems with the rate and extent of transformation at Rhodes into the foreground. Given this context the installation of new artworks commemorating Biko can be read as a pointed gesture intended to ease some of the suspicions that Rhodes was not as committed to transformation as

[132] Bombi, T., 'Biko commemoration unveiling', *Rhodes University Latest News*, 16 September 2015. Available at: http://guides.is.uwa.edu.au/c.php?g=325241&p=2177430. Accessed September 2015.

it perhaps could be – though again, the SRC did not take the opportunity to use the space to openly acknowledge the exact nature of the relationship between Steve Biko and the university.

Example Three: The Rhodes University Tapestry

This chapter shall conclude with an examination of one final example of the way in which Rhodes University has attempted to "decolonize" its visual culture: that of the *Rhodes University Tapestry*. The *Tapestry* has already been made the subject of much detailed analysis by Schmahmann (who recommended its commissioning), but the artwork is such an important and evident example of "aesthetic decolonization" that it seems appropriate to revisit it (and Schmahmann's remarks upon it) in the context of this thesis.

In 2010 the university authorities set up a task team, chaired by Schmahmann, with the purpose of rethinking the visual culture of the institution and managing the acquisition and display of new artwork for the university.[133] One of the aims of the task team was to provide suggestions for a new and appropriate artwork for the university council chamber. To this end, the task team turned to the Keiskamma Art Project, a community art project located in Hamburg, Eastern Cape, that focuses on the production of large-scale embroidery works. [134] In *Picturing Change* Schmahmann recounts that her attention had been drawn to the Keiskamma Art Project following their completion in 2004 of the *Keiskamma Tapestry*, a 73-panel tapestry hanging in the Houses of Parliament in Cape Town that depicts the history of the frontier wars in the Eastern Cape.[135] On the strength of that previous artwork it was decided that the Keiskamma Art Project be commissioned to produce a similar artwork for Rhodes, a *Rhodes University* tapestry using the medium of embroidery to depict the history of the institution. With input from historians Paul Maylam and Jeff Peires, as well as written suggestions from various staff, students and alumni, the Keiskamma Art Project eventually produced an artwork consisting of four panels,

[133] Schmahmann, *Picturing Change*, 225.
[134] www.keiskamma.com. Accessed July 2015.
[135] Schahmann, *Picturing Change*, 226.

each seeking to illustrate a particular aspect of the university's history.[136] While the Visual Culture task team (which included representatives from both staff associations, as well as the SRC) provided suggestions as to what events might be depicted in the *Tapestry*, and stressed that these should be placed in chronological order, they wished to avoid following an overly prescriptive "top-down" approach to the creation of the artwork and thus the *Tapestry's* designer, Nozeti Makubalo, was afforded a significant degree of creative freedom.

The visual narrative of the *Tapestry*'s first panel does not begin in 1904, with the founding of the university, but rather takes as its starting point the arrival of British settlers in the area, the founding of what was to become the city of Grahamstown and the bloody frontier conflicts that followed.[137] Featuring embroidered depictions of the Battle of Grahamstown (1819), the drowning of Nxele following his attempted escape from Robben Island, and the establishment of the Drostdy military complex, this first panel is intriguing as a piece of heritage-commemorating artwork in that it does not shy away from the troubling history of imperialism that preceded and gave rise to Rhodes University, but rather emphasizes it, foregrounding the link between the contemporary university and the complex, bloody histories of colonialism in the eastern Cape. [138] As a further considered touch, this panel is bordered with translucent blue, white and pink beadwork, colours traditionally associated with the Mfengu people who played a significant role in the region in the early colonial period.[139] Such an artistic choice renders inseparable the history of the institution and the history of the city, an attempt, perhaps, to be more frank and honest about the historical context in which Rhodes University is rooted.

The second panel, which depicts the history of the university itself from its establishment in 1904 to its acquisition of independent status in 1951, makes similar references to the link between the university and the imperial culture and context of which it was part, depicting important (now discredited) figures in its early history, such as Cecil John Rhodes and Leander Starr Jameson and incorporating imagery of the Rhodes University College air-training squadron as an homage to those students

[136] *Ibid.*
[137] *Ibid*, 228.
[138] *Ibid.*
[139] *Ibid*, 238.

who lost their lives fighting for Britain in the First and Second World Wars.[140] This panel is bordered by red, white and blue beadwork, in reference to the Union Jack. [141]

The third panel, whose narrative begins in 1951, contains within it several references to the apartheid regime, depicting student protest against apartheid but also containing indications of ways in which the university as an institution acquiesced to or was complicit in the will of the state, such as incorporating a depiction of the awarding by Rhodes of an honorary doctorate to state president CR Swart in 1962, as well as including a depiction of Steve Biko (whose association with the university has already been discussed).[142] It is bordered by beadwork in orange, blue and white, the colours of the old South African flag.[143] The final panel, bordered by beadwork referencing the colours of the new South African flag, depicts Rhodes in the post-apartheid period, with embroidered representations of the awarding of honorary doctorates to Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela.[144]

Schmahmann notes that the *Keiskamma Tapestry* (and by extension, its successor, the *Rhodes Tapestry*) can be interpreted as a somewhat ironic reference to one of the most important pieces of English art heritage, the famous *Bayeux Tapestry*, an embroidered depiction of the Norman invasion of England in 1066, thus suggesting 'a correlation between the Norman conquest of England and the British conquest of the Xhosa people'.[145] Such a visual reference, to 'one of the most-well known examples of needlework in Europe', seems especially appropriate for Rhodes University. The blending of traditional South African craft (in the form of beadwork and Xhosa methods of embroidery) with references to a quintessential piece of English history and heritage seems to encapsulate, in a way, the manner in which Rhodes and the Rhodes campus itself has become a careful and sometimes volatile blend of English and African influences, a melange of different cultural forms and styles, in the visual sphere as well as in other areas of institutional life.

Although the tapestry was intended to be a visual symbol of Rhodes' commitment towards transformation, a work of "aesthetic decolonization", not all students appear to have seen it that way. In September 2015, when the council chamber was occupied

[140] *Ibid*, 232.
[141] *Ibid*, 238.
[142] *Ibid*, 235.
[143] *Ibid*, 238.
[144] *Ibid*,
[145] *Ibid*, 226.

by members of the Black Student Movement, protesting against what they perceived as a lack of commitment to transformation on the part of the university, the tapestry was taken off of its wall and replaced with a kind of informal commemorative display of the students' own devising. The occupying students printed out portraits of various iconic black thinkers and leaders, such as Steve Biko, Frantz Fanon, Maya Angelou, and bell hooks, and placed them on the wall of the council chamber in place of the tapestry, thus creating an interesting alternate counterpoint to the portraits of (white) chancellors and vice-chancellors that had formerly graced the council chamber walls.[146] The decision on the part of the Black Student Movement's occupying members to remove the tapestry can be read as an indication of how certain members of the student body found themselves dissatisfied with the symbolic (and concrete) gestures towards transformation that had been made by the institution. No matter how careful the thought behind the tapestry and how good the intention behind its installation, the political climate of 2015 was such that it was still viewed as insufficient by certain student protesters – a move which itself can be interpreted as symbolic of wider-ranging frustrations with what was perceived as the slow pace of transformation at Rhodes.

As this chapter has sought to demonstrate, aesthetics and visual culture comprise an important means by which the institutional culture and identity of Rhodes University is formulated and presented to the world. The visual signs and signifiers that make up the physical and symbolic space of the institution are currently in a state of flux, with modern, ideologically-driven elements of aesthetic transformation existing in tension with an older visual schema rooted within the university's origins as a mechanism of British imperial culture. This tension has been brought to the foreground in recent years by the #RhodesMustFall protests of 2015, and raises interesting questions as to how institutions in post-apartheid South Africa ought to curate their particular visualities in order to better reflect a changing institutional ethos more in line with the ideological imperatives of the transformed nation.

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[146] O'Halloran, P., 'The African university as a site of protest', *UHURU: Unit for Humanities at Rhodes University* [website], 10 September 2015. Available at: https://www.ru.ac.za/uhuru/latestnews/theafricanuniversityasasiteofprotest.html. Accessed February 2016.

CHAPTER 4:

Making sense of the changing nature of sex and sexuality at Rhodes University in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

South Africa's "Sexual Revolution": The Fall of Apartheid and Erotic Liberation

The sexual revolution that so drastically and dramatically altered the landscape of intimate relationships in the western world from the 1960s onwards was late in coming to South Africa. While societies elsewhere in the world had shown signs of a more liberal understanding of sex and sexuality over the latter half of the twentieth century, South Africa remained for a long time the bastion of a reactionary sexual morality. Under the rule of the apartheid state, which had followed an equally sexually repressive colonial regime, sexual practices, discourses and representation were subject to intensive modes of censorship, regulation and repression. These attitudes towards sex were informed by a state-endorsed puritanical strain of Christian theology, and were further underscored by racist ideologies of white sexual "purity", as well as by a view that western sexual permissiveness was evidence of a "moral depravity" stemming from Communism and other left-wing and was inimical to the maintenance of European civilization.[147] Any sexuality that was deemed "transgressive" by the state, such as homosexuality and sex across the racial divide, was criminalized and intensely stigmatized.[148] Media representations of sex, even sexually explicit conversation, were forbidden by legislation, and pornography was banned entirely.[149] The degree of control which the apartheid regime had sought to exercise over so many other aspects of South African life – limiting freedom of expression, of movement and of association, denying political representation and

[147] Posel, D., ' "Getting the Nation Talking about Sex": Reflections on the Discursive Constitution of Sexuality in South Africa since 1994. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, 62, African Feminists Volume 2,1: Sexuality in South Africa, 2004,54.
[148] *Ibid.*
[149] *Ibid.*

economic opportunity - was, in a similar vein, applied to the realm of South African sexuality.

With the advent of non-racial democracy and the collapse of the apartheid regime following the historic elections of 1994, South African society bore witness to an extremely rapid shift in the public discourse around sex and sexuality. As the South African polity sought to come to terms with what Melissa Steyn has described as "one of the most profound collective psychological adjustments ... in the contemporary world", the discursive construction of sex and sexual identity began to be framed in a new light.[150] In a fledgling nation where national identity had begun to be conceived of explicitly in terms of a fundamental right to non-discrimination, the rights to freedom of sexual association and freedom of sexual identity became enfolded within grander overarching narratives of what, exactly, it meant to be a citizen of the new South Africa.[151] The adoption of the new constitution and Bill of Rights in 1996 paved the way for, among other things, the legalization of pornography and sexually explicit media under the aegis of freedom of speech, the political recognition of queer individuals under the aegis of the right to freedom of sexual identity and orientation, and the legal safeguarding of women's capacity to exercise sexual agency under the aegis of the right to gender equality.[152] These developments resulted in a legislative framework that not only allowed for, but even encouraged, a greater degree of sexual liberalization than had previously been possible in South Africa. One must be careful, however, not to view these shifting state attitudes towards sex and sexuality in isolation; in many senses the discursive re-framing of sex in post-apartheid South Africa was simply a necessary consequence applying the principles of non-discrimination and "unity through diversity" that were positioned as so fundamental to the construction of the new South African identity.[153]

Of course, legislation and ideology are by no means synonymous with society, and societies do not change overnight - especially, as in the case of South Africa, when that society is a highly diverse, divided and differentiated one. The belated sexual revolution that began to take root in South Africa following the demise of apartheid

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[150] Steyn, M., *Whiteness Isn't What It Used To Be: Identity in a Changing South Africa*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), xxii.
[151] Weeks, J., *The World We Have Won*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 83.
[152] Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Chapter 2 (Bill of Rights), 1996, 6.
[153] Posel, 'Getting the Nation Talking', 55; McEahern, C., *Narratives of Media, Memory and Representation in the Making of the New South Africa*, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2002), 5.

did not occur immediately or evenly throughout the nation, and indeed many sectors of South African society were, and continue to be, staunchly opposed to the new atmosphere of sexual permissiveness. The relaxing of apartheid *verkramptigheid* in relation to matters of sex and sexuality opened up new avenues for sexual expression and allowed for sex to enter more into the realm of public discourse, but the transition from heavy sexual repression to a greater degree of sexual openness was by no means an easy one, and sexual morality remained subject to much fierce contestation and critique throughout the first two decades of non-racial democracy.

The "erotic liberation" that accompanied the transition to democracy was also not without its darker and more sinister dimensions. By a tragic irony of history, South Africa's nascent sexual liberation began to take hold alongside the rapid escalation of the country's HIV/AIDS epidemic. Though the first two officially documented cases of HIV/AIDS in South Africa were recorded in 1983, during the apartheid period, the epidemic has very much become a post-apartheid problem.[154] In 1990, the estimated prevalence of HIV infection in South Africa stood at less than 1%, a figure which had climbed to 22.8% by 1998.[155] By the beginning of the 21st century the South African HIV/AIDS pandemic had become widely acknowledged as a national disaster, and had provoked an extensive outpouring of governmental, academic and media debate and discussion. The pandemic, alongside the controversies and difficulties involved in dealing effectively with it, has become one of the defining challenges of the New South Africa, and has come to colour and define the way in which the nation understands and talks about sex in myriad and manifold ways.

The AIDS pandemic must be understood as running parallel to, and exacerbated by, another darker dimension of post-apartheid South African sexuality: the problem of rape and sexual violence. In 2000 Statistics South Africa published a report, *Quantitative research findings on rape in South Africa*, in which they concluded that the number of women raped in South Africa in 1997 was close to 55 000 - a figure of 134 per every 100 000 (or 143 in 100 000, taking into consideration the fact that many women were raped more than once).[156] These figures have led to South

[154] Tsampiras, C., 'Politics, Polemics, and Practice: a history of narratives about, and responses to, AIDS in South Africa, 1980-1995'. Unpublished PhD thesis, Rhodes University, 2012, 1.
[155] Marks, S., 'An Epidemic Waiting To Happen? The Spread of HIV/AIDS in South Africa in Social and Historical Perspective. *African Studies* 61, 1, 2002, 16.
[156] Statistics South Africa, *Quantitative Research Findings on Rape in South Africa*. 2000: 1. Available at: http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Rape/Rape.pdf. Accessed May 2016.

Africa being accorded the dubious honour of being considered the world's "rape capital": no other member of Interpol boasts rape statistics so high.[157] Furthermore, rape in South Africa is far more likely to be brutal or violent than rape elsewhere in the world; women in South Africa are more likely to be raped at gun or knifepoint, and more likely to be killed during the course of a rape, and more likely to suffer grievous bodily harm before, during, and after being raped than women elsewhere in the world.[158] Sexual violence, like HIV/AIDS, has come to characterize much of the national discourse around sex and sexuality in post-apartheid South Africa, providing a gruesome counterpoint to the phenomenon of erotic liberalisation in the new nation. Taken together, these facets/consequences of sexual liberation in post-apartheid South Africa - increased sexual openness, increased tolerance of alternate sexualities, the escalation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the increase in rape and sexual violence - form a complex socio-political narrative in which sex becomes a site for historical change.

When scholars and politicians speak of "transformation", the word is usually deployed in a fairly confined and restricted way, referring generally to the redress of racial inequalities. This understanding of transformation, however, is an incomplete one; transformation, in its broadest sense, should be understood as the dismantling and reformulation of all aspects of the previous regime which unfairly restricted human agency and flourishing. The relaxation of state-endorsed sexual repression, the public acknowledgment and support of alternative sexualities in line with the values of the new constitution, and the greater national focus on previously unspoken sexual crises such as HIV/AIDS and the epidemic of rape should all be considered manifestations of the broader socio-political project of transformation in South Africa, and deserve to be examined as such.

This aspect of transformation - the intersection between the transformation project and sexuality - is of particular interest in the context of transformation at Rhodes University. University campuses around the world are hotbeds of sexuality. They are spaces in which young people are gathered together, living away from home for the first time, with relatively few cares or obligations. These spaces thus become sites in which many people seek to explore and understand their sexualities in an extensive

[157] *Ibid.*
[158] *Ibid*, p. 2.

fashion for the first time[159]. Rhodes, in particular, has long had a reputation as a hedonistic institution. This perception is, in part, a result of some of the particular structural characteristics of the university. The institution is fairly isolated; the majority of students live in residence; and it is located in a small town with relatively few avenues for entertainment and leisure (as from 2013, Grahamstown does not even have a cinema). These factors combine to create an environment in which, put bluntly, students at the university are having a lot of sex.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the ways in which the nature of sex and sexuality, and the discursive shaping of these elements, has shifted and altered at Rhodes over the last few decades, how the transformation of sex in the post-apartheid period can be seen reflected in changing attitudes towards and discussions of sex within the Rhodes community. There will be four primary areas of focus in this chapter: changing attitudes, at both an institutional and student level, towards homosexuality and queerness; the shifting nature of student sexual liberation, what might, for want of a less loaded term, be described as student "promiscuity"; the way in which Rhodes as an institution and a community has responded to the South African HIV/AIDS pandemic; and the way in which Rhodes as an institution and as a community has sought to come to terms with the South African epidemic of rape and sexual violence.

There are, naturally, some methodological challenges at play here. Sex by its very nature is something that happens in private between individuals, and there are powerful social and cultural taboos in place which restrict the degree to which sex can be openly spoken about and discussed in the public sphere, even within the more sexually liberated context of post-apartheid South Africa. Fortunately, the existence of archived editions of the Rhodes student newspaper, *Rhodeo* (later *Activate*), provides a potential avenue through which to explore these questions. As a newspaper written for students, by students, *Rhodeo* is the closest thing one has to a window into the thoughts, opinions and lives of students at Rhodes, though obviously one should bear in mind that the editors and contributors still made up only a small portion of the student populace and their views should not necessarily be taken as entirely representative of the student body as a whole (not that anything

[159] Simon, T., 'Sex on Campus, '90s Style'. *Change* 25, 5, 1993, 51. Available at: http://www.istor.org/stable/40177733. Accessed July 2016.

could be, of course - the Rhodes student body has always been a diverse and differentiated group of individuals, and has only become more so as the decades have gone by). Though other sources will be utilized - student society minutes, disciplinary records, internal Rhodes publications and findings, and so on - *Rhodeo/Activate* will inform the bulk of this chapter, as the primary interest here is uncovering the ways in which the student culture of Rhodes has changed over the years. In later years, another excellent source of information that will be utilized is that of social media - Facebook and Twitter, primarily - which provides an even more extensive insight into student culture at the university.

Tracing attitudes towards sex and promiscuity among students at Rhodes, 1972-present

There are some inherent methodological problems involved in trying to ascertain the levels of sexual activity among students on Rhodes campus over the time period in question. Sex, by its very nature, is an intensely personal and intimate matter, something that takes place in private, behind closed doors.[160] Furthermore, the various shifting social taboos surrounding sex and sexuality make it difficult, at times, for people to speak openly about their sex lives, and limit the extent to which sex can be openly discussed in public discourse. Nonetheless, a close reading of the *Rhodeo/Activate* archive does reveal some reasonably reliable means of exploring the history of sexual activity on campus. One means of doing so is to simply track the frequency of references to sex in the pages of the newspaper. Put bluntly, the more that sex is openly spoken about and discussed, the more likely it is that students are having sex. A second method of doing so is to follow the discussion of contraception and abortion in the pages of *Rhodeo* and *Activate*, as an increased interest in contraceptive methods and abortion can be understood to be a reasonably reliable indicator of an increase in recreational sex among students.

The year 1972 furnishes one with a good starting point for this particular discussion. That year, in the wake of the 1971 Symposium on Student Health held in what was then Rhodesia, Rhodes began considering the establishment of a Student Health Centre, with a permanent medical doctor on the staff to deal with student medical

[160] Sexual exhibitionists notwithstanding.

and psychiatric concerns.[161] Though student health initiatives were intended to help students cope with a wide variety of issues, physical and psychological, much of the discourse coming out of both the 1971 Symposium and the internal discussions of the Rhodes SRC was focused on sexual health. Peter Clarke, at the time president of the SRC, noted in defence of this particular focus that it was the sentiment of the SRC that "sex and the emotional problems that went with it were prevalent at Rhodes" and that "many students did not have enough knowledge about contraception and were therefore prone to get into trouble".[162] Efforts at promoting sexual health, information about contraception and the like through an officially-endorsed student health centre, however, were fraught with certain difficulties. On the one hand, it was feared that offering sexual advice through the forum of the Student Health Centre could be interpreted by some as condoning or even actively encouraging promiscuity, pre-marital sex and other forms of "immoral behaviour".[163] On the other, the absence of effective sex education in schools at the time, coupled with the fact that for most students their time at Rhodes coincided with their sexual maturation and experimentation, meant that the institution was to a degree obliged to provide some kind of basic sex education and information about contraception to its students, provided this was not done in a manner that was "sensational and salacious".[164]

In an effort to ascertain just how necessary counselling on matters of sex and contraception was to the student populace the SRC conducted an anonymous socio-sexual survey to which 952 out of 1920 enrolled students responded – that is, 49.5% of the total student populace at the time.[165] Of the respondents, 448 were men, 509 women.[166] The results of the survey indicated that of the total respondents 52.1% approved of pre-marital sex, with 31.8% disapproving, and the remainder either expressing uncertainty as to their views on the subject or declining to answer.[167] In addition, 47.2% of the respondents reported having had intercourse either while at Rhodes or before coming to the university.[168] The responses varied quite significantly

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[161] Clarke, P., 'Memorandum on the need for a health service', 1972, 1. In Cory Library, records pertaining to the Rhodes University Students Representative Council, PR4632 1-2.
[162] *Ibid.*
[163] *Ibid*, 2.
[164] *Ibid.*
[165] Rhodes SRC Socio-Sexual Survey, 1972. In Cory Library, records pertaining to the Rhodes University Students Representative Council, PR4632 1-2.
[166] *Ibid.*
[167] *Ibid.*
[168] *Ibid.*

according to the gender of the respondent and whether they lived in residence or off-campus. Male students were significantly more approving of pre-marital sex than female students were, with 72.1% of male students stating that they approved, as opposed to only 34.3% of female students.[169] Furthermore, only 32% of female student respondents reported having had sexual intercourse (either at Rhodes or previously), as opposed to 62% of male students.[170]

This discrepancy raises some interesting questions. If the results of the survey are to be taken at face value, the implication is that male students at Rhodes at this time were far more sexually active than female students, which begs the question: with whom were they having sex in the first place? There are several possible answers to this question, all of which are most likely valid to some degree or another and none of which can be easily proven given the gap of decades between now and then. Sexual activity is, of course, not restricted between students, and it is very possible that many students were having sexual relations with individuals beyond the institution. Such a discrepancy might be explained, as well, by taking homosexuality into account - perhaps the difference in sexually active male and female students could have partly been down to a proliferation of same-sex experiences among male students (of which more later). Another possibility that comes to mind is that those female students who were sexually active were particularly so - that is, that they had higher partner counts than their male counterparts. And of course, the discrepancy in place may be down to the simple fact that, even in anonymous surveys, people lie - especially about a topic as delicate and subject to social taboo and control as their sex lives. All of this is conjecture, and the reality of the situation is probably some combination of all of the above, or other factors not even considered.

Also of interest is the divergence between the sexual attitudes and experiences of oppidan students as opposed to those of students in residence. 70.3% of oppidan students reportedly approved of pre-marital sex, and 72.2% reported having had sexual intercourse before.[171] That oppidan students would be more sexually active and experienced than students in residence is not unexpected, given that in the first place they would, as is the case now, have tended to be older and therefore would have had more time to explore their sexualities, and they did not live within the

[169] *Ibid.*
[170] *Ibid.*
[171] *Ibid.*

stricter confines of the residence system where constraints such as inter-visiting rules would have made sexual activity more logistically difficult to arrange.

The survey conducted by the SRC in 1972 is certainly not without flaws. It does not account for same-sex sexual interactions at all, and by focusing on sexual *intercourse* (presumably penetrative, penis-in-vagina intercourse) it elides the possibility that Rhodes students may still have been engaging in sexual *activity* without necessarily having "sex" as such - some may have been practising oral sex, for instance, or mutual masturbation. These uncertainties notwithstanding, the survey gives one a reasonably solid idea of the level of sexual activity taking place on the Rhodes campus in the early 1970s, with just under half the student populace having reportedly had at least some sexual experience. This information – together with other findings from the survey which indicated that some 22 female respondents, or 4% of the total female respondents, had had an abortion during their time at Rhodes – was used by the SRC to lend support to the idea that Rhodes was in need of a Student Health Centre and that the Centre ought to offer advice on sexual health and contraception to students.[172] That there was a high level of interest in such matters among students is born out both by the number of students who responded to the survey and to the high levels of attendance at two seminars held at Rhodes that year, one on contraception and one on abortion.[173]

Abortion was a particularly controversial topic in apartheid South Africa. Up until 1975, abortion was governed by Roman Dutch common law, with abortions being permitted only when the life of the mother was in danger.[174] However, in practice physicians regularly performed abortions without legal sanction. For instance, in 1968 an estimated 28% of abortions were performed for non-therapeutic reasons.[175] Only three years after the SRC survey results revealed that 22 female students had undergone abortions during their time as students of the university the Abortion and Sterilization Act (no 2 of 1975) was passed, which formally criminalized abortion except under specific exceptional circumstances.[176] The passing of the Act resulted in the far more stringent policing of and requirements for legal abortions. This in turn

[172] *Ibid.*
[173] 'Sexual Concern', *Rhodeo* 8 March 1973, 3.
[174] Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (Population Division), report on abortion in South Africa, 2010, 98. Available at: www.un.org/esa/population/publications/abortion/doc/southafrica.doc. Accessed September 2016.
[175] *Ibid.*
[176] Abortion and Sterilization Act (no 2 of 1975).

fuelled the development of a thriving black market for abortion procedures – a report on abortion in South Africa issued by the United Nations estimated that about 200 000 illegal abortions were carried out every year between 1975 and 1996, when the ANC repealed the Abortion and Sterilization Act and replaced it with the far more liberal and pro-choice Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (Act no 92 of 1996), which will be discussed in further detail below.[177]

The question of providing contraception to students via official university channels continued to be a controversial topic throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1989 the Rhodes SRC put forward a proposal for condom-dispensing machines to be installed on campus, but this initiative was met with some resistance from the Rhodes Council, who refused to allocate university funding to the installation of the machines.[178] Though the Family Planning Clinic had agreed to provide free condoms to the Rhodes sanatorium, the staff of the sanatorium were reportedly resistant to the idea of providing contraception to students.[179] After a protracted battle between the SRC and management, spearheaded by SRC Women's Councillor, Nina Shand, Rhodes eventually agreed to make oral and other forms of contraception available from the sanatorium (or "San" as it is more informally known) on a twice-weekly basis, with the san hiring an additional sister in order to handle the demand for contraception.[180] In addition, the SRC managed to secure outside funding for six condom vending machines to be installed in and around campus.[181]

Despite this, it would appear that contraception continued to be difficult to obtain on campus for some time. The san frequently ran out of contraceptives and the condom machines were often faulty, resulting in many students at Rhodes having unprotected sex, as evinced by the high volume of requests for information regarding the morning-after pill reportedly fielded by the wardens and sub-wardens of women's residences.[182] In 1995 the staff of *Activate* attempted to address this issue by including free condoms with that year's O-Week edition of the newspaper, an attempt, perhaps, to encourage incoming first-year students to practise safe sex.[183]

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[177] United Nations report on abortion in South Africa, 2010, 99.
[178] 'Condom Vending Still Pending', *Rhodeo* October 1989, 3.
[179] *Ibid.*
[180] 'San makes contraception freely available on campus', *Rhodeo* May 1990, p. 3.
[181] 'News in Brief', *Rhodeo* October 1990 p. 4.
[182] "Concerned" (Letter to Editor), 'No Condoms at San?', *Activate* March 1995, p. 8; 'Truth About the Morning-After Pill', *Masikhule* May 1994, p. 6.
[183] *Activate* February 1995 (Orientation Edition), cover page.

Casual sexual encounters between students appear to have become far more normalised at this point in the university's history. When questioned for an article about the state of Grahamstown's "hookup culture" one student wryly noted that "Sometimes it feels like Grahamstown is like an extended incestuous family - everybody knows everybody else, everybody's done it with everybody else".[184] These sentiments were echoed in an edition of one of *Activate*'s more ribald and bawdy columns, 'Stool Talk', in which columnist Robin Kelly noted that "What really makes the socio-sex scene here so steamy though, is not how much sex is happening or who is watching, but how many people are actually involved!".[185] Statements like these indicate that among those students who were sexually active, many students ended up sharing partners between themselves, either over the course of successive monogamous relationships or over the course of various casual sexual encounters or one-night stands.

The ongoing discussion/debate around the logistics and ethics of birth control on campus must necessarily be read in conjunction with the discussion of what may be considered birth control's most extreme form – abortion. The national debate around abortion and the right to termination of pregnancy was also not without its ripples on Rhodes campus, and as the pages of *Activate* show the issue of abortion proved as controversial a topic of conversation at Rhodes as it did everywhere else. In 1994 the newly elected government had set up a Select Committee on Sterilization and Abortion, whose mandate was to review existing abortion legislation and make recommendations for the modification of said legislation.[186] In 1996 the Committee included as part of their final report to parliament a Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Bill, which was approved by cabinet in July 1996 and accepted by Parliament in August that year.[187] The proposed bill, which greatly extended the flexibility of the parameters under which abortions could be legally performed, was the subject of much dispute, so much so that a group of theologians opposed to the new legislation made a public call for the upcoming vote to be an "open" vote,

[184] King, K., 'DevelopMENtal Block", *Activate* October 1995 p. 15.
[185] Kelly, R., 'Stool Talk', *Activate* April 1995 p. 10.
[186] Hodes, R., 'The Medical History of Abortion in South Africa, c.1970 – 2000'. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39, 3, 2013, 537.
[187] *Ibid.*

meaning that parliamentarians would vote as individuals rather than as members of a party, a proposal that was rejected by the ANC executive.[188]

In the months leading up to the tabling of the bill by Parliament, *Activate* published several pieces on the contentious issue. In the August 1996 edition of the newspaper, the *Activate* editorial clarified that the official position of the paper was a pro-choice one.[189] In the interest of objective reporting and "balancing the debate", however, the issue contained a three-part article which sought to approach the question of abortion from different frames of reference, with one author arguing for pro-choice legislation despite the fact that according to her personal religious convictions she believed abortion to be wrong, another author making the argument that life began at the moment of conception and therefore abortion ought to be considered murder, and the third arguing that abortion was an unfortunate necessity but one whose frequency could be mitigated through better sex-education and contraception-promotion campaigns.[190] The article also included a graphic photograph of the corpse of a botched abortion victim, a decision which some readers found distasteful and a cheap attempt at eliciting support for the pro-choice stance on abortion through the use of an emotive and visceral image.[191]

In October 1996, the same month in which President Nelson Mandela personally endorsed the "Choice Bill", a coalition of various Christian student societies at Rhodes, that included His People Church and CathSoc, embarked upon an aggressive anti-abortion campaign, utilising flyers, e-mails, mural paintings and posters, some of which contained graphic images, such as foetuses' heads being held by pincers.[192] This in turn prompted another group of pro-choice student activists to mount a counter-demonstration, and the wall mural painted by the anti-abortion group was swiftly covered up by a series of slogans promoting a woman's right to bodily autonomy.[193] As incidents like this demonstrate, the Rhodes student population was heavily divided on the issue of abortion, and in this sense the Rhodes community can be seen as reflective of the divisions within the broader South African society at the time.

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[188] *Ibid.*
[189] Editorial, *Activate* August 1996, p. 8.
[190] Webster, M., Adlard, J., and Vincent, L., 'Yes or No to Abortion?' *Activate* August 1996, pp. 10 – 11.
[191] "Appalled and Impressed" (Letter to Editor), *Activate* September 1996, p. 10.
[192] Hodes, 'Medical History, 538; Mokoditoa, T., 'The abortion debate', *Activate* October 1996, p. 2.
[193] Mokoditoa, 'The abortion debate'.

The Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act was passed into law by the National Assembly on 30 October 1996, with 209 votes in favour, 87 votes against, and 5 abstentions.[194] Several years later, *Activate* ran two pieces – one double-article piece in 2000 and a second article in 2004 – examining the state of abortion in Grahamstown following the relaxation of legal strictures. According to Dr Barbara Bull, medical officer in charge of abortions at Settlers Hospital, 79 abortions took place at the Hospital in 1999, and though it is impossible to know how many of those abortions were had by Rhodes students, one can reasonably assume that several students would have numbered among those 79.[195] Also of interest in this particular edition, however, is the testimony of a student who, upon deciding to have an abortion, opted to travel to a different city rather than have her abortion in Grahamstown, in order to avoid judgment and condemnation from "over-zealous Christians".[196] Clearly, the post-apartheid legislative sanctioning of abortion had not removed the stigma attached to the procedure, especially when religious sentiments were involved. The later article, written in 2004, gave an overview of the process involved in getting an abortion and also included a sidebar in which a handful of students, presumably chosen at random, gave their views on abortion.[197] Once again, those students who opposed abortion did so primarily on religious grounds.

By the end of the twentieth century, contraception, at least, had become far more readily available on campus. In a 1999 article detailing a student's impression of that year's Orientation Week the author mentions hearing "the melodic plop of used condoms landing on the wet grass after being chucked out the window" and notes how students could acquire not only free condoms but also free contraceptive pills and morning-after pills during O-week.[198] With contraception readily available on campus, and abortion a legal option out of unwanted pregnancy in the event of contraceptive failure or slip-ups, students at Rhodes at the dawn of the twenty-first century were in a better position than they had ever before been to indulge in recreational sex, if they were inclined to do so.

The push towards making contraception readily available on campus was lent further momentum in the early 1990s by growing concerns around the rapidly escalating

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[194] Hodes, 'Medical History', 538.
[195] Dancer, H., 'A Life and Death Decision'. *Activate* 2000 Edition 4 (4-18 May), p. 3.
[196] Anonymous, 'My Foetal Position'. *Activate* 2000 Edition 4 (4-18 May), p. 2.
[197] Brennan, J., and Odendal, L., 'The Reality of Abortion'. *Activate* 2004 Edition 2 (21 October), p. 4.
[198] 'The Story of O', *Activate* February 1999, p. 9.

crisis of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. Statistics released to *Activate*'s reporters by the Red Cross paint a harrowing picture of just how rapidly the disease had spread through the Grahamstown area over the course of the early 1990s. In December 1990, there were only three confirmed individuals living with AIDS in Grahamstown, a figure which grew to 23 in 1991, 37 in 1992, and 75 in 1993, with 22 people known to have died of AIDS-related causes over this four-year period.[199] By 1996, the number of confirmed cases of AIDS had grown to 170, a figure which does not take into the account the presumably numerous other instances of individuals infected with HIV who had not yet developed AIDS.[200] In 1995, Grahamstown's first HIV/AIDS support group was launched under the leadership of Ben Schoemann, with the aim of providing counselling to those living with HIV/AIDS and raising awareness around the epidemic in Grahamstown.[201] By 1996 the prospect that HIV/AIDS could pose a significant health risk to students and staff at Rhodes was being taken seriously by the university authorities, and the San began distributing pamphlets informing students of the facts around the virus and the dangers it entailed.[202] It was at this point that the San also first began to consider the idea of conducting blood tests on campus. This notion, however, was approached with caution, due to both the potential legal ramifications involved and the fact that the prohibitive costs of the testing procedure would mean that HIV tests would only be available to students on private medical aid.[203]

In 1997 (a year in which an estimated 2000 people in Grahamstown were HIV-positive) the San began offering HIV tests to students at a subsidized cost (R20 as opposed to the R60 – 120 that the test cost elsewhere at the time).[204] Students electing to be tested were also offered both pre- and post- test counselling by Ben Schoemann.[205] This decision appears to have been well-received by students; in 2000 the San reportedly administered between three to four HIV tests every week.[206] Two years later Rhodes formed a committee intended to develop a formal HIV/AIDS

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[199] Dixon, N., 'AIDS in Grahamstown'. *Activate* October 1996, p. 6.
[200] *Ibid.*
[201] Naidoo, I., 'AIDS: Don't let it happen'. *Activate* March 1995, p. 5.
[202] Lloyd, T., 'Testing Times at the San'. *Activate* May 1995, p. 6.
[203] *Ibid.*
[204] Fourie, M., and Ross-Watt, J., 'HIV Tests on Campus'. *Activate* April 1997, 2.
[205] *Ibid.*
[206] Van Niekerk, J., Whitehouse, A., Anderson M., Scheckter, J., Krasser, M. and Sylvester, J., 'Sex and the City of Saints'. *Activate* 2000 Edition 1 (1-14 March), p. 6.

policy for the university, headed by the student adviser, Mark Rainier.[207] Among the recommendations put forward by the committee were the prohibition of screening prospective students and staff for HIV and the notion of keeping a small stock of the anti-retroviral drug AZT on hand at the San.[208] The decision to put together a formal committee to tackle the issue of HIV at Rhodes may have in part been influenced by shocking statistics released that year by the *Eastern Cape Herald*, indicating that some 25% of students at the University of Fort Hare, an institution geographically close to and historically associated with Rhodes, were infected with the virus.[209] The official university AIDS policy was finalized in 2006 and approved by Council in 2008, and made provision for the establishment of a permanent HIV and AIDS Task Committee.[210] The policy laid out the position of the university vis-a-vis managing the social consequences of HIV/AIDS within the Rhodes community, placing a heavy emphasis on confidentiality, education and putting in place adequate support structures to assist students and staff living with the virus.[211]

One striking example of the relaxation of attitudes towards sex and sexuality among the Rhodes student community over the course of the 1990s can be seen in the increased consumption and discussion of pornography on campus. During apartheid, pornographic materials were subject to an outright ban, following provisions laid down in the Publications Entertainment Act No. 26 of 1963 and the Publications Act 42 of 1974. The latter sought to restrict the production and distribution of "publications, films and public entertainment which were deemed offensive, indecent and obscene or harmful to public morals or blasphemous or offensive to religious convictions to a section of population".[212] The ban on pornography (with the exception of child pornography) was repealed with the implementation of the Film and Publications Act no. 65 of 1996, though pornography had already begun to circulate on the open market prior to the official reversal of the ban on the part of the new dispensation.

In 1995 numerous newsagents in Grahamstown stocked pornographic magazines and that year the town even played host to a controversial live-sex performance

[207] Ball, D., 'AZT for Rhodes?'. *Activate* June 1999, 6.
[208] *Ibid.*
[209] Mupfurutsa, H., '25% of Students HIV Positive'. *Activate* June 1999, 6.
[210] Rhodes University HIV and AIDS Policy, 2009. Available at: https://www.ru.ac.za/hiv-aids/policy/.
[211] *Ibid.*
[212] Publications Act 42 of 1974, Section 47.

troupe, The Pussycats.[213] The newfound availability of pornographic films and images in the 1990s seems to have been gladly welcomed by certain sections of the Rhodes student population. According to an *Activate* article of August 1998, the common rooms in numerous men's residences were the site of regular "blue movie" screenings and certain residences were even said to have communal collections of pornographic magazines which members of the residence could borrow and peruse at their leisure.[214] The consumption of internet pornography was also exceedingly common, to the point where the Information Technology Division resorted to censoring internet searches from university computers, filtering out search terms related to pornographic material in an attempt to reduce the strain on the university network.[215] The use of pornography was not restricted only to male students, either, as pornographic material was also reportedly present in women's residences, though female students were rather more reticent on the subject when asked.[216]

Somewhat surprisingly, a survey on the sex lives of students living in residence conducted by *Activate* in 2000 indicates that levels of reported sexual activity among Rhodes students seem to have increased only marginally in the twenty-eight years following the student health survey conducted by the SRC in 1972. According to a report on the results of the survey printed in *Activate* in March of 2000,[217] 50% of respondents reported being sexually active, an increase of only 2.8% over a period of almost three decades.[218] As was the case with the 1972 survey results, the majority of sexually active students were male.[219] *Activate*'s reporters also indicated that non-sexually active students cited religious beliefs as the reason why they did not engage in pre-marital sex.[220] Although contraception was available at the san Rhodes students seem not to have been particularly keen to avail themselves of it. The san reportedly only distributed a total of 1128 contraceptives, mainly in the form of contraceptive pills and injections, throughout the year of 1999.[221] Almost all students

[213] McKenzie, R., and Graulich I., "Pussycats Sex Troupe". *Activate* April 1995, p. 3.
[214] Botha, N., and Leuner, B., 'X-Rating Guys Residences'. *Activate* August 1998, p. 4.
[215] Molepo, M., 'No More Porn at Rhodes'. *Activate* October 1998, p. 2.
[216] Botha, N., and Leuner, B., 'Pornography: Girls Dig it Lank'. *Activate* October 1998, p. 8.
[217] The actual survey itself seems to have unfortunately not been preserved.
[218] Van Niekerk, J., Whitehouse, A., Anderson M., Scheckter, J., Krasser, M. and Sylvester, J., 'Sex and the City of Saints'), p. 6.
[219] *Ibid.*
[220] *Ibid.*
[221] *Ibid.*

questioned, however, agreed that condoms should be made freely available in residences.[222]

The assertion that attitudes towards sex among the Rhodes student community had become more relaxed and open by the beginning of the twenty-first century is borne out by the increasingly explicit and open discussion of sex within the pages of *Activate*. The Orientation Edition of the paper for the year 2000, for instance, included as a joke a "Valentine's Day Signature Card" on which readers could collect the signatures of their various Valentine's Day "conquests", under categories such as "People I slept with", "People I settled for but claimed I was drunk the next morning", and so on.[223] In a similar vein, the O-Week edition for the following year included a feature entitled 'Rules of Attraction' giving both male and female students advice on how to navigate the romantic and sexual scene at Rhodes and giving a list of stereotypical "mating strategies" they were likely to encounter.[224] The same edition also included the traditional Orientation Week "A-Z of Rhodes" feature, under which, for instance, "One Night Stands" were described as being "a staple of the average Rhodent's relationship history, useful when masturbation gets boring" and "shagging" was defined as "a wonderful pastime, lots of fun as long as you do it safely and with the other person's consent".[225]

The growing reputation of Rhodes as a sexually liberal (or, depending on one's point of view, licentious and debauched) institution formed the basis of a 2013 article by Fred De Vries, 'Grahamstown: Love and Sex in the City of Saints', published by the *Mail and Guardian*. In the article De Vries sets out to portray Grahamstown as a kind of sexual bohemia and bastion of experimentation, drawing on the experiences of a handful of interviewees and their salacious tales of threesomes, meaningless sex and bisexual experimentation. [226] One of De Vries' interviewees, under the pseudonym "Suzette", characterized Grahamstown as a "liberating" space, one where "so much crazy stuff can happen with no consequences".[227] Testimonies such as these indicate that for at least some students, Rhodes was a place of exceptional sexual

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[222] *Ibid.*
[223] 'Valentine's Day Signatures', *Activate* 2000 O – Week Edition (February), p. 7.
[224] Joseph, N., 'Rules of Attraction'. *Activate* 2001 O-Week Edition (February), pp. 4-5.
[225] 'Grahamstown's A-Z', *Activate* 2001 O-Week Edition (February), p. 6
[226] De Vries, F., 'Grahamstown: Love and Sex in the City of Saints', *Mail and Guardian* 11 October 2013. Available at: http://mg.co.za/article/2013-10-11-00-grahamstown-love-and-sex-in-the-city-of-saints. Accessed October 2016.
[227] *Ibid.*

openness. However, De Vries' article drew severe criticism from several fronts. Some commentators found his writing sensationalist, and accused him of leveraging the experience of a small handful of students as being somehow representative of the community as a whole.[228] One of the most damning criticisms of De Vries' article came from Hussein Badat, who in a response, first published by *Africa is a Country* and later reprinted by *The Mail and Guardian,* pointed out that by conflating "Grahamstown" with "the Rhodes community" De Vries essentially erased from existence the majority of Grahamstown's populace: "the fact of the matter is that Rhodes University and Grahamstown do not begin and end with a certain segment of middle class students spending their days and nights drinking and experimenting with their identities and sexualities".[229] Sensationalist though it may be, De Vries' article provides some indication that for at least some members of the Rhodes student community sexual liberation characterized their time studying at the university.

Running parallel to a greater acceptance of sexual openness and "promiscuity" within the Rhodes community, one can also witness a concomitant shifting of attitudes towards those of alternative sexualities, in particular homosexuality – though this, as the next section shall explore, proved to be a far more contentious and pitfall-ridden development.

The broader context of the suppression of homosexuality in apartheid South Africa

The repression and regulation of sexuality that characterised the apartheid period in South Africa was nowhere more evident than in the state's attitude towards and treatment of homosexuality. Sexual contact between men (and, to a lesser extent, between women) was strictly prohibited, and subject to harsh legal penalties. In the rhetoric of the National Party homosexuality was constructed as a threat to white South African civilization, a force of moral degradation with the potential to undermine the moral fibre of white South African society.[230] In an address given to

[228] *Ibid.*
[229] Badat, H., 'Where is Grahamstown?', *Africa is a Country* 13 October 2013. Available at: http://africasacountry.com/2013/10/where-is-grahamstown/. Accessed October 2016.
[230] Retief, G., 'Keeping Sodom out of the Laager: State repression of homosexuality in apartheid South Africa'. In Gevisser, M., and Cameron, E. (Eds.), *Defiant Desire: gay and lesbian lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1994, 102).

the House of Assembly in 1967, Minister of Justice PC Pelser referred to homosexuality as "a viper in our midst", and made reference to the collapse of ancient civilizations such as Rome or Sparta where forms of homosexuality had been commonplace and accepted.[231] The implication - that if South Africa allowed such practices to take place within its borders, it would soon follow suit - was clear. Homosexuality was characterized in the discourse of the National Party as "foreign" to South Africa, an invasive deviancy, and various powerful Afrikaner religious and cultural organisations portrayed homosexuality as a problem spread chiefly by older English and Jewish men and women in an attempt to corrupt "innocent" Afrikaner boys and girls.[232] Retief (1994) has linked the fears around homosexuality to a more general paranoia among white, particularly Afrikaner, South Africans at the time concerning whites' status as a racial minority attempting to keep control of an increasing black majority population. The fear that whites would eventually "shrink into obsolescence" if they did not breed faster than other racial groups provided grounds to condemn homosexuality as a threat to the reproductive success of the white nation.[233] Following the establishment in 1967 of a special parliamentary committee tasked with investigating the matter, a proposed new amendment to the Immorality Act was drafted and eventually passed into law in 1969. The amendment extended pre-existing sodomy laws by criminalising sexual contact between men and boys under the age of 19, and also included the infamous "three men at a party" act, which criminalized sexual contact between men at a party where a "party" was defined as "any occasion where more than two persons are present".[234] The Act also criminalised the manufacture, sale or supply of "any article which is calculated to stimulate sexual passion or to give sexual gratification", presumably in an attempt to combat the threat of lesbianism.[235]

Following the passing of the Act, the South African police initiated a concentrated clampdown on homosexual activity throughout the 1970s. Clubs and bars which were known gathering places for gay and lesbian South Africans were placed under surveillance, and police conducted regular random raids on these spaces and on

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[231] *Ibid.*
[232] Croucher, S., 'South Africa's Democratisation and the Politics of Gay Liberation'. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28, 2, 2002, 317. Available at: http://www.istor.org/stable/823387. Accessed May 2016.
[233] Retief, 'Keeping Sodom out of the Laager', 102.
[234] Immorality Amendment Act, Act No. 57 of 1969.
[235] *Ibid.*

outdoor "cruising spots".[236] The ultimate threat, Retief notes, was the threat that one's identity could be leaked to the newspapers, as "exposure could have meant unemployment, social isolation and vitriolic abuse wherever one went".[237]

The single worst example of homophobia under the apartheid regime, however, can be seen in the policies towards homosexual recruits in the South African Defence Force, In particular the so-called "Aversion Project". Between 1968 and 1987 SADF conscripts suspected of being homosexual were subject to a horrific series of psychiatric experiments designed to "cure" them of their predilections.[238] These conscripts were sent to the secretive Ward 22 at 1 Military Hospital in Pretoria where they were housed indiscriminately with drug abusers and the mentally ill and forced to undergo crude electroshock treatment.[239] In addition, approximately 900 men and women were forced to undergo gender reassignment surgery, the "logic" of the state being that if a person had sexual desires for a person of the same gender as them, the simplest way to "fix" the problem was to forcibly assign them a different gender.[240] The casualty rates of these surgeries were high, and the victims were not accorded proper post-operative treatment or hormonal supplements.[241] As it so happens, the head of the Aversion Project, Dr Aubrey Levine (or "Doctor Shock", as he was dubbed by the tabloids), later went on to lecture in the Psychology department at Rhodes University (and who is now, ironically, in a Canadian prison having been convicted of the sexual assault of several of his male patients).[242]

Reading the experience of homosexuals at Rhodes through the pages of Rhodeo, Part 1: 1968 – 1983.

Even during the height of the apartheid state's crackdown on homosexual and queer people during the late 1960s, the editors of *Rhodeo* appear by and large to have taken

[236] Retief, 'Keeping Sodom out of the Laager', 103.
[237] *Ibid.*
[238] Kaplan, R., 'Treatment of homosexuality during apartheid'. *British Medical Journal* 329, 18, 25 December 2004, 1415. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/25469630. Accessed May 2016.
[239] *Ibid.*
[240] *Ibid.*
[241] *Ibid.*
[242] Poplak, R., "Dr Shock: How an apartheid-era psychiatrist went from torturing gay soldiers in South Africa to sexually abusing patients in Alberta", *The Walrus*, September 19 2015. Available at: https://thewalrus.ca/doctor-shock/. Accessed May 2016.

a progressive and sympathetic attitude towards the plight of homosexuals in South Africa.[243] In an edition published in May 1967, *Rhodeo* ran a piece entitled "Focus on Homosexuality", in which an anonymous gay student wrote a frank and touching account of the homosexual experience.[244] In the piece, the author seeks to debunk some of the myths surrounding homosexuality - that gay men hate women, that homosexuals somehow "choose" their sexual orientation, that all homosexual men are effeminate or in some other way obviously gay - and gives an account of the difficulties of coming out to one's parents as gay, the attempts by psychiatrists and psychologists to "cure" homosexuals of their same-sex desires, and the way in which the social stigma and legal repercussions of homosexuality in South Africa led many homosexuals to take their own lives.[245] "When this happens", the author concludes, "society washes its hands in the blood of an innocent man".[246]

As the pages of *Rhodeo* reveal, certain progressive elements at Rhodes showed a keen interest in the wellbeing of homosexual students on campus. In 1968, in response to the National Party's proposed amendment to the Immorality Act which would further criminalise sexual contact between men, the World Affairs Society held a symposium on homosexuality, at which a number of experts - including a psychiatrist, a social worker and most tellingly a minister, Rev. Louw from Port Elizabeth who was an outspoken critic of the proposed legislation - were invited to speak.[247] Mr Geoff Verschoor, chairman of the society, appealed for homosexual students at Rhodes to come forward and take part in the symposium, and pointed out that "there are more homosexuals within our society than many of us realise... some of our colleagues at this university... are, unknown to us, homosexuals".[248] In a letter *Rhodeo* published in April 1968, however, the Society's suggestion that homosexuals publicly come forward and explain their position was met with some criticism. The author, going by the pen-name "Hopeful", noted that "the ostracism

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[243] A remark on terminology: the nomenclature used to refer to people of alternate sexualities is a dense and complex subject and one that has undergone a significant degree of change and evolution over time, with various terms such as "homosexual", "gay", "queer" and the modern, more inclusive "LGBT" (or "LGBTQI+) holding various different denotative and connotative meanings as well as political implications. In the writing of this section of this thesis I have made use of several different terms in an effort to reflect the terminology and nomenclature present in the sources themselves, in this way intending to showcase how the way in which these things were spoken of within the Rhodes community has been subject to alteration and change over the past few decades.
[244] 'Focus on Homosexuality', *Rhodeo*, 4 May 1967, p. 4.
[245] *Ibid.*
[246] *Ibid*
[247] 'Queer Symposium', *Rhodeo*, 30 May 1968, p. 5.
[248] *Ibid.*

which any homosexual experiences after publicly declaring his or her position, is enough to make a homosexual or lesbian think twice about such a declaration".[249] As the author of "Focus on Homosexuality" had sought to do the previous year, "Hopeful" used the letter as a platform from which to debunk some common myths about homosexuals - that homosexuals were "vicious, immoral and degraded people", that homosexuals were prone to seducing children, that all homosexuals indulged in anal sex, and so on.[250] "Hopeful" then goes on to say that

> Homosexuality is only abnormal because society defines it as such. If society were more tolerant of us, we would perhaps be more useful to ourselves and other people. After all: most of us are just ordinary, unspectacular people trying to live decent lives under trying circumstances.[251]

The above-cited examples are telling in several ways. First, the fact that a Rhodes society took the initiative to organise such a symposium, and that it took a sympathetic stance towards homosexuals and a seemingly critical stance towards the proposed new legislation, suggests that at least some elements of Rhodes' culture were relatively open-minded when it came to such matters. Secondly, the fact that *Rhodeo* was willing to provide homosexuals with a platform on which to express their views is indicative of a progressive attitude towards the politics of queerness on the part of the editorial staff of the newspaper. Finally, pieces like the 1967 "Focus on Homosexuality" article and "Hopeful"'s letter provide one with historical evidence for the simple existence of homosexual students at Rhodes during the 1960s - a fact that may appear self-evident, but which is still of interest nonetheless.

A further avenue through which the issue of homosexuality was discussed and brought into the public sphere at Rhodes was that of student theatre. In May 1970 the Little Theatre played host to a series of one-act student productions, one of which, "Part of the Scenery" by Lorraine Bellamy, dealt with homosexuality as its major theme.[252] *Rhodeo* published a fairly scathing review of the play, describing the playwright's treatment of the subject as "insensitive" and criticising Bellamy for her use of overly technical and theoretical dialogue, but these criticisms are levelled against the execution of the piece, rather than against the content of the play itself.[253] That such a production was even put on by Rhodes students in the first place,

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[249] 'Homosexual Appeal', *Rhodeo*, 4 April 1968, p.6.
[250] *Ibid.*
[251] *Ibid.*
[252] 'Dramatic New Plays', *Rhodeo* 28 May 1970, p. 8.
[253] 'Student one-act plays prove interesting', *Rhodeo*, 11 June 1970, p. 6.

controversial though its subject matter would have been in the context of the sexually repressive apartheid state, can be read as indicative of a degree of liberal open-mindedness on the part of certain elements of Rhodes society. This interpretation of the attitudes towards homosexuality on the part of *Rhodeo*'s editorial staff is further supported by *Rhodeo*'s reporting on a talk given at the 1973 Arts and Science Symposium by one Dr. Katinka Strydom, then a lecturer in the Department of Psychiatric and Social Work at the University of Cape Town, with Strydom reportedly condemning South Africa's general lack of tolerance towards and ignorance of homosexuality.[254]

These progressive attitudes were certainly not shared by all members of the Rhodes community. In August 1973 *Rhodeo* published a piece entitled "On Being Gay", featured on the cover page of the newspaper. This provoked a significant backlash from more conservative members of the Rhodes community.[255] The following issue of *Rhodeo* featured a letter to the editor by one Alan Robertson, who expressed distaste for homosexuality and for *Rhodeo* for allowing homosexuals a platform on which to speak. Robertson's objections to homosexuality were rooted in religious reasoning and in a highly traditional binary notion of sex and gender. He began his letter by claiming that "the natures of men and women are complementary. The nature of the man inclines towards dogmatism, aggression and self-confidence. The nature of the woman inclines more towards gentleness, reserve and self-sacrifice".[256] Following this premise, Robertson went on to state that homosexuals were therefore "acting contrary to [their] natural and god-given instincts... [and] the pursuit of such a relationship is BOUND to end in frustration, unhappiness and possible damage to the personalies [sic] of both involved".[257] The religious motivation behind Robertson's objection to homosexuality were made explicit when he claimed that "the pinnacle of the heterosexual relationship is Christian marriage" and that "homosexuality is a result of man's fallen nature", viewing homosexuality as a consequence of society's general estrangement from God.[258] He ended his letter by

[254] 'The Gay and You'. *Rhodeo* 9 August 1973.
[255] The particular edition in which this piece was published, unfortunately, appears to have been lost; it does not appear in any of the archived editions of *Rhodeo*. Its contents, therefore, have to be guessed at by examining the ways in which the piece was responded to in later issues of the newspaper.
[256] Robertson, A., 'Letter', *Rhodeo* 9 August 1973, p. 4.
[257] *Ibid.*
[258] *Ibid.*

imploring homosexuals to enter into a relationship with God, according to him the only way in which they would be able to turn their back on their same-sex desires and be able to engage in fulfilling heterosexual relationships.[259]

Robertson was not the only individual who objected to *Rhodeo*'s publication of "On Being Gay". A few issues later, in 1973, presumably in the interest of balancing the debate, *Rhodeo* published a piece by Paul Oliver entitled "On Not Being Gay". Oliver's take on the subject was far more measured than Robertson's, and written in a more dry and academic tone. Nonetheless, he was still highly critical of homosexuals and sceptical of the idea that they had any place in society. While he acknowledged that homosexuals "are needlessly victimized and much of their unhappiness could be eliminated if society treated them primarily as people, with normal human decency", he went on to characterise homosexuals as fundamentally "immature", citing one D.J. West as claiming that "many young men who practise homosexuality in their late teens or early 20s grow out of the habit after meeting a suitable woman".[260] Oliver's objections to homosexuality, unlike those of Robertson, were grounded not in religion but in various psychological and social theories of homosexuality which were fashionable at the time, but have since been debunked. He rejected the notion that homosexuals were born as such, framing homosexuality as a deliberate choice rather than an innate sexual orientation, and characterised homosexual relationships as "intrinsically unsatisfactory".[261] Oliver's piece ended with an appeal to homosexuals to seek psychiatric treatment in order to cure their "condition".[262]

This conservative backlash against the *Rhodeo* editors' decision to take a more open-minded and sympathetic stance towards the issue of homosexuality provoked, in turn, a sort of counter-backlash in the form of yet another letter to the editor, submitted by one David Carver in 1973. Writing in response to Robertson's letter, Carver took umbrage with several of the principal points raised by Robertson, emphasising that the generalisations he made with regard to the differing natures of men and women failed to take into account the variety that existed between individuals, and the reality that gender roles were the product of social

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[259] *Ibid.*
[260] Oliver, P., 'On Not Being Gay', *Rhodeo* 27, 12, 1973, p. 6.
[261] *Ibid.*
[262] *Ibid.*

construction.[263] Carver was also sceptical of the idea that it was possible or desirable to "cure" a person of their homosexual desires, pointing out that when one spoke of a homosexual one was not referring to a sexual orientation in abstract, but rather an entire personality, and attempting to "fix" one facet of that personality could well have negative consequences for the whole. [264] Rather than trying to "fix" homosexuals, Carver argued, what was necessary was the re-education of society as a whole in order to provide an environment where more care, acceptance and tolerance of homosexuals was possible.[265]

As pieces such as Robertson's letter and Oliver's opinion piece show, it would be a mistake to assume that Rhodes as a whole was especially progressive in terms of the university community's attitude towards homosexuality and gay rights in the 1960s and 70s, despite the fact that the editorial staff of *Rhodeo* certainly appears to have been. As these counter-examples demonstrate, there were students (and, presumably, staff) at Rhodes whose opinions on this matter fell more in line with the repressive and condemnatory stance towards "deviant" sexualities which characterized the official position of the apartheid state. It is of interest, nonetheless, that *Rhodeo*, which can be seen as a mouthpiece of the Rhodes student community during this period - albeit one staffed by a small if vocal minority - was open-minded and even supportive of homosexuals during this period. The fact that *Rhodeo* even provided a platform on which these issues could be discussed and brought to the public attention suggests an undercurrent of liberalism with regard to these matters which was quite at odds with the general atmosphere of state-endorsed sexual repression which held sway over South Africa at the time.

It would be incorrect to over-emphasise the progressive nature of *Rhodeo*'s general discursive treatment of homosexuality. By contemporary standards, some of the ways in which *Rhodeo* framed the discussion on homosexuality, while sympathetic and well-intentioned, come across as rather problematic. For instance, there was an almost total exclusion of any discussion of lesbianism in the majority of homosexuality-related pieces published in *Rhodeo*. The handful of pieces and letters relating to homosexuality that appeared in the newspaper during the late 1960s and early 1970s dealt, either implicitly or explicitly, exclusively with gay men; there is no

[263] Carver, D., 'Homosexuality', *Rhodeo* 27, 13, 1973, p. 7.
[264] *Ibid.*
[265] *Ibid.*

mention of lesbian or even bisexual women up until 1978. On 2 June that year, *Rhodeo* published a piece entitled "Bi the Gay", in which an anonymous contributor described some of her experiences and impressions as a bisexual woman. This particular piece provides interesting insights on several levels. Like the other pieces concerning homosexuality previously published in *Rhodeo*, the tone of the piece was highly sympathetic. Indeed, there was what one might almost call a certain degree of stridency or militancy in the writing of it: the author began by admonishing those who had no qualms about dealing with alcoholics, political radicals or even prostitutes, but who balked at engaging with homosexuals.[266] She went on to discuss some of the misconceptions she had had about lesbians before actually engaging with them herself - that she'd previously thought of them as all "brash butches who didn't shave their legs, spoke in practised rough baritones, and wore big boots and aftershave", but on encountering more lesbians had realised that these stereotypes did not necessarily hold true and that lesbians, too, could be feminine.[267] She also, remarkably given the attitudes of the time, wrote quite frankly about the nature of lesbian sexual experiences, characterising her same-sex relationships as sexually "both stimulating and satisfying" and noting that for her "mutual masturbation rather than penal penetration guarantees sexual satisfaction".[268]

Frankness and openness aside, however, there are certain elements to the "Bi the Gay" piece which to twenty-first century eyes come across as jarringly regressive, or even indicative of subconscious internalised homophobia on the part of the author. Though the author pointed out that the stereotypes she had previously held concerning lesbian women proved to be not necessarily true, she herself then later deployed similar stereotypes, albeit positive ones, claiming that "most gays... are sensitive and have a tremendous sense of rythme [sic], taste (in cuisine and culture and couture) and current affairs".[269] More problematic, the author repeatedly framed and presented homosexuality, particularly lesbianism, as an illness, the product of psychological sickness and trauma as opposed to simply being a sexual orientation. She speculated that lesbianism (or "penis-phobia", as she referred to it several times) might stem from "a sense of sexual inferiority or inadequacy [which] may lead to total disinterest in hetero relationships" and drew on some quasi-Freudian notions of

[266] 'Bi the Gay', *Rhodeo* 32, 4, 2 June 1978, p. 9.
[267] *Ibid.*
[268] *Ibid.*
[269] *Ibid.*

childhood sexual development in order to further support this theory, linking lesbian desires to the absence of a father figure or on the deprivation of maternal love in childhood.[270] "Penis phobia", the author claimed, "generally develops as a result of some bizarre childhood experience. The child then grows up with intensified feelings of hurt, hatred and repulsion".[271]

That such relentless pathologisation of same-sex desire was present even in a fairly pro-gay piece written by a self-professed bisexual woman is a telling indicator of how "behind the times" the general understanding of homosexuality in South Africa was in the 1970s. Homosexuality was still presented, even by some homosexuals themselves, as a pathology, a mental disorder, as opposed to a healthy and normal sexual orientation. The contemporary liberal understanding of homosexuality as being a legitimate form of sexual attraction with no necessary pathological roots or dimensions - at least, no more than any other form of sexual attraction inevitably accrues - was still some way off.

The next mention of homosexuality in the pages of *Rhodeo* appeared five years later, in a 1983 edition. In the *Issues* section of the newspaper, a segment dedicated to discussing pressing social and political issues of the time, there was a brief piece on homosexuality, the tone of which was once again sympathetic to the problems faced by homosexuals. The author noted that the components of a homosexual relationship - spiritual bonding, sexual and physical attraction, romantic symbolism - are in no inherent way different to those that characterise a heterosexual relationship, and that the particular challenges faced by homosexuals - social condemnation and isolation, challenges in self-identification and expression, legal repercussions - were the result of the broader society's negative attitude towards homosexuality, rather than inherent qualities of homosexuality per se.[272]

An examination of homosexuality as represented in the pages of *Rhodeo* between 1968 and 1983 brings to light a remarkable degree of consistency on the part of the ever-changing editors and contributors of the newspaper. The majority of pieces relating to homosexuality and queerness written by *Rhodeo* staff and contributors were at the very least sympathetic to homosexuals, if not outright supportive of them.

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[270] *Ibid.*
[271] *Ibid.*
[272] 'Issues: Homosexuality'. *Rhodeo* 6 June 1983.

Certainly, the views of the *Rhodeo* staff over this period seemed quite at odds with the official narrative of homophobia and suppression of "deviant" sexual orientations put forward by the apartheid state. If one were to take *Rhodeo* as representative of the views of the Rhodes student body as a whole one would have good reason to suppose that the Rhodes campus during this period was an enlightened and liberal space when it came to student attitudes towards homosexuality. This conclusion is a fallacious one – *Rhodeo* was run by a small group of students, and one should not over-emphasise the newspaper's role as the voice of the student body as a whole. That being said, the attitudes towards homosexuality evinced by *Rhodeo* should not be entirely discounted; they are indicative of the fact that at least some students of the university held progressive and sympathetic stances on this issue, stances which were maintained over a fairly long period of time and were in opposition to the general atmosphere of state-endorsed homophobia which was predominant during the apartheid period. Rhodes students as a whole were probably not particularly progressive in terms of their understanding of different sexualities by present-day standards - but they were almost certainly on the whole more progressive than most of the country was at the time.

The progressive attitude towards homosexuality that characterised the editorship of *Rhodeo* was by no means always shared by the University authorities. In 1977, the vice-chancellor, Dr Derek Henderson, censored an issue of Rhodes' other student newspaper, *The Oppidan Press*, on the grounds that it featured images of naked men (with their genitalia covered) which Henderson deemed "homosexual and prurient".[273] Dr Henderson (perhaps due to his Catholic background) held fairly conservative and traditionalist attitudes towards sex and sexuality in general. He had also censored issues of *Rhodeo* and club posters that depicted female nudity, and described himself in an interview as "a liberal in political matters and a conservative in moral ones".[274]

There is little evidence of official disciplinary action being taken against homosexual students. Though homosexuality was illegal in South Africa during the apartheid period and therefore circumscribed on campus as well, I have been able to uncover only one instance in which a student was expelled from Rhodes for homosexual

[273] 'Henderson: A Man for All Reasons'. *Rhodeo* 13 February 1978, p. 3.
[274] *Ibid.*

behaviour, the case of a certain Mr AJ De Villiers in 1982. In this case, however, it seems that homosexuality was far from being his only "offence": he was found guilty of "homosexual behaviour, contravention of residence rules, causing damage to university property, and absenting himself from the University".[275] It would appear that homosexual behaviour alone was not enough to get De Villiers excluded, and that his alleged homosexual activity was simply one of many infractions committed by a delinquent student.

This apparent absence of official chastisement of homosexual activity could be due to a number of factors. The number of self-admitted homosexual students at Rhodes was most likely low to begin with, given the low student numbers of the university, and gay students were no doubt painfully aware of the exorbitant cost of being outed as such. The penalty for being openly homosexual at this time, after all, was not only expulsion from the university, but also potentially legal reprisal from the state, as well, in the form of fines or even imprisonment, not to mention social exclusion and ostracisation. For gay and lesbian students at Rhodes, discretion and secrecy were of the utmost importance. It was no doubt in the best interests of the Rhodes authorities not to look too closely into the lives and loves of homosexual students on campus. To bring such matters to light would have reflected badly on the university, and the last thing the institution wanted for itself was to be branded a "queer" campus at a time when such matters were subject to such heavy censure and vilification by society and state.

"Apartheid's gone, and anything goes": gay liberation and the New South Africa[276]

In the waning years of the apartheid regime, the regulation and repression of homosexuality by the state underwent a certain degree of relaxation. In 1990, 1991 and 1992 authorities agreed to allow a lesbian and gay pride march through the streets of Johannesburg, an event that would have been inconceivable twenty years earlier.[277] Meanwhile, the involvement of gay and lesbian organisations such as

[275]Cory Library, Rhodes Council Minutes, MS 19 315. Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes, 4 November 1982. In Discipline 82.82, page 6.
[276] Title taken from Keller, L., 'Apartheid's Gone, and anything goes', *New York Times* 28 December 1994. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/1994/12/28/world/apartheid-s-gone-and-anything-goes.html?pagewanted=all. Accessed June 2016.
[277] Retief, 'Keeping Sodom out of the Laager', 105.

GLOW (Gays and Lesbians on the Witwatersrand) and OLGA (Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Activists) in anti-apartheid popular movements such as the United Democratic Front (UDF) in the late 1980s and early 1990s meant that gay and lesbian activists were well placed to lobby the ANC to recognise gay and lesbian rights.[278] The ANC formally recognised gay rights at a policy conference in 1992, including a prohibition against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in its Bill of Rights.[279] The same recognition of gay and lesbian rights was soon after accorded by the Democratic Party and the IFP.[280] The stage was set, therefore, for a new South African order in which for the first time alternate sexualities could not only be recognized, but afforded protection and support within the framework of the incipient new constitution.

To an extent, the recognition of gay and lesbian rights within the social and political fabric of the new South Africa can be understood as a side-effect or additional consequence of the new South African ideology, as much as it came about as the result of concentrated lobbying on the part of gay and lesbian activists. The new ways of thinking about and articulating what path South Africa should take in the wake of the collapse of apartheid was premised, first and foremost, upon being what apartheid was not. Thus as the apartheid regime had been founded upon the discrimination, segregation, and exclusion of the 'Other' from political, social and economic life, so the reformulated South African nation was framed as being based upon a radical form of inclusivity and non-discrimination. Discrimination on any grounds was constructed as antithetical to the post-apartheid transformative project, and thus the new constitution and bill of rights ensured that, above all else, the right of groups and individuals to be free from discrimination was legally entrenched and enforced. The ideological and legal prioritization of non-discrimination thus created an environment in which alternate sexualities could gain legal and social recognition, and be constitutionally safeguarded from prejudice and discrimination. That South Africa became, on paper at least, such a liberal and progressive nation with regard to the recognition of the rights of homosexuals is all the more remarkable given the deeply entrenched homophobia which was widespread - and remains commonplace - among many different South African communities, black and white, and bears

[278] Croucher, 'South Africa's Democratisation', 319.
[279] *Ibid*, 320.
[280] *Ibid*.

testament, perhaps, to the radically transformative power of the post-apartheid moment. This mentality was perhaps best encapsulated by a statement made in 1990 by ANC constitutional lawyer Albie Sachs at an OLGA press conference:

> What has happened to lesbian and gay people is the essence of apartheid - it tried to tell people who they are, how they should behave, what their rights were. The essence of democracy is that people should be free to be what they are. We want people to feel free.[281]

The constitutional guarantee that lesbian and gay South Africans "should be free to be what they are" only became a concrete legal and political achievement through a series of cases brought before the Constitutional Court over the course of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Between 1998 and 2004 the court ruled, among other decisions, that medical aid regulations that do not recognise same-sex partnerships were unconstitutional, that the crime of sodomy be abolished, that same-sex partners of South African residents be considered spouses in relation to immigration regulations, that same-sex couples be permitted to adopt children, and that the common-law definition of marriage, which only recognised heterosexual partnerships, be declared unconstitutional.[282]

Reading the experiences of homosexuals at Rhodes through the pages of Rhodeo/Activate, part 2: 1990 – 2016

The tolerant and open-minded attitude of *Rhodeo* on matters of sex and sexuality was further underscored in 1993 with the launch of a regular column, *Outward Bound*, devoted specifically to discussing gay and lesbian news and issues. This was a particularly bold step on the part of *Rhodeo*, taking into consideration the fact that homosexuality was still illegal in South Africa at the time.[283] Though the column was initially published anonymously, in *Rhodeo's* August 1993 edition the author of *Outward Bound*, Peter Frost, decided to attach his name to the bottom of the column, reasoning that although *Outward Bound* had initially been intended as a voice for the queer community at Rhodes as a whole, such an idea was not in fact a

[281] Cited in Gevisser, M., 'A different fight for freedom: a history of South African lesbian and gay organisation from the 1950s to the 1990s, in Gevisser, M., and Cameron, E. (Eds.), *Defiant Desire: gay and lesbian lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1994, 82).
[282] Reddy, V., 'Decriminalisation of Homosexuality in post-apartheid South Africa: A Brief Legal Case History Review from Sodomy to Marriage'. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 67, 2, 3, 2006, 147. Available at: http://www.istor.org/stable/4066803. Accessed June 2016.
[283] 'Outward Bound', *Rhodeo* March 1993, p. 13.

practical one, as gays and lesbians at Rhodes were not, after all, one homogenous mass and it was therefore presumptuous of *Outward Bound* to pretend to speak for them.[284] Such a decision casts an interesting light on the changing status of homosexuality both in South Africa as a whole and at Rhodes in particular at the time. If Frost felt comfortable being identified as the author of a gay-interests column, and therefore presumably (though not, of course, necessarily) as homosexual himself, he must have felt secure in the assumption that being linked to homosexuality would not have any legal repercussions, or open himself up to homophobic assault either physical or verbal from members of the Rhodes community. That Frost was able to "come out" in this way speaks volumes in regard to the shifting of attitudes towards homosexuality, and is a far cry from the anonymous submissions that peppered the pages of *Rhodeo* in the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

This decision was not without its detractors; according to the initial edition to carry the *Outward Bound* piece, a certain "fascist" in administration had expressed disbelief at the very idea that there were "people like that on campus".[285] In the September 1993 edition, *Rhodeo* published a letter by a certain Dave Henderson, of the Assembly Church of God, criticising *Rhodeo*'s decision to run the column. Henderson's objections were religiously motivated, and his line of reasoning was in many ways similar to that put forward by Robertson thirty years earlier. The same premises were there: men and women were designed by God to be sexually and romantically complementary; the only context in which sexual intimacy was permissible was within the bounds of marriage, and any other sexual union was to be considered sinful according to the precepts laid out in the Bible.[286] The modern trend towards greater acceptance of homosexuality, Henderson argued, went against the will of God and was the consequence of the intellectual contributions of secular thinkers such as Sigmund Freud, Alfred Kinsey and Havelock Ellis.[287]

Henderson's theologically-based criticisms of homosexuality were challenged in a letter published in the following edition of *Rhodeo* (October 1993). The author, "Brett", pointed out that same-sex partners had just as much capacity to be

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[284] Frost, P. 'Outward Bound', *Rhodeo* August 1993, p.12.
[285] 'Editorial', *Rhodeo* March 1993, p. 10.
[286] Henderson, D., "Gays, Lesbians, and the Bible". *Rhodeo* September 1993, 6.
[287] *Ibid.*

"complementary" to one another as heterosexual couples did, and that if the only concrete difference between heterosexual and homosexual couples lay in their procreative capacity then logically Henderson ought to have extended his critique to sterile heterosexual couples or heterosexual couples who made use of contraception.[288] 'Brett' also drew attention to the fact that the Biblical literalism underlying Henderson's argument is had been largely abandoned by most mainstream theologians.[289]

As both the sheer existence of and the content reported in *Outward Bound* indicates, the early 1990s were a time during which the gay and lesbian community at Rhodes became far more vocal and visible, the continuing official illegality of homosexual acts notwithstanding. The year 1994, in particular, proved to be something of a watershed year for gay rights at Rhodes - as, indeed, it was a watershed year for South Africa in general.

In the May 1994 edition of the paper the tone of *Outward Bound* (now penned by one Ross Scheepers) was decidedly celebratory. Opening with the jubilant exclamation "We're Legal Now!!!", Scheepers pointed out that with the ANC, IFP and DP constituting 75% of the combined vote, the future was bright for homosexuals in South Africa as all three parties had formally recognized gay and lesbian rights.[290] "We are no longer", he wrote, "governed by a bunch of half-dead, white, balding, Afrikaans, conservative, middle-aged homophobic males".[291] In the same column, Scheepers made reference to a debate between political parties held on campus in anticipation of the upcoming election at which members of Rhodes' gay community were present and posed several questions to the delegates.[292] Reportedly, when the ACDP delegate at the debate commented that gay people "should not be allowed to carry on living their corrupt lifestyles", a member of the audience responded by saying "he shouldn't flatter himself - no gay person would want to corrupt a sanctimonious little bigot like him".[293] This incident can be read as indicative of a generally more accepting and liberal atmosphere towards homosexuality on the Rhodes campus that extended beyond the confines of the *Rhodeo* (later *Activate*)

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[288] 'Brett', 'Homosexuals and the Bible take 2', *Rhodeo* October 1993, p. 7.
[289] *Ibid.*
[290] Scheepers, R., 'Outward Bound', *Rhodeo* May 1994, p. 13.
[291] *Ibid.*
[292] *Ibid.*
[293] *Ibid.*

office; it suggests that (at least some) gays and lesbians at Rhodes felt comfortable and secure enough to express themselves publicly, without (too much) fear of censure and reprisal.

That same year the Sexuality Tolerance and Education Program (STEP), Rhodes' first gay, lesbian and bisexual organisation, began organizing a wide array of events and campaigns in order to promote the recognition of gay, lesbian and bisexual students at Rhodes and combat homophobia on campus, offering counselling services to students struggling with their sexual identity, ran poster campaigns and, in typical Rhodes fashion, holding a series of "dykes and moffies" parties at the Vic.[294] That year Rhodes played host to the first gay and lesbian ball held at a university in South Africa, which was reportedly well-attended, though, as Scheepers archly noted, all of the various prizes given out during the ball were awarded to straight attendees.[295]

In 1994 STEP organised a rights march intended to draw attention to all forms of discrimination - racism, sexism, homophobia and ageism - with a specific focus on gay pride.[296] Intersectional interests aside, the stated aim of the march was to convince the Rhodes administration to officially incorporate principles of non-homophobia and non-heterosexism into the constitution of the university.[297] It is interesting that STEP's first large-scale public march should be such an intersectional one (at a time long before "intersectionality" became a buzzword among progressive campus circles around the world in the twenty-first century). This approach can be interpreted in two ways (neither of which are necessarily exclusive). On one level, the decision to frame the march as a "rights march" rather than a pride parade can be seen as a tactical decision, designed to garner support from a wider variety of students than would ordinarily partake in a parade intended to draw attention to specifically queer issues. On another, such an event can be understood as an organic extension of the general ideology of non-discrimination and equal rights ascendant in South Africa during the transition from apartheid to democracy, and a reflection of the broad-based nature of the struggle against apartheid as a whole at the close of the twentieth century.

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[294] Scheepers, R., 'Outward Bound', *Rhodeo* March 1994, p. 18.
[295] Scheepers, R, 'Outward Bound', *Rhodeo* October 1994, p. 19.
[296] *Ibid.*
[297] *Ibid.*

The rights march was given further legitimacy through the endorsement of the Rhodes SRC, who had elected to launch an anti-homophobia campaign and played a role in organising the march alongside STEP.[298] The result of this collaboration was what can considered to have been the first "Gay Pride" march held in the Eastern Cape, during which participants marched around Rhodes campus shouting slogans such as "we're here, we're queer, get used to us", and "hey, hey, ho, ho, homophobia has got to go".[299] This was followed by a party, and by a formal discussion on the question of homosexuality at which the majority of the audience were reportedly supportive of gay rights.[300] This event was not without its own share of controversy and homophobic backlash. Before the march, certain students from Botha House were overheard saying that they were planning on attending the march "to see which women not to spade [flirt with/court] in the future", while other students from College and Matthews residences shouted derogatory and homophobic remarks as the parade passed by.[301] The column ended with Scheepers noting how Wits had fined one student and expelled another for homophobic behaviour - intended, perhaps, as a pointed warning to those who had made homophobic remarks at Rhodes during the Pride Parade.[302]

In September 1994 Rhodes concluded its first ever disciplinary hearing for a homophobic offence.[303] On the night of 12 August, a student of Founder's Hall (given the pseudonym "Charles" in the *Rhodeo* article)[304] had verbally abused a fellow student ("Richard") at the Rat and Parrot, threatening him with physical violence and referring to him as a "fucking faggot" [sic] after being told by a friend that "Richard" had been "perving" on him.[305] During the hearing "Charles" was found guilty of contravening Rule 14.1 of Rhodes' disciplinary code, prohibiting "conduct which may be reasonably regarded as unbecoming to a student of the University".[306]

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[298] Scheepers, R., 'Outward Bound', *Rhodeo* August 1994, p. 13
[299] *Ibid*
[300] *Ibid.*
[301] *Ibid.*
[302] *Ibid.* As an aside: in this column of *Outward Bound*, Scheepers compared homophobes at Rhodes to Hitler and Verwoerd, and pointed out that bigotry was responsible for both the Holocaust and Apartheid. On the same page there was report on the Grahamstown premiere of Steven Spielberg's award-winning Holocaust movie, *Schindler's List*. One has to wonder if Scheeper's invocation of Godwin's Law/*Reductio ad Hitlerum* was not in part inspired, even subconsciously, by a general spike in interest in Holocaust that came about as a result of the film.
[303] 'Homophobia Fine on Campus', *Rhodeo* October 1994, p. 9.
[304] Referred to pseudonymously as Rhodes' disciplinary code guaranteed anonymity to offenders.
[305] *Ibid.*
[306] *Ibid.*

He was fined R100, but R70 of that fine was suspended due to "mitigating circumstances", a decision which "Richard" decried as "nothing short of a joke".[307] Certainly, the fine did not seem to have made much of an impact on "Charles". When questioned by *Rhodeo* reporters after the hearing, "Charles" expressed some remarkably homophobic sentiments, stating that he and the students in his residence were now more resentful toward homosexuals than he had ever been before and that the thought of "two guys getting off" was "sick" and that it made him want to "kotch".[308]

Such an incident may be considered a milestone for gay rights at Rhodes in a purely symbolic sense, but the leniency of the sentencing, as well as the unapologetic homophobia expressed by "Charles", indicate that at this point Rhodes still had a long way to go in terms of fostering a truly safe and supportive space for queer students, both in relation to how the university authorities dealt with homophobic students and in relation to the feelings of homophobia present within the student body. Dissatisfaction over the leniency of the sentencing notwithstanding, the decision was still heralded as a victory for the Rhodes gay community by some, as "it forced admin to admit that homophobia is a problem on campus".[309] *Outward Bound* columnist Ross Scheepers was less impressed, however, advising students who faced homophobic harassment to not bother with reporting such incidents to the university authorities as "the policies are designed to look good on paper but are not taken seriously in practice".[310]

In 1995 STEP sought to extend its influence beyond the narrow parametres of the Rhodes campus. As the Constitutional Assembly launched its ambitious campaign to solicit the views and opinions of ordinary South Africans as a basis on which to design the new constitution, the question of gay rights was one of the most hotly contested areas of debate. Though the prohibition against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation had already been enacted in the interim constitution, several groups in parliament - most notably the ACDP – had expressed opposition to the further entrenchment of anti-homophobic principles in the new constitution, and survey results indicated that a sizeable portion of the South African population were

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[307] *Ibid.*
[308] *Ibid.*
[309] Editorial, *Rhodeo* October 1994, p. 16.
[310] Scheepers, R., 'Outward Bound, *Rhodeo* October 1994, p. 19.

opposed, with varying degrees of vehemence, to the constitutional enshrinement of queer rights.[311] In response the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE), formed in 1994 with the specific aim of ensuring the retention of the gay rights clause in the constitution, initiated a nation-wide lobbying campaign in order to ensure that the final constitution would continue to guarantee the protection of gay, lesbian and bisexual South Africans from unjust discrimination.[312] STEP, as one of the 78 member organisations in the NCGLE and one of the only queer organisations in the Eastern Cape, became actively involved in this campaign, petitioning the student body to throw their support behind the clause's inclusion and organising a national conference in Port Elizabeth at the beginning of March 1995 at which various gay and lesbian groups in the Eastern Cape met to discuss strategies for the promotion of gay rights within the province.[313] It is doubtful, of course, whether STEP's involvement in the NGCLE campaign had much in the way of a tangible impact on the eventual decision to retain the "gay clause" in the constitution. What STEP's active involvement in the 1995 lobbying efforts does indicate, however, was that the organisation was deeply aware of and involved in the politics of gay liberation in South Africa at a national level. Far more than just a simple student society, in the early 1990s STEP had become part and parcel of a broader movement attempting to elicit mass social and political change.

It is also important to note that the chairperson of STEP in 1995 was none other than Larissa Klazinga, a figure who cannot go unmentioned in any history of gender or sexuality at Rhodes University. Heavily involved in STEP and other related organisations during her time at Rhodes, Klazinga would later go on to be employed by the university's Dean of Students office as Student Services Officer, a position in which she was able to exercise considerable influence over the institution's policies and attitudes towards queer students as well as towards gendered issues on campus. The appointment of Larissa Klazinga to the position of Student Services Officer is both indicative of a more supportive and sympathetic institutional stance towards "queer" members of the Rhodes community and in turn helped to strengthen and lend weight to pre-existing stances of institutional support.

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[311] Cock, J., 'Engendering gay and lesbian rights: the Equality clause in the South African Constitution'. In Hoad, N., Martin, K. and Reid, G., (Eds), *Sex and Politics in South Africa*. (Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005, 194).
[312] *Ibid*, 193.
[313] Scheepers, R., 'Outward Bound: It's a World Gone Queer, *Activate* February 1995, p. 15; Gopal, K., 'A Step Forward', *Activate* March 1995, p.3.

In keeping with the pro-queer ethos displayed by the publication since the 1960s, *Activate* continued to combat homophobia in both overt and subtle ways throughout the 1990s. A clear example of this can be seen in several of the paper's Orientation Week editions, which traditionally included a glossary of Rhodes jargon for incoming first year students. The 1994 'Alphabetical Guide to Campus Life', for instance, included an entry on "Gays" in which they were defined, in a tongue in cheek matter, as "happy types", while the 1998 'A-Z of Varsity' entry on "Queers" stated that "if people have a problem with homosexuality, it is usually because they cannot persuade persons of either sex to get naked with them". A similar sentiment is found in the 1999 O-Week edition, in which "Homophobia" was stated to be "Generally manifested by people who attack gay men while being unable to get anything from either sex themselves".[314] In instances like these, the writers of *Rhodeo/Activate* sought to impress on first year students (and other readers) that homophobia was not acceptable at Rhodes, and did so using humorous language that sought to shame homophobes by casting aspersions on their seductive prowess.

The commitment of the Rhodes SRC during the 1990s to fostering an attitude of tolerance towards and acceptance of homosexuality on campus is further evinced by an interview given by the 1996/1997 SRC president, Mr. Chicco Khoza. When questioned on his stance towards homosexuality, Khoza's response was that "People, because of their socialisation, will frown upon certain things. We need to recognise that there is a discrepancy in our socialisation and overcome it. Homosexuals are people and they have rights. I don't believe anyone should be discriminated against".[315] This statement, though brief, offers an intriguing degree of insight into Khoza's – and, by extension, the SRC (and institution/student body) he represented - attitude towards homosexuality. Homophobia was framed as the result of "socialization" rather than an innate moral or ethical issue, and the "discrepancy" between such socialisation and (presumably) the values of a transformed institution was noted and singled out as something to be overcome. These observations, coupled with the points made about homosexuals being people with rights, can be read as a manifestation of the ways in which the transformationist ethos, as it pertained to homosexuality had come to shape and influence the treatment of homosexuality on

[314] 'Alphabetical Guide to Campus Life', *Rhodeo*, February 1994, p. 4; 'A-Z of Varsity, *Activate* February 1998, p. 9; 'The Rhodes Dictionary of Disgrace', *Activate*, February 1999, p. 8.
[315] Gopal, K., 'Chicco in the Driving Seat', *Activate* September 1996, 6.

the Rhodes campus, if not by the student body as a whole than at least by its elected representatives.

Other elements of the institution, it appears, were not quite so progressive during this period. The February 1997 edition of *Activate* contained a letter to the editor titled "Homophobia and Conservatism at Rhodes", written under the pen name "Cock in a frock". In the letter the author related how during the previous year he had been refused entry to the Oriel Hall formal dinner due to the fact that he was dressed in women's clothing - "a tastefully dark skirt, stockings, hat, and a red silk blouse".[316] The author recounted his and his host's embarrassment and humiliation on being asked to leave the dinner (with Ms Baker reportedly stating that it was "a formal dinner, not a fancy dress") and pointed out that under the new South African constitution, which guaranteed full equality for all citizens, cross-dressers had the same rights as everybody else.[317] The author ended the letter by demanding a formal apology and explanation from the Vice-Chancellor and suggesting that "perhaps a hearing in the constitutional court would help the University treast [sic] people with the respect they deserve as human beings".[318]

From this brief incident, several conclusions can be drawn with regards to the changing status of homosexuality at Rhodes University. That the hall warden would refuse to allow a cross-dressing student to attend a formal dinner is indicative, as 'Cock in a Frock' himself pointed out, of a certain conservatism and "pseudo-Christian" morality on the part of at least some of the institution's authority figures at the time, attitudes which stood at odds with the general atmosphere of tolerance and permissiveness in relation to sexuality which can be gleaned from the pages of *Rhodeo* and *Activate* and in the official stances of the SRC. This, though disheartening, could hardly have been all that surprising. 'Cock in a Frock's' letter can also be read as an example of the ways in which the discourse of "New South-Africanism" and the enshrinement of equal rights for people of alternate sexualities in the constitution impacted upon how queer students at Rhodes saw themselves and their place in society. That the student felt confident enough to attempt to attend a public, formal residence event dressed in drag in the first place - something that would have been unthinkable a decade earlier - and that upon being turned away

[316] 'A Cock in a Frock', "Homophobia and Conservatism at Rhodes". *Activate* February 1997, 7.
[317] *Ibid.*
[318] *Ibid.*

from the dinner he was able to claim the moral high ground and demand symbolic recompense (in the form of a formal apology from the Vice-Chancellor) by pointing out that such an action was unconstitutional. Unfortunately, there appears to be no further record of this incident, and it is uncertain whether "Cock In A Frock" ever received his formal apology. But the mere fact that he was bold enough to ask for it in the first place is indicative of the shifts in attitude towards queerness that took place in South Africa following the demise of apartheid.

Tensions between the Rhodes administration and the university's queer community continued to manifest throughout the late 1990s. In 1998, in a bid to combat the over-saturation of the university's internet connection, the Information Technology Division attempted to prevent students and staff from accessing pornographic websites by blocking websites containing certain keywords, including "slut", "lust", "erotic", "pussy", "horny", "fuck" and "gay".[319] The inclusion of "gay" in the list of forbidden search terms met with some controversy, with some commenting that it was discriminatory and a violation of freedom of speech.[320] Brett Lock, at the time Rhodes' journalism design lecturer, was especially critical of the decision, noting pointedly that the decision had been taken by "middle aged, heterosexual white males... [who] do not share the experiences of groups more marginal to the mainstream of society".[321]

That same year, tensions arose between STEP and the Rhodes Journalism Department. During the Highway Africa conference hosted by the Department, STEP had sought to draw attention to the plight of homosexuals in Zimbabwe and Zambia by plastering posters around campus bearing the slogan "Zambian and Zimbabwean Journalists Please Go Home". [322] The Journalism Department responded by removing the posters, which STEP interpreted as an infringement of freedom of speech, and subsequently attempted to open up a case against the Journalism Department with the Anti-Harassment Panel.[323] This incident appears to have been the cause of some consternation within the ranks of STEP itself, with some members

[319] Molepo, M., 'No More Porn at Rhodes'.
[320] *Ibid.*
[321] *Ibid.*
[322] Hart, D., and Kenny, T., 'STEP vs Journ Dept'. *Activate* October 1998, p. 3.
[323] *Ibid.*

arguing that the campaign was too aggressive and damaging to the image and reputation of the gay and lesbian community on campus.[324]

1999 bore witness to the controversial launch of "Gaily Forward", Rhodes Music Radio's (RMR) first radio show dedicated to gay issues[325] Hosted by a pair of anonymous DJs going by the monikers of "Fig and Fag"[326] and aired for three hours each Thursday, the show became the subject of much controversy following the airing of an episode entitled 'The Ins and Outs of Gay Sex'.[327] Many listeners were reportedly shocked by the graphic and explicit details on gay sex, particularly anal sex, given during the show.[328] Several students also were reportedly angered by the explicit posters for the show put up around campus, which featured an image of two men having sex, their genitals censored by a black block.[329] As one student (perhaps fairly) pointed out, "you don't walk around and see a poster of heterosexual couples having sex advertising a heterosexual show".[330] "Fig and Fag" responded by saying that their aim was not to shock listeners, but to educate them, as well as to remind students that "it's ok to be gay".[331] In the following edition of *Activate*, a student writing under the name "Peeved Eve" came to the duo's defence, pointing out that although the duo may be perceived by some as "pushy", "a radio can be switched off. Fear and prejudice cannot".[332] "Peeved Eve" went on to decry the lack of tolerance and open-mindedness on the part of "Fig and Fag's" detractors, pointing out the double standard that was in play when explicit talk of heterosexual sex was allowed to enter into public discourse (the example the author furnished of this was the ubiquity of *Cosmopolitan* magazine in South Africa) but homosexual sex was not.[333] "Acceptance", the author concluded, "is not merely about opening one's mind. It is about erasing years of parental and grand-parental influence".[334]

The establishment of a student radio show such as "Gaily Forward", whose producers felt emboldened enough to explicitly discuss gay sex on air and promote their show

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[324] *Ibid.*
[325] O'Donoghue, K.R., 'Not so gaily sensitive?'. *Activate* June 1999, p. 7.
[326] Their real names, a later edition of *Activate* (Edition 6 2001) revealed, were Ryan McNab and Darren Jay Hart.
[327] *Ibid.*
[328] *Ibid.*
[329] *Ibid.*
[330] *Ibid.*
[331] *Ibid.*
[332] 'Peeved Eve', 'Gayly Forward or Gayly Pushy?'. *Activate* September 1999, p. 2.
[333] *Ibid.*
[334] *Ibid.*

with graphic images of homosexual acts, is indicative of how much the general atmosphere towards homosexuality on campus must have shifted by the close of the twentieth century. Of course, this does not mean that at this stage the Rhodes community was completely tolerant of homosexuality. "Fig and Fag", after all, still felt the need to operate under pseudonyms, and as some of the responses to the show indicate there were still many students who felt repulsed or disgusted by homosexuals and homosexual acts. However, this was still a far cry from the rigidly heteronormative climate that prevailed in the 1970s, when Henderson censored the *Oppidan Press* for daring to feature mild male nudity in its pages. It is important to be reminded at this point that in the previous year, thanks to the efforts of the NCGLE, the Constitutional Court had officially abolished the crime of sodomy.[335] This represented a significant victory for the gay rights movement in South Africa, and may have contributed to the greater atmosphere of openness and permissiveness towards homosexuality which things such as "Gayly Forward" can be seen as a manifestation of.

The promotion of gay and lesbian rights on the Rhodes campus was given even more impetus in 1999 with the establishment of OutRhodes, Rhodes' gay and lesbian society. OutRhodes grew out of STEP, but whereas STEP's agenda was more overtly political, OutRhodes was from the outset intended to foster a more private, personal sense of identity within the queer community at the university. The chairman of OutRhodes for 1999, Nic Moolman, promoted a vision of a society grounded on acceptance and tolerance both within and outside the gay community, emphasising in an interview the need to avoid alienating the straight community through pushing certain stereotypes about what it "means" to be a gay or lesbian person.[336] Moolman conceived of homophobia as arising chiefly from ignorance and a lack of education, and believed that these stereotypes could be broken simply through prolonged but unforced exposure to individuals of alternate sexualities.[337] Under Moolman's leadership OutRhodes stressed the idea that sexuality was fundamentally a private, rather than politicised, public affair, and to this end did not place pressure on homosexual and bisexual individuals at Rhodes to 'come out'.[338] Emphasis was placed on a *personal*, rather than communitarian, identity in relation to sexuality –

[335] Reddy, V., 'Decriminalisation of Homosexuality', 147.
[336] Friedman, D., 'Working on the Straight and Narrow at Rhodes'. *Activate* June 1999, p. 10.
[337] *Ibid.*
[338] *Ibid.*

"whether this means remaining secretive about your sexuality or dressing in drag and holding a rally".[339] As was the case with STEP, one of the most important services OutRhodes provided to homosexual students was lay counselling and support for those students struggling to "come out of the closet".[340]

The efforts of OutRhodes and STEP notwithstanding, it seems that Rhodes at the dawn of the millennium was still not exactly the most welcoming space for students of alternate sexualities. In 2000 *Activate* conducted a residence-wide survey on sexual behaviour and attitudes, and found that although the majority of students expressed sentiments of tolerance and acceptance towards homosexuals, the homophobic minority were vehemently and vociferously so.[341] As had been the case in previous decades, the majority of those opposed to homosexuality came from heavily religious backgrounds and used their religion to justify their homophobia.[342] Darren Jay Hart, one of the producers of 'Fig and Fag', told *Activate*'s interviewers that being openly gay at Rhodes had proved "hazardous to his social health" and stated that he felt more comfortable being openly gay in Johannesburg than he did in Grahamstown.[343] In a strange reversal of expected roles, there was also a case in 2000 in which a straight student took a gay student before the Anti-Harassment Panel on being informed that the gay student was supposedly attracted to him - a case which the panel dismissed.[344]

The following year, *Activate* conducted another survey, this one focusing specifically on attitudes towards homosexuality. Of a 100 random students surveyed, 59% were opposed to homosexuality on religious grounds. [345] Interestingly, 66% of Zimbabwean students surveyed described themselves as "disgusted" by homosexuals - not surprising, perhaps, considering the virulent culture of state-endorsed homophobia present in that country.[346] When asked "should Rhodes University have policies discouraging homosexual activity in residence", some 20% of respondents

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[339] *Ibid.*
[340] Kelly, T., 'Search Soc'. *Activate* February 1999, p. 10.
[341] Van Niekerk, J., Whitehouse, A., Anderson M., Scheckter, J., Krasser, M. and Sylvester, J., 'Sex and the City of Saints'.
[342] *Ibid.*
[343] *Ibid.*
[344] 'Mr Touchstone', 'How to take an insult, fuckhead! (letter to editor). *Activate* 2000 Edition 5 (15-29 May), p. 5.
[345] Oshry, L., Scott, C., and Strickland, R., 'Straight Out'. *Activate* 2001 Edition 6 (23 May – 6 June) p. 4.
[346] *Ibid.*

said "yes".[347] The survey also revealed that a significant portion of respondents (the actual number not given) reported either experimenting with, or being interested in experimenting with, same-sex sexual liaisons.[348] As part of the same investigative feature, *Activate* also conducted a social experiment in which a group of drama students went out to several Grahamstown drinking spots and pretended to be homosexual and approached members of the same sex in a flirtatious manner.[349] The participants reported that while women tended to respond in a more positive or neutral way to same-sex female attention, men responded very differently.[350] The male participants who attempted to flirt with other men as part of the experiment reported being met with hostility, verbal harassment and physical threats.[351] A few years later, in 2004, not much seems to have changed, as *Activate* reported that there had been numerous incidents of verbal abuse and harassment of gay students that year, though no accounts of physical assault.[352] And in 2005, some gay students reported having homophobic insults carved into their doors in residence.[353]

At this point, the gay and lesbian community at Rhodes appears to have been in a fairly moribund state. With the resignation of Nic Moolman from the position of OutRhodes chair the society seems to have lost some drive and impetus, and Colours, Grahamstown's only "gay bar", had shut its doors the previous year.[354] In an article entitled "Moffie, Moffie, Wherefore Art Thou?" former *Gayly Forward* host Ryan McNab laid the blame for the decline in Rhodes' gay culture firmly at the feet of its gay community, who he accused of being apathetic and uninterested in actively fostering a thriving queer communal identity at Rhodes.[355] However, there were some bastions of queerness left in Grahamstown and on the Rhodes campus: the "Fig and Fag" radio show, for instance, had been replaced by a show called "Gaydar the Faggot Radar" on RMR, and a location known as "the Big Gay Farm" had been opened just outside Grahamstown by two former members of OutRhodes, providing queer students and other members of the Grahamstown homosexual community

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[347] *Ibid.*
[348] *Ibid.*
[349] *Ibid.*
[350] *Ibid.*
[351] *Ibid.*
[352] Pettenger, J., 'Sexual Oppression on Campus'. *Activate* 2004 Edition 9 (August 26) p. 2.
[353] Whitehead, C., and McLean, N., 'Homophobia – run for your life'. *Activate* 2005 Edition 8 (August) p. 7.
[354] Oshrey et al., 'Straight Out', p. 5.
[355] McNab, R., 'Moffie, Moffie, Wherefore Art Thou?'. *Activate* 2001 Edition 5 (9-23 May) p. 9.

with a space in which to relax and socialise.[356] The fragmented and disorganized nature of the Rhodes queer community notwithstanding, certain heterosexual students reportedly felt threatened by the gay community at Rhodes because of their perceived unity; they were seen as grouping together "like a little clique", a perception which seems somewhat at odds with how gay, lesbian and bisexual students actually viewed themselves.[357]

All of the above paints a picture of Rhodes as a relatively tolerant institution with regards to homosexuality, one which grew steadily more so over the course of recent decades. While this is true, for a given value of "true" (and a given value of "tolerant", for that matter), homophobic attitudes on campus remained a persistent problem well into the twenty-first century, and indeed continue to exist among the student body today, though their manifestations have become far more muted in recent years. As recently as 2007, for instance, homophobic attitudes on the part of some of the student body were expressed during Gay Pride Week. During the run-up to Pride, there had reportedly been complaints on campus about the society being too "militant" that year, prompting one student to send out a mass e-mail (from his Rhodes e-mail account) stating that in response to OutRhodes' aggressive promotional strategies he would "now discriminate even more".[358] The leadership of OutRhodes responded by printing out the e-mail, together with his name and student number, and posting copies of it all over campus in an attempt to "name and shame" the student as a homophobe.[359] This decision appears to have aroused some ire on the part of the more reactionary elements of the student body, which may go some way towards explaining the homophobic incidents which took place during Pride Week.

To commemorate Pride, OutRhodes had set up an installation in the quadrangle outside the Rhodes Library – a large cabinet (symbolic of the "closet" that all queer people either had to leave or remain trapped within), with drawers containing supportive leaflets and white paper pinned on its outside so that people could leave their messages and musings.[360] On the first day of the installation the messages left

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[356] Oshrey et al, 'Straight Out', p. 5.
[357] Pettenger, 'Sexual Oppression', p. 2.
[358] 'tally', 'Something Serious', *My Digital Life* [web blog], 25 August 2007. Available at: http://mydl.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_myblog&show=4673. Accessed August 2016.
[359] *Ibid.*
[360] *Ibid.*

on the cabinet were positive – things like "gay and proud" and "I'm glad I came out" – but as the week progressed the cabinet was gradually covered in homophobic comments and slurs: "let God change you"; "It is wrong"; "Mob justice is the only way to turn them straight"; "you might as well talk about rights for paedophiles"; and other hateful comments of that nature.[361] By the Friday of Pride Week, the cabinet had been destroyed and lay in a shambles in the quadrangle, though whether this was the result of a homophobic attack or simply due to the windy weather Grahamstown experienced that year is uncertain.[362] It seems that, given anonymity, homophobic students (and, for all we know, staff) at Rhodes had no qualms in letting their views be known.

The homophobic outbursts that took place during Pride in 2007 were, at least, focused on an inanimate object - the cabinet. However, physical violence directed against gay students was certainly a problem on the Rhodes campus, even during the supposedly more progressive period of the mid-2000s. James Hamilton, a gay student and erstwhile chairman of OutRhodes, recalled in an interview an incident that took place during his undergraduate years in which he was first verbally harassed, then physically assaulted by a group of three male students outside the Rhodes Union building. According to Hamilton, the students, after first asking him if they could borrow his lighter, began verbally harassing him, calling him a 'faggot' and insinuating that he wanted to have sex with them.[363] When Hamilton insulted them in kind, one of the men flew at him, punching him twice in the face and then, when Hamilton fell to the ground, continuing to kick him in the face, stomach and groin.[364] Hamilton's injuries were severe enough that he was bedridden for a week, but he refused to go to hospital so as not to concern his parents, with whom he had had a difficult relationship upon coming out.[365] For the same reason, Hamilton elected not to report the matter to the Rhodes authorities, despite pressure to do so from other members of OutRhodes. He did not wish for his parents' worst fears around his coming out - that he would be the target of homophobic violence - to be confirmed, nor did he want to publicize the incident and perhaps open himself up to further assaults, verbal or physical, from the homophobic contingent of Rhodes

[361] *Ibid.*
[362] *Ibid.*
[363] James Hamilton, interviewed by Alan Kirkaldy, 2008.
[364] *Ibid.*
[365] *Ibid.*

students.[366] This reluctance to come forward was no doubt influenced, in part, by another uncomfortable aspect of being queer at Rhodes that Hamilton touches on in his interview - the small, intimate nature of the Rhodes community made it impossible for queer students to "blend in" to society, and once someone was known to be gay, that information about them was swiftly disseminated throughout campus and soon became common knowledge. Because of this, Hamilton considered Rhodes in a sense a much more difficult place to be gay than was the case at other universities in South Africa.[367]

The most disturbing aspect of the incident, Hamilton stated, was that some time later he discovered that one of his fellow students in residence had witnessed the entire incident but did not intervene because he had felt that Hamilton had been "asking for it" by talking back to his assailants.[368] Such a response is indicative of how, even among students who were not necessarily openly homophobic, gay students were still viewed through a decidedly unsympathetic lens. Hamilton's assault was not an isolated incident. According to him, during his time at Rhodes there had been numerous cases of attacks on queer students in Grahamstown's clubs and bars, particularly at Friar Tuck's in New Street.[369] At the Rat and Parrot, one queer student was reportedly pushed down the stairs and sustained concussion.[370] Homophobic attacks were prevalent enough at Rhodes that when *Activate* interviewed Saleem Badat shortly after he took up the post of vice chancellor in 2006 he singled out homophobia and homophobic assault at Rhodes as one of the issues he wished to address at the university, in reference to an alleged homophobic attack that had taken place at Rhodes the previous year.[371]

The interview with James Hamilton sheds some light on several other aspects of the homosexual experience at Rhodes (so near, and yet in some ways so far, to the present time). Asked about his experience as a gay student in residence, Hamilton reported a certain kind of covert, yet still hurtful sense of "othering" and alienation at the hands of his straight peers - what he termed a "passive" homophobia.[372] Students

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[366] *Ibid.*
[367] *Ibid.*
[368] *Ibid.*
[369] *Ibid.*
[370] *Ibid.*
[371] Silva, B., and Schumacher, I., 'To the Point with Professor Saleem Badat, Vice-Chancellor'. *Activate* 2006 Edition 9 (August), p. 6.
[372] James Hamilton interview.

who were known to be gay, for instance, found that often straight students reduced their entire identity to their sexual orientation - they were no longer a "guy", for instance, but a "gay guy".[373] The use of the term "gay" as an insult, implying something was distasteful, unpleasant or not cool, was also apparently widespread in Rhodes residences.[374] Details such as these may seem small or petty, but they had a profoundly negative impact on the self-image and general mental health of gay students, particularly those who were experiencing some degree of internal conflict with regard to their sexuality.[375]

When asked if he felt that the university authorities and administration were supportive enough of gay and lesbian issues at Rhodes, Hamilton indicated that the general attitude of the institution towards queer students left something to be desired. While he admitted that a "select few" individuals in administration were sympathetic towards the issues faced by queer students, Hamilton felt that there were not enough officially endorsed mechanisms in place to deal with queer issues at the university, and that much of the responsibility for creating a queer-supportive campus environment was foisted onto OutRhodes.[376] Hamilton did not think that OutRhodes, by itself, was capable of challenging homophobic attitudes on campus (a far cry from the optimistic vision put forward by Moolman over a decade earlier), and pointed out that OutRhodes had enough on its plate simply trying to provide counselling and a safe haven for queer students at Rhodes.[377] Also of interest is an astute observation made by Hamilton, in which he noted that the high attendance figures at OutRhodes parties did not necessarily indicate a general acceptance of homosexuality or supportive attitude towards homosexual issues on the part of the attendees.[378] Many of those who attended, he pointed out, were simply looking for a good party, and were by and large indifferent to OutRhodes and the causes it was championing.[379]

James Hamilton's interview provides one with a brief but poignant snapshot into the life of a gay student at Rhodes in the early twenty-first century; an existence defined

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[373] *Ibid.*
[374] *Ibid.*
[375] *Ibid.*
[376] *Ibid.*
[377] *Ibid.*
[378] *Ibid.*
[379] *Ibid.* I myself remember that in my undergraduate years OutRhodes parties were always very popular and well-attended, and that many students joined OutRhodes not because they were particularly concerned with LGBTQI+ issues, but in order to get into OutRhodes parties for free.

by undercurrents of alienation where the looming threat of violence was all too real, and all too often passed from fear into reality. But the disturbing relationship between sexuality and violence was not only experienced by gay men at Rhodes. Sexual violence, as the following section will explore, impacted upon the lives of many members of the Rhodes community, in particular women, and the national crises of rape and sexual assault did not confine themselves to the world beyond the Rhodes campus.

Sexual violence, rape and assault at Rhodes University from the 1980s to 2016

Any exploration of the history of sex and sexuality in post-apartheid South Africa must, necessarily, touch on one of the darker dimensions of sex in this country - the ongoing epidemic of sexual violence currently plaguing the nation. In the post-apartheid period rape, sexual abuse and gender-based violence have become, as Posel notes, "a matter of deep public concern".[380] South Africa's rape rate stands at one of the worst in the world and is rapidly worsening. Furthermore the nature of rape and sexual assault in South Africa is far more violent than that in comparable countries, with South Africa leading the world in, for example, rape at gunpoint and the rape of children.[381] Given the scope and severity of the crisis of sexual assault in South Africa, it would be naive to assume that this problem did not manifest itself at Rhodes. Indeed the question of rape and sexual assault on the Rhodes campus, and the way in which the Rhodes authorities attempted to address this problem, became an issue of much contention in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

The history of rape and sexual violence at Rhodes between the years 1984 and 2004 has already been subject to research in the Rhodes history department; in 2007, History Honours student Amy McNeill completed a thesis entitled 'Rape at Rhodes: Responses and Reactions (1984-2004)'. This thesis extensively explored the problem of sexual assault on the Rhodes campus and the attempts made by both the institution and the student body to address the issue. In writing her thesis McNeill utilised a similar research methodology to the one I have employed in the writing of this chapter, with a strong focus on archival materials, making particular use of the

[380] Posel, 'Getting the Nation Talking About Sex', 59.
[381] McNeill, A., 'Rape at Rhodes: Responses and Reactions (1984-2004). Unpublished Honours Thesis, Rhodes University, 2007, 8.

minutes of the Rhodes SRC and of the archived editions of *Rhodeo/Activate*. For this reason much of the following section will consist of a fairly cursory summary of the most salient points of McNeill's research; there is little point in simply rehashing her work, and to do so would not only be largely pointless but also constitute an act of plagiarism. McNeill's research will be used to provide a context for further research conducted into the history of sexual violence at Rhodes in later years, with a particular emphasis on the Silent Protests which began in 2006 and the #RUReferenceList protest of 2016. Where specific sources are cited, such as editions of *Rhodeo* or other documentation, these sources have been uncovered through independent research, but it ought to be noted that in the majority of cases these same sources have also been utilized by McNeill.

In the mid-1980s, the starting point of McNeill's research, there was a high incidence of "prowlers" and "peeping Toms" on the Rhodes campus, as well as several reports of rape and attempted rape.[382] The SRC(s) during this period were reportedly vocal in their attempts to convince the university to adequately respond to these issues, focusing in particular on problems of physical security for female students (the issue of insufficient numbers of campus security guards and a lack of adequate lighting on campus were issues that became perennial bones of contention over the period of McNeill's research) and on a lack of adequate channels through which women could report assault and harassment (a complaint which, as will be discussed below, was echoed later during the #RUReferenceList protests).[383] McNeill characterises the university's responses to the problem of rape and assault on campus as "lackadaisical", noting, for instance, that in 1985 the university was unwilling to channel funds into the establishment of a rape crisis centre on campus, or to employ more security guards, or to improve campus lighting despite repeated incidents of sexual assaults on campus.[384]

The safety of women on campus, and the inadequacies of the institution when it came to combating the threat of sexual violence at Rhodes, continued to be a contentious issue in the 1990s. McNeill cites a report produced by the SRC Women's Group in 1991 on the extent of sexual harassment at Rhodes in which over half of the students questioned found campus unsafe to walk through after dark, with particular

[382] McNeill, 'Rape at Rhodes', 24.
[383] *Ibid*, 24-30.
[384] *Ibid*, 25, 31.

areas of campus (the Kimberley Hall area, St Peter's Campus and Eden Grove) being identified as "no go" areas.[385] The report also noted that the student body as a whole lacked faith in the ability of the university to handle cases of sexual harassment and rape, with many students opting not to even bother reporting such incidences as they felt that there was an absence of proper channels through which to do so, or else feared that they would not be believed or that the situation would not be adequately dealt with.[386] Also significant – especially in light of the events of 2016 - was the finding that many students reported being sexually harassed by fellow students, an observation which cast doubt on previous assumptions that rapists and harassers were a problem that lay "outside" of Rhodes itself.[387] In response to these findings the SRC Women's Group initiated an anti-sexual harassment campaign in an effort to draw attention to the problem of sexual violence on campus.[388] In this they were assisted by *Rhodeo*, which in 1991 ran several prominent articles on sexual assault and harassment at Rhodes.[389] McNeill notes that at this time the loudest voices campaigning against sexual violence at Rhodes were those of students themselves, in the form of the SRC and *Rhodeo*. As had been the case in the 1980s the responses of the Rhodes authorities were distinctly muted, even denialist, with Dr Motara, then Dean of Students, going so far as to claim that as there were no reported cases of sexual harassment and that there was therefore no problem of such harassment at the university.[390]

In response to increasing pressure from the SRC and criticism of the university's sexual assault policies (or lack thereof) from the student body as a whole, Rhodes established a committee in March 1992 to investigate the problem of sexual assault on campus which submitted a draft of a preliminary sexual harassment policy in June of the following year, though this policy was only reviewed and finalized in 2001. [391] In 1995 Senate approved the appointment of a specialized anti-harassment officer, though the position remained vacant until 1998.[392]

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[385] SRC Women's Group, *Report on the extent of sexual harassment at Rhodes University*, 1991. Senate Minutes and Documents, MS19 408, Cory Library
[386] *Ibid.*
[387] *Ibid.*
[388]McNeill, 'Rape at Rhodes', 36.
[389] *Ibid.*
[390] McLachlan, A., and Speed, S., 'The Hidden Horror', *Rhodeo* August 1991, p. 10-11.
[391] McNeill, 'Rape at Rhodes', 37.
[392] *Ibid.*

In 1992, two rapes were alleged to have taken place outside the Rhodes library on 17 and 27 August.[393] It would appear that neither incident was reported, with both CPU and the Dean of Students denying having any knowledge of such crimes taking place.[394] Unknown members of the student body expressed their outrage and dissatisfaction with the state of affairs on campus through the medium of graffiti, spraypainting the words "Rape Zone" and "Admin Wake Up" on the library walls.[395] In a *Rhodeo* editorial published that month the editors took a similar perspective, admonishing management for what they deemed a "head in the sand" attitude towards the problem of campus rape and criticising the university's report procedure for sexual assaults.[396] The problem of rape on campus continued to be accorded space in *Rhodeo* over the next few years. One March edition of the newspaper published in 1993, for instance, included a map of campus which highlighted various dangerous "no-go zones" where rapes had allegedly taken place, while in the February 1994 edition the traditional alphabetical glossary of Rhodes terminology included in the Orientation Week editions of the newspaper defined "Rape" as "a phenomenon not recognized by admin".[397] From these and other findings two primary conclusions can be drawn: first, that rape and sexual assault were persistent problems on Rhodes campus; and second, the student body - at least, insofar as the opinions of the SRC and of the editors of *Rhodeo* can be seen as representative of the student body - was deeply dissatisfied with the manner in which the Rhodes authorities were dealing with this problem.

McNeill's findings over the period of her research show several common themes running through student complaints in regard to the university's response to sexual assault and harassment on campus. One motif which cropped up repeatedly between the 1980s and 90s was that of poor lighting on campus; this issue, which made certain areas of campus dangerous to walk through at night and which rendered certain areas, especially St Peter's campus and Eden Grove "a haven for prowlers and rapists", was brought up time and time again by various groups campaigning to increase the safety of women at Rhodes, such as the SRC Women's Group and the

[393] Balvedu, N., 'Graffiti warning: "Rape Zone"', *Rhodeo* August 1992, 8.
[394] Editorial, *Rhodeo* August 1992, 2.
[395] Balvedu, 'Graffiti Warning'.
[396] Editorial, *Rhodeo* August 1992.
[397] 'Your A-Z of Campus Life', *Activate* February 1995, 9.

Gender Forum.[398] What is interesting, however, about this focus on lighting and security as primary deterrents against rape is that such an understanding of rape and sexual assault foregrounds a particular *kind* of rape – "stranger rape", or rape by assailants unknown to their victims - as the central form of sexual violence that needed to be addressed by the Rhodes authorities. Other forms of sexual assault, such as acquaintance rape or date rape, seem to have received comparatively little attention, though the subject is brought up in a 1997 *Activate* editorial.[399] This particular framing of rape and sexual assault would become subject to a gradual shifting and broadening of understanding in the twenty-first century, as can be seen in the 2016 #RUReferenceList protests which will be discussed shortly.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the Rhodes campus continued to be rife with rumours of sexual harassment, assault and rape. In an article entitled 'Shattering the Silence', published in *Activate* in 2000, student journalist Vivienne Hambly noted that rape at Rhodes had been accorded "phantom status", as the lack of formally reported cases of rape had resulted in an official stance that denied that rape was a serious problem at the university.[400] The lack of reported cases at this time, however, is not all that surprising when one considers the paucity of channels through which survivors of rape could report incidents. For instance, one university-appointed official whom students were able to report rape and assault incidents to, the student adviser, Mark Rainier, was quoted by *Activate* as claiming that many rapes at Rhodes took place because women were not forceful enough in saying "no" to men.[401] This statement, a classic example of victim-blaming mentality that provoked significant outrage against Rainier, and is indicative of the inappropriate and unsympathetic manner in which the university dealt with the problem of sexual assault on campus - particularly between students - at this time.[402]

In May 2004, in response to pressure from the SRC to improve the safety of students on campus, Rhodes implemented a security "green route" system, a system of routes around campus subject to increased security patrols.[403] That same year, however, during the Tri-Varsity event that took place in August, a first-year student was

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[398] Mnyanda, L., 'Rape Alert', *Activate* May 1995, 5.
[399] Martin, B., 'Editorial', *Activate* May 1997, 2.
[400] Hambly, V., 'Shattering the Silence', *Activate* 2000 Edition 6 (31 May – 14 June), 5.
[401] *Ibid.*
[402] McNeill, 'Rape at Rhodes', 53.
[403] *Ibid*, 56.

subject to a gang-rape on campus outside the Student Union, near one of the supposedly secure green routes.[404] This incident sparked shock and outrage among the Rhodes community and on 18 August 2004 a group of over 1000 students and staff took part in a protest march, organised by a group of female students from Canterbury House, intended to place pressure on the university to do more to ensure the safety of students on campus.[405] At the culmination of the march a petition, signed by 1300 students, was handed over to the Vice-Chancellor's office, demanding, among other things, an increased presence of trained guards, improved lighting on campus and the installation of emergency phones along the campus green routes.[406] Following the march and the presentation of student demands the university's senior administration put together a task team (comprising equal numbers of men and women) to investigate issues concerning campus security.[407] The task team made numerous suggestions for ways in which safety on campus could be improved, some of which (such as the installation of panic buttons at strategic locations around campus) were implemented, while others (such as increasing the number of trained CPU guards on campus) were not.[408]

In 2006, two years after the Tri-Varsity gang rape, the national crisis of rape and violence against women in South Africa was brought into even sharper focus when the former deputy president and future president of the country, Jacob Zuma, stood accused of the rape of a family friend and HIV/AIDS activist (known in the media as "Khwezi") at his Johannesburg home the previous November.[409] The alleged rape provoked national outrage and led to many conversations about the escalating and ongoing crisis of rape in South Africa. At Rhodes University, a group of gender activists including, crucially, Student Services Officer Larissa Klazinga, initiated a campaign in solidarity with Zuma's accused known as the "One in Nine" campaign, which took its name from the assertion that statistically speaking only one in every nine women raped in South Africa choose to report their rape to the police.[410] On 24 March some 300 individuals, primarily students, marched from the Drostdy Lawns

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[404] Joseph, T., 'Rhodes' bubble bursts', *Activate* 2004 Edition 9 (August 26), 6.
[405] Evans, S., and Haralamboue, N., 'Rhodents march as one', *Activate* 2004 Edition 9 (August 26), 1.
[406] *Ibid*.
[407] McNeill, 'Rape at Rhodes', 58.
[408] *Ibid*, 63.
[409] 'Timeline of the Jacob Zuma Trial', *Mail and Guardian Online* 21 March 2006. Available at: http://mg.co.za/article/2006-03-21-timeline-of-the-jacob-zuma-rape-trial. Accessed October 2016.
[410] Reid, L., 'Students break the silence', *Activate* 2006 Edition 4 (March), 1.

to the Grahamstown High Court in High Street, led by a group of nine students, eight of whom had taped their mouths shut in a gesture intended to symbolically represent the ways in which rape survivors were silenced in South Africa, and as a visual representation of the one in nine statistic.[411] The event garnered so much support and attention from the Rhodes community that the following year the One in Nine campaign organized a second protest, with the support of the Dean of Students Office.[412] Building on the motif of silence explored during the first year of the campaign, it was decided that the theme of the protest, "Sexual Violence = Silence", would again be represented visually. The eighty women who signed up for the protest had their mouths taped shut for an entire day, in an attempt

> to make visible the silence, to force people to note the vibrant woman, the person who was a regular contributor to conversation and debate, now forcibly silenced, her voice taken away while her physical presence remained.[413]

The protest continued to be held annually over the years between 2008 and 2016, with 2008 marking the first year that men were permitted to participate; men participating did not have their mouths taped, however, to emphasise the different degree to which women were subject to sexual violence.[414] With each successive year, the 'Silent Protest' (as it came to be called) took on more and more ritualistic and symbolic aspects. In 2008, for instance, the protest ended with a "breaking the silence" ritual, during which the participants gathered at Eden Grove at the end of the day, removed their gags, and let out a single simultaneous scream to mark the end of the event.[415] In 2009 the Silent Protest included a mass "Die-In" during the middle of the day in which participants lay down in the road outside the library in an effort to create "a visual representation of the lives devastated by gender-based violence", as well as a "Take Back the Night" march down High Street following the "breaking the silence" ritual and debriefing.[416] 2009 was also the first year in which participants had the option of signing up to wear a shirt which indicated that they

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[411] *Ibid.*
[412] 'A Brief History of the Silent Protest', at https://www.ru.ac.za/silentprotest/about/. Accessed October 2016.
[413] *Ibid.*
[414] *Ibid.*
[415] *Ibid.*
[416] *Ibid.*

were a rape survivor.[417] With each successive year the Silent Protest garnered more student support and more media attention; by 2014 it had grown to be the biggest student event at Rhodes apart from Inter-Varsity, as well as the largest protest against gender-based violence in South Africa.[418] In the year 2013, the Silent Protest had also begun to spread to other universities, with both UKZN and Wits holding their own Silent Protests that year.[419] The Silent Protest would continue as a Rhodes tradition until 2016, when the events of the #RUReferenceList protest dramatically altered the framing of discourse around sexual assault on Rhodes campus.

In examining the brief history of the Silent Protest, several conclusions can be drawn about attitudes towards sexual violence at Rhodes over the time period in question. Firstly, the sheer number of students lending their support to the protests indicates that for a significant portion of the Rhodes community, both male and female, the problem sexual violence, rape and sexual assault had come to be seen as a very important issue, one significant enough to mobilize students in large numbers to come out in support of the campaign. Secondly, the significant institutional support given to the campaign appears indicative of a changing attitude towards sexual violence on the part of the Rhodes authorities, a shift from the "head-in-the-sand" and "lackadaisical" view remarked upon and critiqued by McNeill. Thirdly, the origins of the Silent Protest (a campaign initiated in solidarity with "Khwezi") and the mass media attention and solidarity that the Silent Protest engendered around the country are evident of the way in which the movement emerged within a broader national conversation around the crisis of rape and gender-based violence in South Africa. In this way, the protest can be seen as a manifestation of a much larger and more urgent debate occurring simultaneously across many levels of South African society.

The furore surrounding the 2004 gang-rape incident and the efforts made by the Silent Protest to draw attention to the problem of gender-based violence appears to have had some impact on the way in which Rhodes as an institution sought to deal with cases of sexual violence on campus. In 2007 the Dean of Students division began to develop a specialized sexual assault protocol outlining procedures to be followed by sexual assault survivors in the event of an attack: who exactly to contact

[417] *Ibid.*
[418] *Ibid.*
[419] *Ibid.*

in the immediate aftermath of rape or assault, how to preserve evidence, how to file a university and police report, and where to seek medical and psychological assistance.[420] The protocol also provided information on definitions of concepts such as consent and coercion and detailed the manner in which the university would respond to charges of sexual assault or harassment laid against students of the institution.[421] Such a response, especially in light of the preceding two decades of institutional apathy with regard to the problem of sexual assault on campus, ought to be considered a progressive gesture on the part of the university, and a testament to the ability of the Rhodes community to encourage institutional change through protest and lobbying.

In practice, however, the process of actually dealing with sexual assault on campus continued to be a difficult one. McNeill notes that between 1997 and 2007, four cases of rape were brought before the university proctor, Gordon Barker.[422] Of these, two were not prosecuted due to lack of evidence.[423] The remaining two cases resulted in successful prosecutions, with the respective sentences being permanent exclusion and exclusion for five years.[424] Though McNeill notes approvingly that in situations of rape female prosecutors formed part of the prosecuting team as a matter of policy, she is critical of the fact that there was no mandatory sentencing for those found guilty of rape, and of the fact that on the university transcript of those excluded for rape the reason for exclusion was given as "unsatisfactory conduct"- a term which, as McNeill archly points out, "seems to suggest public drunkenness and vandalism rather than the rape of a woman".[425]

According to an article written by the 2016 chairperson of the Rhodes University Gender Action Project, Gorata Chengeta, there were seven cases of sexual assault and/or harassment brought before the university prosecutors, of which only one

[420] Rhodes University Sexual Assault Protocol. Available at: https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/deanofstudents/documents/policies/Sexual%20assault.pdf. Accessed September 2016.
[421] *Ibid.*
[422] McNeill, 'Rape at Rhodes', 65.
[423] *Ibid.*
[424] *Ibid.*
[425] *Ibid.*

resulted in the accused being found guilty. He was subsequently only excluded from Rhodes for one year.[426]

As Chengeta points out, the low figures for reported rape cases at Rhodes paint an "incomplete picture" of the gravity of the situation.[427] As the One in Nine campaign emphasized, a significant proportion of rapes and sexual assaults go unreported, as rape survivors often do not wish to experience the stigma, pity or social sanctioning that often goes hand in hand with rape survival, or else do not want to revisit the traumatic memory of their sexual assaults - especially, as the low conviction rates and light punishments typically seen in prosecuted cases of sexual violence attest, when there is a high chance that their rapists will be acquitted or else only lightly punished for their crimes.[428] Despite efforts on the part of the university to improve the channels and mechanisms through which students could report cases of sexual assault and harassment, many students still either were not aware of, or were not comfortable using, the channels put in place by the university to report such cases, as revealed in a survey undertaken in early 2015 by the Gender Action Project.[429] The difficulties and dangers associated with reporting cases of rape and sexual assault, the low conviction rates and mild penalties that had come to characterise those cases of assault that were reported, and the perceived lack of institutional understanding and support for rape survivors had resulted in a significant portion of the student populace, particularly women, feeling extremely dissatisfied and frustrated with the manner in which Rhodes University had sought to deal with the problem of rape and sexual assault on campus. These frustrations came to a head in April 2016 with the #RUReferenceList protests.[430] The following section will examine the events of the protests in some detail, as these protests represent a dramatic shift in the discussion of rape and sexual assault at Rhodes.

The protests were preceded by a student-led poster campaign, the Chapter 2.12 Campaign, which took its name from the section of the South African constitution guaranteeing the right to psychological and bodily integrity for all citizens of South

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[426] Chengeta, G., 2016, 'Awareness needed to tackle sexual violence at Rhodes University'. Available at: https://gorahtah.wordpress.com/2016/01/. Accessed April 2016.
[427] *Ibid.*
[428] *Ibid*
[429] *Ibid.*
[430] Following a precedent set by the #RhodesMustFall protests of 2015 the name #RUReferenceList protest is named after the Twitter hashtag under which news and discussion of the protest were catalogued on various forms of social media.

Africa.[431] On 11 April 2016 Chapter 2.12 sought to draw attention to the continuing problem of rape culture within the institution and the perceived shortcomings of Rhodes' policies towards and treatment of cases of rape and sexual assault on campus through a series of posters put up near the Kaif/Library area and then photographed and disseminated on social media, a similar tactic to that which had been used the previous year as part of the Black Student Movement's "#RhodesSoWhite" campaign.[432] The posters placed up near the library consisted of simple slogans printed in black on A4 paper, the content of which included both general statements regarding rape culture at Rhodes University (such as "Rhodes University hires rapists and abusers") and specific quoted problematic statements reportedly said to rape survivors who attempted to report their rapist via the university's internal disciplinary system (such as "Girls shouldn't get too drunk or else they will be raped"). Despite the fact that Chapter 2.12 had been officially endorsed by the SRC, the posters proved controversial and were removed by the Campus Protection Unit the same morning they were put up, a decision which provoked much ire and consternation among various students on social media. That an officially-endorsed poster campaigning intended to raise awareness around rape culture was subject to this kind of censorship was itself interpreted by many as a concrete example of rape culture - an attempt to silence the voices of survivors. Following an evening of Facebook furore the posters were put up again the following day, when they were allowed to remain in place.[433] The poster campaign was supposedly received positively by certain branches of management, with the Student Affairs Office expressing their support for the campaign and the vice-chancellor, Dr Sizwe Mabizela, promising to investigate the problematic statements made by various members of Rhodes management.[434]

The Chapter 2.12 campaign appears to have had the effect of foregrounding the issue of sexual violence within the broader consciousness of the Rhodes student body, sparking off debate and conversation around issues such as rape, sexual assault, harassment and related issues across campus. It was within the context of this new wave of discussion and awareness around the problem of rape culture at Rhodes

[431] Wazar, W., 'Chapter 2.12: the campaign against rape culture', *Activate Online* 11/04/2016. Available at: http://activateonline.co.za/chapter-2-12-the-campaign-against-rape-culture/. Accessed May 2016.
[432] *Ibid.*
[433] *Ibid.*
[434] *Ibid.*

precipitated by the efforts of Chapter 2.12 that the #RuReferenceList was released. The list was published on the night of Sunday 17 April on the now-defunct *RU Queer Confessions and Crushes* page, a Facebook page intended as a space where members of Rhodes' LGBTQI community could share their views, opinions, and secrets anonymously.[435] Due to the anonymous submission system utilized by the page it remains unknown who was responsible for compiling and releasing the list. Though initial suspicions fell on the Chapter 2.12 group, the students involved in the campaign categorically denied any and all responsibility for the release of the list.[436]

The list itself consisted of only the names of eleven men, all current or previous students of Rhodes University, together with the heading 'Reference List'. What is particularly interesting about the 'Reference List' is that no further context was given to the list of names in the original post; no direct accusations were made. The author(s) of the list appear to have been relying on a combination of factors – the small, insular, gossip-prone nature of Rhodes, the poor reputations of the men named on the list, and the heightened awareness of the issue of rape and rape culture at Rhodes brought about by the Chapter 2.12 campaign – to make clear, in the eyes of those who were attuned to these things, the connection between the eleven names on the list. The intention behind this use of covert, implicit as opposed to overt and explicit accusation can be read in a myriad of ways. On one level, the decision not to state outright that the list was a list of rapists or alleged rapists can be understood as an attempt on the part of the author(s) to maintain a level of plausible deniability or presumed innocence should their identity/ies be brought to light and the men named on the list seek legal action against them. On another level, the absence of context or explanation behind the names on the list can itself be understood as a comment on the ubiquity of a rape culture on the Rhodes campus; implicit in the thinking behind the publication of the list is the notion that all the men on it were, rightly or wrongly, known within different circles at Rhodes as being abusers of women, and therefore that anyone reading the list would be able to understand the underlying thread connecting them all.

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[435] Seddon, D., "'We Will Not Be Silenced': Rape Culture, #RUReferenceList and the University Currently Known as Rhodes", *Daily Maverick* 1 June 2016. Available at: http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2016-06-01-we-will-not-be-silenced-rape-culture-rureferencelist-and-the-university-currently-known-as-rhodes/#.WAZLy_l96M-. Accessed June 2016.

[436] Tadepally, S. and Parker, M., '#RuReferenceList", *Activate Online* 18 April 2016. Available at: http://activateonline.co.za/rureferencelist/. Accessed April 2016.

The publication of the 'reference list' had an immediate and dramatic impact. Shortly after being posted to the *RU Queer Confessions and Crushes* page the post was shared on the Rhodes SRC Facebook page, the largest online discussion forum for the Rhodes community, with over 9000 subscribed members. The post rapidly gained traction and students soon began to guess at the connection between the names and the intention behind the publication of the list. Particularly controversial was the inclusion of the name of one of the members of the SRC. Calls went out on the Rhodes SRC page for an impromptu mass mobilisation of students. A large crowd gathered at the Steve Biko Union Building where the SRC offices were located, in the hope of finding the named SRC member and asking him to account for his inclusion on an alleged list of alleged rapists. Thereafter the crowd began to move between various residences, Jan Smuts, Goldfields, Calata, Cullen Bowles, and Graham, seeking out the individuals named on the list.[437] In a few instances, the crowd was able to gain entry to the residences and forcibly remove some of the men named on the list from their rooms, frog-marching them onto campus.[438] By the time the crowd had reached Cullen Bowles Dr Mabizela had been informed of events on campus and had arrived on the scene together with Dr Colleen Vassiliou, Director of Student Affairs, and several members of the police, who assisted in freeing the alleged rapists from the crowd and placed them in protective custody.[439] Mabizela's response was met with uproar from the students present, who interpreted his actions as indicative of an institutional attitude that privileged the rights of rapists over those of victims.[440]

Following the intervention of Mabizela and the police, the crowd reconvened outside the Rhodes Drama Department at the location popularly known as "Purple Fees Square" by students ever since the area had been used as a primary gathering point for the '#FeesMustFall' protests that had taken place the previous year. The gathering was addressed by SRC Activism and Transformation Councillor, Naledi Mashishi, and over the course of the evening the protesters had drawn up a list of demands to present to the university authorities – including, but not limited to, the immediate revision of the university's sexual assault policies and the immediate

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[437] *Ibid.*
[438] Heideman, V., 'From the Silence: A Response to Deborah Seddon', *Daily Maverick* 6 June 2016. Available at: http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2016-06-06-from-the-silence-a-response-to-deborah-seddon/#.WAedtvl96M_. Accessed June 2016.
[439] Tadepally, S., and Parker, M., '#RUReferenceList'.
[440] *Ibid.*

suspension, pending investigation, of all those named on the 'reference list'.[441] The students proposed an ultimatum – that all demands be met before 16:00 the following day, or else the protesters would impose a full academic shutdown of the university, with an interim shutdown being put into place on Monday 18 April while the university deliberated on the demands put forward.[442] In response, Mabizela refused to instate a formal shutdown on the Monday but did concede that students taking part in the protest would not be academically penalized for their participation.[443]

The next day bore witness to a series of lecture disruptions which culminated in an occupation of the Council Chamber within the main administration building.[444] At 16:00 the protesters moved outside to the area at the foot of the steps to the main administration building, where Dr Mabizela addressed the crowd. Though Mabizela was receptive to several of the demands made the previous evening by the student protesters - such as the establishment of a task team, comprising both students and staff, with the purpose of re-evaluating the university's policies towards rape and assault – he refused to capitulate to the demand that the individuals named on the 'reference list' be suspended pending further investigation, reminding the protesters that such an action could not be carried out within the legal and institutional framework of the university's disciplinary code and that no action could be taken against the individuals named on the Reference List until their accusers came forward and laid official charges.[445] This response, reasonable though it was, angered the protesters, and following a second gathering at Purple Fees Square the decision was taken (albeit not unanimously) to attempt to enforce a full academic shutdown of the university until all demands were met.[446] Following the decision to impose a shutdown the protesters began erecting barricades on Prince Alfred Street, in an attempt to block access to the campus.[447] The barricades were dismantled by the Campus Protection Unit the following morning, with Dr Mabizela arriving at the

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[441] *Ibid.*
[442] *Ibid.*
[443] King, J., '#RUReferenceList: Mabizela Addresses Students', *Activate Online* 18 April 2016. Available at: http://activateonline.co.za/rureferencelist-mabizela-addresses-students/. Accessed April 2016.
[444] Tadepally and Parker, '#RUReferenceList'.
[445] King, 'Mabizela Addresses Students'.
[446] Parker, M., '#RUReferenceList: Barricades Go Up'. *Activate Online* 19 April 2016. Available at: http://activateonline.co.za/rureferencelist-barricades-go-up/. Accessed April 2016.
[447] *Ibid.*

barricade in person and taking part in their dismantling.[448] During the course of the dismantling, Dr Mabizela was filmed physically pushing over a student who was attempting to keep a barricade in place; the video soon went viral on Rhodes-related social media groups and provoked outrage among the student body, despite Dr Mabizela's swift public apology.[449] Mobilisations and lecture disruptions continued throughout the day, and that evening barricades were erected once more, blocking off the Prince Alfred Street, Lucas Avenue and South Street entrances onto campus, with protesters manning the barricades throughout the night.[450]

On the morning of Wednesday 20 April, half an hour before lectures were due to begin, the police arrived on the scene and broke up the protest using rubber bullets, pepper spray and tear gas.[451] During the course of events six students were arrested for blocking public roads.[452] Despite attempts on the part of Dr Mabizela to convince the police to leave the campus, clashes between police and protesters continued throughout the morning, with numerous students sustaining injuries in the process.[453] Despite, or perhaps because of, a heavy police presence, protesters rallied again that afternoon and staged what was termed a "naked protest" on Prince Alfred Street, with some female protesters stripping to the waist and forming a topless human barricade and lying in a semi-nude row across the road.[454]

The decision to protest topless - a move on the part of the protesters which grabbed news headlines across the country - was no doubt inspired by the thinking behind the global "slutwalk" movement, which originated in Canada in 2011 and was quickly taken up by various feminist organizations throughout the world.[455] During "slutwalks", protest marches against rape and rape culture, participants generally wear revealing, alluring or otherwise "slutty" attire in order to emphasise the non-

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[448] *Ibid.*
[449] Pillay, D., and de Swardt, D., 'Rhodes VC apologises for pushing student'. *Herald Live* April 19 2016. Available at: http://www.heraldlive.co.za/news/2016/04/19/rhodes-vc-apologises-pushing-student/. Accessed April 2016.
[450] Tadepally, S., and Eming, J., '#RUReferenceList: Police and Protesters Clash'. *Activate Online* 20 April 2014. Available at: http://activateonline.co.za/rureferencelist-protests-become-heated-as-police-and-students-clash/. Accessed April 2016.
[451] Tadepally and Eming, 'Police and Protesters Clash'.
[452] *Ibid.*
[453] *Ibid.*
[454] Butler, L., 'Students strip in protest over rape', *Herald Live* 20 April 2016. Avalable at: http://www.heraldlive.co.za/news/2016/04/20/students-strip-protest-rape/. Accessed April 2016.
[455] Carr, J., L., 'The Slutwalk Movement: A Study in Transnational Feminist Activism', *Journal of Feminist Scholarship* 4, 2013, 24. Available at: http://www.ifsonline.org/issue4/pdfs/JFS_Issue4.pdf#page=28. Accessed August 2016.

negotiability of affirmative consent and the right of women to dress and comport themselves however they see fit without fear of sexual assault. The slutwalk originated as a form of protest against the idea that women who dressed in ways considered provocative were "asking for it" and therefore were less worthy of sympathy in the event of their being sexually assaulted, or even that the fact of dressing in certain ways negated the victim status of rape survivors.[456] The decision on the part of the #RUReferenceList protesters to employ a similar tactic can be read as indicative of how, thanks to the growth of the internet, certain ideas and movements within global feminism had become rapidly disseminated throughout the world. By adopting the tactics of anti-rape culture protests that had been utilized around the globe, the #RUReferenceList protesters were symbolically aligning themselves with a transnational feminist movement rooted in the instant connectivity that had been brought about by the rapid expansion of the internet and social media. These same tactics, incidentally, were taken up by protesting students at the University of Cape Town several weeks later, when in protest against the inadequacies of the university's sexual assault policy a group of students stripped down to their underwear in front of the Bremner Building.[457]

Despite high tension between protesters and police, who made threats of further arrests during the naked protest (on grounds of public indecency), no further clashes took place that day thanks to the intervention of several staff members who reminded the police present at the protest that Prince Alfred Street was technically not a public road.[458] The police then agreed to leave the scene provided that students remained on Prince Alfred Street and did not attempt to block or barricade any other roads.[459] Protesters remained at 'Purple Fees Square' into the evening. The protest, however, took an unexpected turn when news began to circulate that the university management had taken out an interim police interdict against the protesters. The interdict, which was taken against both the '#RUReferenceList' protesters in general and against particular individuals whom management had identified as the ringleaders of the protest, strictly forbade any protest actions that could be deemed illegitimate or infringing on the rights of others, such as restriction on freedom of

[456] Carr, 'The Slutwalk Movement', 25-26.
[457] Wilson, T., 'UCT Speaks Back'. *Varsity Newspaper* July 29 2016. Available at: http://varsitynewspaper.co.za/news/4630-uct-speaks-back. Accessed September 2016.
[458] Butler, 'Students strip in protest'.
[459] *Ibid.*

movement (in the form of barricades, human or otherwise) or the disruption of the academic programme.[460] The interdict, met with much outrage from both students and sympathetic staff members, appears to have had the desired effect. Although protests continued throughout the following day, no more attempts at barricade-building were made, with protests taking the form of peaceful marches and prayer vigils instead.[461]

In response to the demands made by the protesters, Rhodes had agreed to set up an interim task team (later to be made official), consisting of both staff and student representatives and headed by Professor Catriona Macleod, to investigate Rhodes' current sexual assault and harassment policies and make recommendations for how they could be improved, as well as to facilitate reconciliation between staff and students and manage the aftermath of the '#RuReferenceList' protests.[462] Some of the deliberations of the task-team were taken on board by the Vice Chancellor, who delivered a speech to the student body on 23 April in which he addressed several of the protester's demands. In his speech Mabizela agreed, among other pledges, to increase the funding and capacity of the Rhodes Harassment Office, to have cases of rape and sexual assault overseen by external prosecutors, and to revise the university's sexual assault policy to be more in line with the national Sexual Offences Act.[463] Despite these concessions, many students were still highly dissatisfied with Mabizela's response. The issue of what was to be done about the students and former students named on the Reference List, for instance, was still undecided, and the interdict, which students and several staff members had demanded be lifted, was still in place.[464] Nonetheless, these concessions, combined with the fear of further police action should the interdict be breached, seem to have had their desired effect. Lectures resumed on 26 April, although in recognition of the events of the past week many lecturers suspended their usual curricula and used their lecture periods to host

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[460] Rhodes University Council statement on recent student protests, 8 June 2016, 1. Available at: https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/communications/documents/Council%20statement%20on%20student%20protests%20and%20transformation08062016.pdf. Accessed June 2016.
[461] Tadepally, S., '#RUReferenceList: Amended Demands, Press Conferences, and Task Team Debated. Available at: http://activateonline.co.za/rureferencelist-amended-demands-press-conferences-and-task-team-debated/. Accessed April 2016.
[462] *Ibid*.
[463] Tadepally. S., '#RUReferenceList: Mabizela Answers to List of Demands', *Activate Online* 24 April 2016. Available at: http://activateonline.co.za/rureferencelist-dr-mabizela-answers-to-the-list-of-demands/. Accessed April 2016.
[464] *Ibid*.

talks and discussions relating to sexual assault and the rape culture.[465] Minor protests and demonstrations continued over the next few months, but no further major disruption to the academic programme took place. The '#RUReferenceList' protest had, in effect, come to an end.

The protests proved to be hugely divisive among the Rhodes community, particularly in terms of staff responses to the protest. On 21 April a group of concerned academic staff members released a statement condemning the hard-line approach taken by the police in their handling of the protest and decrying management's decision to take out a court interdict against the protesters, a decision which was seen as criminalising legitimate student protest and which could serve to further escalate tensions and sow mistrust between students and the institution.[466] The concerned staff expressed sympathy with the premises and aims of the '#RUReferenceList' movement, agreeing that the university remained steeped in a culture that tacitly enabled rapists and that downplayed the gravity of rape cases and accusations.[467] In one case, this expression of sympathy and support was itself seemingly enough to raise the ire of the university. Ms. Corinne Knowles, of the Extended Studies Unit, was reportedly threatened with legal action, being found in contravention of the interdict after encouraging students to "disrupt" classes by raising their hands and asking their lecturers for their opinions on the protests.[468] On the other hand, other staff members, though broadly sympathetic with the basic aims of the movement, expressed reservations about the manner in which protests were conducted. In an article written for the *Daily Maverick* Vicky Heideman, lecturer in the Faculty of Law, characterized the events of Sunday 17 April, the night on which angry protesters sought to extricate those named on the 'reference list' from inside their residences, as an example of mob justice, and notes that the persecution of the accused men on the part of the protesters was both immoral and illegal given the absence of formal

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[465] Richardson, L., '#RUReferenceList: Lectures resume, education begins', *Activate Online* 26 April 2016. Available at: http://activateonline.co.za/rureferencelist-lectures-resume-education-begins/. Accessed April 2016.
[466] Statement from Concerned Academic Staff about the Events at Rhodes University since April 17th 2016. Published April 21st 2016. Available at: http://activateonline.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Statement-from-concerned-academic-staff-members-regarding-the-RUReferenceList-protests..pdf. Accessed April 2016.
[467] *Ibid.*
[468] Koza, N., 'Rhodes Lecturer Accused of Breaching Protest Interdict', *Eyewitness News Online* 26 April 2016. Avaiable at: http://ewn.co.za/2016/04/26/Rhodes-lecturer-accused-of-breaching-protest-interdict. Accessed April 2016; Seddon., D., 'We Will Not Be Silenced'.

charges and due process.[469] Implicit in the rhetoric of the protest, according to Heideman, was the idea of "the preconceived guilt of the men whose names appear on the list, and that due process is an inconvenient formality".[470] The protests, Heidemann noted, had bred an unfortunate "us and them" attitude on campus; because the issue of rape and sexual assault was such a highly emotively charged one, any criticisms of the protest and the way it was conducted – in particular, any criticisms of the morality/legality of the Reference List itself - were framed as "rape apologism" and met with severe antagonism.[471]

The question of the guilt or innocence of the men on the 'reference list', and the ethics of releasing the list, is a difficult one, not likely to ever be fully resolved and certainly beyond the ambit of this thesis to decide. It should be noted here, however, that the only man named on the list to make any public statement about his inclusion, Stuart Hoosen-Lewis, has stressed his innocence. In an interview given to the *Daily Maverick,* Hoosen-Lewis, who had graduated from Rhodes in 2015 and had since been working as a journalist for the *Daily Vox*, made mention of an allegation made against him several years prior, but claims that upon investigation no further action was taken.[472] Both Stuart Hoosen-Lewis and his wife, Mishka Hoosen-Lewis (also a Rhodes alumnus) released statements on social media addressing the allegations; in his statement Hoosen-Lewis expressed sympathy with the cause being fought by the '#RUReferenceList' protesters, lamenting the 'broken system' that made such drastic actions necessary and affirming that he had no intention of trying to discover the identity of his accuser in order to clear his name from the list as he did not want her to be put through the trauma of a long and messy defamation of character trial.[473] Such a response may be cynically read as a means of casting aspersions on a legitimate accusation through the portrayal of a sympathetic and liberal "ally" persona, or else as a sincere and heartfelt admission of innocence from a man falsely accused. There is no way of ascertaining the truth, but protestations of innocence such as this serve as a reminder that, despite the narrative

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[469] Heideman, V., 'From the Silence'.
[470] *Ibid.*
[471] *Ibid.*
[472] Thamm, M., '*J'accuse*: Life after the #RUReferenceList'. *Daily Maverick* 02 May 2016. Available at: http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2016-05-02-jaccuse-life-after-the-rureferencelist/#.WBB5Fvl96M9. Accessed May 2016.
[473] *Ibid.*

put forward by the #RUReferenceList protesters, accusation is not synonymous with guilt.

In the final analysis, the guilt or innocence of the men named on the 'Reference List' is irrelevant to what the list and its aftermath means for one's understanding of the problem of rape and the rape culture on the Rhodes campus during this particular time period. The '#RUReferenceList' protests can be understood as the culmination of many years of frustration and anger on the part of the student populace – especially, but not only, among female students – over the continuing problem of rape and sexual assault on campus. The events of April 2016 emerged out of this space of deep anger and frustration – anger over a culture that perpetuates rape, and frustration with the perceived repeated failures of the institution to adequately address the issue. That the students involved in the protest felt the need to take such extreme measures to draw attention to their cause – the "outing" of the men named on the 'reference list' as rapists, the forced academic shutdown, the erection of barricades – is indicative of just how silenced rape survivors at Rhodes had been made to feel by the institution, despite the many efforts made by the university over the years to combat the threat of rape on campus. It is also important, however, to bear in mind that the #RUReferenceList protests did not emerge out of isolation. They must be read within a broader national context, a national context in which rape has become, in the words of Pumla Dineo Gqola, "a South African nightmare".[474] Nor is the problem of rape on campus specific to Rhodes University. Similar protests had taken place at UCT the previous year, while in 2013 several lecturers at the University of the Witwatersrand were accused of sexually assaulting their students.[475] It is hard to determine why the protests at Rhodes took on such an intense character at this particular time. One could speculate that the demographics of Rhodes University may have contributed to the scale and intensity of the protests - the Rhodes student body is, after all, predominantly female at the time of writing, and as rape is a crime that disproportionately affects women, it is therefore a crime which either would have directly affected or had the potential to directly affect the majority of the student population. It is also reasonable to speculate that the long history of conversation and protest about the problem of rape at Rhodes, from the

[474] Gqola, P., *Rape: A South African Nightmare*, (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2015), 1.
[475] Pilane, P., '#RUReferenceList: A violent response to a violent act'. *Mail and Guardian Online* 22 April 2016. Available at: http://mg.co.za/article/2016-04-21-rhodes-rapes-a-violent-response-to-a-violent-act. Accessed April 2016.

efforts of the SRC women's group in the 1980s to the actions of the One in Nine campaign throughout the early 2000s, had created an atmosphere of awareness around the problem of rape and assault, and a culture of protest and organization, which in turn provided fertile ground for the spontaneous eruption of the '#RUReferenceList' protests. In this sense, '#RUReferenceList' can be understood as the natural and logical progression of years of organization, activism and, most crucially, anger.

'#RUReferenceList' is still too recent a piece of Rhodes history for its impact to be fully assessed. One effect the protests had, however, was signalling the end, at least temporarily, of the silent protest. During the #RUReferenceList protests an image began to circulate on social media of a young woman refusing the black tape associated with the silent protest, symbolic of the notion widespread among student activists that "the time for silence as a form of protest is over".[476] The silent protest was no longer seen as necessary (given that the goal of the protest, the raising of awareness around gender-based violence and sexual assault, had already been amply fulfilled by the #RUReferenceList protests) or appropriate (given how the protesters themselves had been forcibly "silenced" by the police and the institution of the interdict). It will be interesting to observe, over the next few years, whether the Silent Protest is ever resumed, or whether the anniversary of the #RUReferenceList protests are commemorated in any way, with such a commemoration perhaps filling the gap that will be left by the Silent Protest. In 2016 the silent protest was replaced by the #WeBelieveYou campaign, which consisted primarily of lectures and workshops, but is uncertain at this juncture whether this will become an annual event in the same fashion as the silent protest.[477]

Sex may be a private and intimate affair, but this does not mean that it is a phenomenon immune to the vicissitudes of history and culture. The ways in which the members of a particular community – in this instance, Rhodes University – conduct their sexual liaisons are determined by particular cultural and ideological frameworks, and those frameworks are not static, but change over time. The sexual

[476] Kelland, L., post made to Facebook (Rhodes SRC Group Page), 19 July 2016. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/rhodessrc/permalink/1246788945341064/. Accessed July 2016.
[477] *Ibid.*

climate on Rhodes campus in 2016 is markedly different to that which prevailed in the 1960s, 70s or 80s, and the changes that have taken place are as much a reflection of wider global and national shifts in the politics and ideology of sexuality as they are reflective of changing attitudes towards sex on the part of the university community itself. As the preceding chapter has sought to demonstrate, the transition between the apartheid and post-apartheid periods in South Africa entailed grand changes, political, material and cultural, throughout all levels and in all spheres of South African society. This abstract cultural shift, premised upon a radical political and ideological change, can be seen concretely reflected in the changing nature of sex and sexuality at one small formerly white university in the Eastern Cape: the "erotic liberation" that Posel refers to has played out at Rhodes in a myriad of ways, from increased sexual openness to greater acceptance and tolerance of alternate sexualities to renewed efforts to bring attention to and combat the scourge of sexual assault. These changes have been made possible by the window of opportunity granted by a new atmosphere of permissiveness and openness regarding sexual affairs prevailing in the post-apartheid period, but in their practical realisation are the result of collective and individual efforts on the part of both Rhodes as an institution and on the part of the student body to pursue new ways of being, to challenge pre-existing outdated notions of sexuality and create an environment within the university where the free and safe expression of sexual desire can be pursued. That is not to say that Rhodes University is some kind of libertine paradise. As with any heterogeneous community there exists a diverse array of opinions, viewpoints and positions regarding the nature of sexual desires and practices, and issues such as, say, homophobia or sexual harassment and assault are still distressingly present on campus. Nonetheless, one can still assert with confidence that the sphere of sex and sexuality at Rhodes University has undergone a significant degree of "transformation" over the course of the last twenty-two years.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Universities are more than just institutions of education and research, and certainly more than just businesses. They are also, and crucially, communities. This communal facet of university life is especially apparent at an institution like Rhodes, given its

small, isolated, and predominantly residential nature. Rhodes, for those whose lives are bound up within the institution, is not simply a place of work or study, but also a home, a place where friendships are formed, lifelong connections made, memories forged. For students, especially, who make up the majority of the ever-changing loose body that is "the Rhodes community" on campus, the university has a particular impact, acting as the stage for the often difficult, sometimes terrifying, but always important transition from childhood into adulthood. It can be said without too much exaggeration that Rhodes (and other similar institutions) does not only produce graduates, or research, but *people*: that the institution leaves its mark upon those who pass through its halls.

For this reason, questions of university culture become important ones. The cultural history and practices of the institution set the parameters within which its members are able to be; to live and to love, to work and to play. The broader culture of the institution forms the framework within which the self-expression of its members is realised, as well as the framework within which the community defines itself. Such a culture does not exist in isolation, and is in turn influenced by and reflective of much larger cultural patterns, trends and conflicts, both nationally and, indeed, globally.

As this thesis has sought to demonstrate, the culture of Rhodes University has, across multiple facets, undergone significant change over the last twenty-two years. The shift from the apartheid to post-apartheid periods has resulted in a markedly different institutional climate at Rhodes. These changes, as this thesis has explored, can be observed in myriad different aspects of the institution's culture, from the field of the visual - that is the way that Rhodes actually looks or seems or appears to the world – to the way in which members of the Rhodes community are able to conduct themselves in their most intimate sexual affairs.

It is naive, however, to think that these changes are – or indeed, ever could be – in any way "complete". The transformation process is a long and fraught one, and though much has changed at Rhodes University, much has also remained the same. Rhodes continues to be perceived by many, for instance, as a white "colonial" institution, despite efforts on the part of the university to alter this perception through altering the aesthetic and visual culture of the institution, and issues such as homophobia and sexual assault and harassment on campus still remain contentious issues. Nonetheless, it would be churlish to say that no progress has been made, and

that no meaningful efforts towards the transformation of these two facets of the institution's culture have been taken. In terms of both policy put into place to enact transformation in particular spheres of university life by the institution itself and efforts to alter the institutional culture of Rhodes from within the university community, there have been a cohort of concerted efforts to transform the culture of the institution and make it more equal, democratic and in line with the ideological imperatives of transformation and the new South Africa. The protests of 2015 and 2016 are, indeed, simply another iteration of this process of change, an attempt on the part of certain segments of the student community to alter particular facets of the institution's culture that are perceived to not have changed in a manner appropriate for the new South African context. Where this path will lead the institution, of course, remains to be seen.

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