

AXL5401W – MINOR DISSERTATION

**‘Becoming’ and Overcoming:  
Girls’ changing bodies and toilets in Zwelihle,  
Hermanus**

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
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There in the everyday and the mundane  
There in the sorrow and the dancing  
Your grace finds me.

## Declaration

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of *MSocSc in Social Anthropology*, as per the Faculty of Humanities Postgraduate Handbook (2014). This dissertation is a product of the Anthropology Section of the School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics at the University of Cape Town (UCT).

*I, Kerry Leigh Vice, know the meaning of plagiarism and declare that all the work in this dissertation, barring that which I have properly acknowledged, is my own. In addition, I have referenced all quotations and other ideas borrowed from others using the Harvard Method of citation and referencing.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

*Kerry L Vice*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Terms of Reference

According to the *Faculty of Humanities Postgraduate handbook (2014)*, the following are the requirements for AXL5401W, as recorded in the course outline:

Master's in Social Anthropology: Candidates must undertake an approved research project in Social-Cultural Anthropology comprising an individually supervised research exercise based on engagement with the appropriate literature, and at least two months of field-based research (normally in southern Africa). It culminates in an ethnographic dissertation of a maximum of 25000 words (part of which may, with permission, be an ethnographic film or in new-media text).

## **Abstract**

The dissertation draws on ethnographic research conducted in 2012 and 2013 in a South African township called Zwelihle in the Western Cape coastal town of Hermanus. Leading up to this period, protests motivated by a long growing dissatisfaction with shared temporary sanitation facilities and services were rife within townships and informal settlements across the Western Cape, and the provision of toilets by municipalities that formed part of a national “Water is Life, Sanitation is Dignity” campaign became a highly politicised issue. Against this backdrop, and drawing on evidence gathered while doing ten weeks of ethnographic fieldwork in and around Zwelihle, the dissertation highlights the relationship between reproductive health and sanitation. Specifically, it focuses on the experiences, embodied practices and imaginings of adolescent girls in Zwelihle who use predominantly public toilet facilities; and it uses Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) notion of “becoming-woman” as a lens through which to consider how girls experience their changing bodies. The dissertation shows that, within South Africa’s climate of extreme sexual violence, the experiences, embodied practices and imaginings of adolescent girls in Zwelihle reflect the presence of fear in the everyday and their perceptions of public toilets and other ‘dark’ spaces as unsafe. Finally, it shows the value of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept “becoming-woman” as a theoretical lens through which to view how girls inhabit spaces in Zwelihle and adjacent areas, and how they inhabit their bodies; and it provides a means for an analysis that recognises the potential for girls and women to overcome imposed expectations that may appear to be simple realities.

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## **Acronyms & Abbreviations**

<b>AAA</b>	American Anthropological Association
<b>ASnA</b>	Anthropology Southern Africa
<b>DWAF</b>	Department of Water Affairs and Forestry
<b>FBS</b>	Free Basic Services
<b>IUWM</b>	Integrated Urban Water Management
<b>RDP</b>	Reconstruction and Development Programme
<b>UWMRU</b>	Urban Water Management Research Unit
<b>WRC</b>	Water Research Commission of Southern Africa

# Chapter 1

## *Introduction*

Bronislaw Malinowski wrote, in his second appendix to the first volume of *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, entitled “Confessions of Ignorance and Failure: Gaps and Side-Steps”: “A general source of inadequacies in all my material, whether photographic or linguistic or descriptive, consists in the fact that, like every ethnographer, I was lured by the dramatic, exceptional and sensational . . . I have also neglected much of the everyday, inconspicuous, drab and small-scale in my study of Trobriand life. The only comfort which I may derive is that . . . my mistakes may be of use to others.” [1935:462]

### **“The everyday, inconspicuous and drab”**

*I woke up to a soft rain on the corrugated iron roof. I heard the children who were staying in the backyard rooms running past my window and talking to one another. I dressed and walked through the living room to the front door. Justine was watching television while she ate her breakfast. Justine is from Uganda, and sells crafts at the Hermanus waterfront. I crossed the road, heading past the crèche to use the public toilets at Bloukerk. The streets were dotted with school children and workers, all on their way. It was about 7:30am. Despite the drizzle, people were milling about, filling their buckets at taps scattered throughout the settlement, filling their cups to rinse their mouths after brushing their teeth. Young and old people were coming in and out of the toilets, the wooden doors opening and closing, opening and closing. Fundiswa, the janitor, was handing out toilet paper and cleaning as she went. When I had my chance I entered a vacant cubicle, toilet paper in hand, and closed the wooden door. As I sat down, I thought about how some people had looked at me; and I wondered whether they were perhaps annoyed that I was using their toilets at such a busy time of the day. They knew I didn't live in Bloukerk. When I came out, I thanked Fundiswa and said I would chat with her later. Outside the front door of one shack just a few metres from the toilets, a girl in her school uniform was grooming her hair before a hand held mirror. I recognised her from the primary school. I walked back home to eat breakfast.*

*Justine asked where I had been and I told her; to which she responded, “Are you not afraid of the loxion<sup>1</sup> then?”*

The above narrative does not describe an extraordinary event. It simply describes one of my experiences of using the public toilets in Zwelihle’s informal settlements during my research there. A visit to a public toilet block is a typical journey that residents made many times everyday to collect water and/or to manage their ablutions. On this day, it was perhaps my very presence that distinguished that particular morning from others as there was nothing typical about a 25 year-old blonde woman with an unfamiliar white face appearing amidst the busyness in Bloukerk to wait in line for the toilets so early in the morning. Nevertheless, it offers a glimpse into the everyday in Zwelihle, centred on a mundane yet necessary bodily function that is connected to important issues of public health, safety and human rights.

## **The Question**

Justine’s enquiry as to whether or not I was fearful as I walked around Zwelihle on my own in the early morning in order to use a public toilet, was laden with an apparent expectation of what my behaviour, as a woman, as a white woman and as a stranger to Zwelihle should have been. It was as though she was confused as to how I could move about so freely considering her knowledge of the dangers that I could have encountered and her expectation that I too, particularly since I was a woman, should have known of these same dangers. I felt that her question, and the tone in which she asked it, implied her opinion of my behaviour to be reckless and unwise, and I hastily stumbled over my words in an attempt to defend my behaviour with phrases such as, “it is light”, “there are plenty of people around”, “I was not gone long”.

The dialogue between Justine and me on this occasion is pertinent here as it reflects the essence of my dissertation, that being the sanctions on behaviour that girls in Zwelihle, in particular those in my research group experienced, and the freedoms that they chose in between. Drawing on their experiences of menarche and their management thereof, their

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<sup>1</sup> “Loxion”, taken from *ilokshini*, the Zulu form of the word “location”, an early twentieth century term for African townships (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004). “Location” has also been used since the early colonial period to describe a rural area comprising a number of villages or settlements all subject to the administrative control of a headman (Hammond-Tooke, 1975).

engagement with their ‘changing’ bodies as well as their perceptions of ‘dark’ spaces, many of these spaces being toilet blocks, I consider to what extent Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) notion of “becoming-woman” is useful in terms of thinking about girls’ bodies within a socialisation process in which I found fear to be strongly present.

Simply put, “becoming-woman” is a rather complex notion, coined by Deleuze and Guattari, that they suggest is useful for considering how one can experience one’s body and encounter other bodies in a realm in which dominant gender norms can cease to exist. While I develop the idea in greater detail and explain it further in Chapter 3, it is, however, necessary at this stage to clarify and emphasise that Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept “becoming-woman” does *not* describe an effort to model one’s physical body upon that which is recognised as the female body (Dawson, 2008). Ironically, despite the topic of interest of my dissertation, “becoming-woman” is not a concept that describes the time period of pubescence, nor the idea of girls entering womanhood. It is in fact not at all concerned with girls becoming women in any physio-biological sense, nor with a specific image or idea of what a female body may look like, as there is no one generic female body, only a multiplicity of female bodies (Dawson, 2008). “Becoming-woman” depicts an experience whereby one sheds the socio-cultural impositions and expectations placed on one’s body in order to choose to have more choices, in order to choose to become something different than what one was or has been. As Leonard Lawlor explains, “It means that, having shed the form of an adult, one is able to become...a child. [That] means that one frees the potentialities that the molar form of adult man was enclosing” (Lawlor, 2008: 173).

The necessary condition for ‘becoming’ is aging (Lawlor, 2008). Since I had been grappling with making sense of the liminal space in which girls find themselves in that period when they are not considered children (even though legally they are regarded as such), and are not yet in their teens or adolescent years yet have experienced or are soon to experience menarche, I have found the notion of ‘becoming’ to be an attractive tool for the exploration of what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to as the “micrological” changes in girls that may or may not correspond with gendered developmental trajectories. “Micrological” changes in a person are, say Deleuze and Guattari (1987), those that are often overlooked or considered as trivial, particularly when, as shown in the literature review that follows, the physical changes that a girl experiences, such as the onset of menarche, are given analytical priority.

It is while focusing intently on their experiences of menarche and the bodily changes that accompany puberty that I found the girls with whom I was working to be in a socialisation process in which they inhabit bodies that are perceived by others in certain ways and responded to accordingly; as ‘a child’, ‘a woman’, ‘a female body’. In other words, they inhabited a space in which they were at times socially pushed to behave like women, and yet, in other instances, considered and treated like children. Using Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of “becoming-woman” as a lens, I look at the extent to which the girls’ sexuality<sup>2</sup> is “captured” by society, and whether there is space for their own desires and fears to emerge.

Before going on to elucidate further, however, it is necessary to explain how my research in Zwelihle began and how it evolved into the concerns I address in this dissertation. The research on which the dissertation draws forms part of a study funded by the South African Water Research Commission (WRC), to investigate the provision of janitorial services to public<sup>3</sup> flush toilet facilities in informal settlements in the Western Cape. My assignment was to focus on the janitorial services for the public flush toilets in Zwelihle in general and to contribute information that would be included in the report for the WRC (Taing *et al*, 2014). For purposes of this dissertation, I chose to focus in particular on girls and their experiences with toilets and the janitorial services. I thus decided, as a first step to work with girls in one of the local primary schools, that way to be able to meet a number of girls residing in Zwelihle and with whom I could conduct my research. The primary school where I met the girls who participated in my research is a co-ed school with approximately 1,200 registered learners, from the reception year to grade seven. The school’s toilet facilities for the learners were gender segregated with the girls having access to a row of five toilets with wash basins housed in a room that neighboured the separate boys’ toilets.

## **The Politics of Toilets**

In late 1994 and early 1995, the South African national government stipulated, in its Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), that minimal infrastructure and services

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<sup>2</sup> By “sexuality”, I refer to their possession of the structural and functional traits of sex (Dictionary.com).

<sup>3</sup> By “public” toilets I refer to “those facilities owned and managed by a local municipality and that are located in a publicly accessible space for any person to use. A public toilet is different from a communal toilet in that in the case of the latter; access is limited to a vaguely defined set of households and the responsibility of management and maintenance falls on these users” (Taing *et al*, 2014:22). When I refer to “shared” toilets, I refer generally and collectively to public, communal, and household toilets.

to low-income urban South Africans would be provided. Definitions for what constituted these “basic services” were therefore drafted. In 2001 a Free Basic Services (FBS) policy was implemented which recognised municipalities to be responsible for the provision of limited amounts of potable water, electricity, sanitation, drainage and solid waste removal services for free to all South Africans (Essop & Moses, 2009; Still *et al*, 2009). The increasing backlog and consequent delays in the provision of free housing to the poorest South Africans led to informal settlement residents regularly demanding upgrades to services in the areas in which they lived, particularly upgrades in sanitation, with ‘full flush’ toilets being deemed by national government as the most appropriate sanitation technology for dense urban settlements and being generally preferred by users (DWAF, 2003). Minister of Human Settlements of the Western Cape during this time, Bongikosi Madikizela, commented; “We will never succeed in addressing the challenge of housing if we continue like this. The current approach of housing delivery is further entrenching and deepening poverty on our people. Free houses will never be a substitute for a job and a solution to poverty” (2011). He admitted that the ‘housing crisis’ had led municipalities to react with measures to provide basic services. Suggestions to retrofit informal settlements with sewerage and drainage systems so as to accommodate ‘full flush’ toilets were largely dismissed in the face of problems that plagued conventional engineering approaches. They ranged from the settlements’ layouts, their unfavourable ground conditions such as being located in flood prone areas or on discontinued and capped landfills, and their being on privately owned land where municipalities had no authority to install infrastructure (Taing *et al*, 2013). Nevertheless, recent years have seen sustained and large scale investments in sanitation services in informal settlements even, according to Cape Town Mayor Patricia De Lille (de Lille, 2013), whilst the housing delays persist.

Thus, the provision of what has come to be described as ‘basic sanitation’<sup>4</sup> to informal and previously unserved areas in urban South Africa has been a highly politicised issue that has received much media coverage over the last five years. In 2013, Cape Town saw protests that involved the dumping of faeces at government offices, Cape Town International Airport and on the N2 national highway (eNCA, 2013b; Krige, 2013); acts which vehemently

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<sup>4</sup> According to the Strategic Framework for Water Services document, ‘basic sanitation’ refers to the provision of the infrastructure necessary to provide an unspecified sanitation facility which is safe, reliable, private, protected from the weather and ventilated, keeps smells to the minimum, is easy to keep clean, minimises the risk of the spread of sanitation-related diseases by facilitating the appropriate control of disease carrying flies and pests, and enables safe and appropriate treatment and/or removal of human waste and wastewater in an environmentally sound manner (DWAF, 2003:46)

demonstrated residents' general dissatisfaction with having to share container toilets provided by the City of Cape Town's municipal structures in certain areas of the city's Khayelitsha and Gugulethu townships. Mayor Patricia de Lille responded with a personal visit to the areas deemed problematic in order to supervise the cleaning of the public portable toilets that the City had installed. She was, however, immediately criticised for wearing a hygiene mask on her visit, as it appeared to symbolise the 'unhealthy' state of the toilets that residents use day to day (eNCA, 2013a).

As the race continues to provide adequately maintained 'full flush' toilet facilities, and as it involves local and provincial municipalities across the country, those municipalities which have indeed managed to provide serviced facilities that are deemed to be of an acceptable standard by the residents that use them have set a groundbreaking precedent. One example is the small coastal town of Hermanus where residents of the informal settlements within the township of Zwelihle have been provided with accessible public full flush toilets that are cleaned throughout the day by permanent on-site janitorial staff. The Overstrand Municipality has operated and funded this service since 2007.

## **Zwelihle in History**

There are currently no published accounts pertaining to the history of Zwelihle in Hermanus. I have thus pieced together brief histories of both Hermanus and Zwelihle by using information gathered from museums, local websites and national legislation<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Formulating a full history of Zwelihle is beyond the scope of this dissertation.



**Figure 1.1:** Topographical map of Zwelihle in Hermanus (Source: Google Earth, 2013)

It is commonly understood by local residents that Hermanus was established as a village in the early 1800s when it was discovered accidentally by Hermanus Pieters, a shepherd in search of pastureland. It soon became a fishers' settlement and later developed into a resort town, having come to be regarded, by European settlers and their descendants, as a good place to visit during convalescence because of its reported 'champagne air'.

Implementation of the apartheid era Group Areas Act (1950) by the National Party, defined the Western Cape as a preferential area for people classified as 'coloured' and 'white', therefore severely limiting the number of 'black'<sup>6</sup> residents in the province and expelling those who attempted to relocate<sup>7</sup> there from elsewhere in the country (Cole, 1987).

There was, by the late 1950s, a small population of 'black' workers who were employed in the Hermanus hotel industry and at the New Harbour in the sea-side town. As this population grew over the years, an area which is now referred to as Lower Mount Pleasant was demarcated as their distinctive group area of residence. The 'township' was

<sup>6</sup> At that point described officially as 'native' and subsequently as 'Bantu' and then 'black' by the apartheid classification system (SAHO, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Josette Cole followed the effects of the "Coloured Labour Preference Policy (CLPP)" in the Western Cape in her book titled *Crossroads: The Politics of Reform and Repression 1976-1986* and the profound impact it had on the lives of 'black' South Africans, whom she referred to as "Africans" in her text (1987:8).

named ‘Zwelihle’, isiXhosa for ‘Beautiful Town’. Each township was required to elect its own local black authority whilst the local Bantu Administration Board would select from these nominees a town secretary (Nosy Rosy, 2006). Salukazana, a man who would be known years later as the Hermanus Whale Crier, was a councillor in Zwelihle and worked as a member of the Zwelihle Town Council. Salakuzana reported in an interview published in the Hermanus Times newspaper that in the initial stages of his time in office as a councillor, twenty homes were built in Zwelihle, and that by 1981, further houses and a hostel for single men had been built to accommodate the township’s reported 735 residents. The Zwelihle Town Council further managed to establish a community hall, a police station and an upgrade to the local clinic (Nosy Rosy, 2006). Between 1989 and 1990 a large group of people, predominantly the families of black workers in Zwelihle who had taken up residence in the unused dwelling spaces in hostels belonging to a farmer’s co-operative, were evicted (Legal Resources Centre, AG3199). The municipality then allocated them an area, now known as Thambo Square, and an informal settlement for these newly homeless residents soon sprung up.

After 1994, the post-apartheid dispensation commissioned the erection of RDP houses in Zwelihle, with 240 low cost houses being built in 1997. By that stage, more than two thousand families were housed in what has been described as a “squatter camp” in an area in Zwelihle known formally as Transit Camp and locally as *eKampini* (isiXhosa for ‘at the camp’). Additional RDP housing was therefore built on a nearby municipal airstrip that had, by then, for some time been closed to air traffic. That area is known today as Kwasa Kwasa, which people there told me means daybreak (Nel, 2012).

According to the Overstrand Municipality, there are presently 5384 people living in Zwelihle’s informal settlements (Nel, 2012). That number excludes the residents of backyard shacks on the sites of formal houses in the township, the number of whom is currently unrecorded. The informal houses in the area that residents call “New Site” were intended to be temporary locations for residents awaiting the construction of further RDP housing. As of December 2012, a waiting list of 3681 houses was recorded for Zwelihle (IDP, 2013: 39). Due to various land limitations, financial constraints, and the overwhelming backlog in the construction of RDP housing in the Western Cape, the informal areas have come to be permanent. However the areas’ names reflect residents’ expectations of their temporary living arrangements: *Wag n Bietjie* (Afrikaans: Wait a While), Transit Camp, *Masiphumzani*

(isiXhosa: We wait together) also referred to as *Ziphunzana* (isiXhosa: Little tree stumps) and *Asazani* (isiXhosa: We don't know each other).

Aware of the diminishing capacity of local and provincial government to fund and coordinate the development of RDP housing in Zwelihle, the Overstrand Municipality in Hermanus mandated its Community Services Department to provide necessary services to residents in informal areas, all of which were located on municipal land. At the time of my research, residents had access to unlimited clean running water supplied through standpipes in the settlements, regularly cleaned and maintained flush toilets in public blocks, electricity supplies, and a solid waste management system. There were, at the time of my fieldwork, thirteen public toilet blocks or clusters in Zwelihle.

In 2007, the Overstrand municipality had advertised for a tender for a service provider to clean the toilets. It was awarded to a local businessman in Zwelihle who subcontracted to a janitorial contractor, also based in Zwelihle. All janitors were residents of Zwelihle, and most of them lived in the areas where they worked.

Since 2001, Zwelihle's informal settlement residents have thus had access to public and thus shared sanitation facilities where janitors have been employed to ensure cleanliness, to dispense toilet paper, to monitor the operation and maintenance of taps and toilets, and to contribute to users' safety and security in the facilities - at least between 7am and 7pm daily. The Overstrand Municipality's efforts to provide some form of sanitation to these previously unserved informal areas in Zwelihle, albeit in janitor-served public toilet blocks rather than on a one-toilet per household site basis, align with the Department of Water Affairs' campaign to restore dignity in sanitation to the poorest urban residents, many of whom have historically had to use a 'bucket'<sup>8</sup> - long seen as a symbol of the unjust and discriminatory policies of the apartheid regime.

The following review considers the literature that recognises the relationship between girls and toilets and the relevance of this relationship to studies of childhood and adolescent sexuality.

## Girls and Toilets in Literature

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<sup>8</sup> A 'bucket toilet' is a label given to the literal empty buckets that people use as toilets usually by putting a shallow layer of Jeyes Fluid (disinfectant) to line the bottom of the bucket to neutralise odour. It is also however a name assigned to the 'Container toilets' that, although contained in a concrete structure, are not flushable and instead have large rectangular buckets to catch the waste. These buckets or "containers" as they are preferably called by government agencies are then emptied by a municipal service provider (Taing *et al*, 2014).

A relevant point of interest in research on menstrual management in relation to the provision and management of sanitation in informal settlements and rural areas is what women use to manage their menstrual flow, how often, and how they dispose of it, as certain systems, such as septic tanks, composting facilities, and the commonly used flush to water-borne sewer system, do not cope well if sanitary materials such as rags, sanitary pads and tampons are introduced into them. A study undertaken at the University of KwaZulu Natal has explored women's menstrual management practices and experiences in informal settlements in eThekweni where sanitation facilities predominantly consist of pit latrines or communal toilet blocks, and where open defecation is a common practice (Okem, 2012). That study selected only women between the ages of 18 and 35 for interviews or to participate in the study's Menstrual Management Practices Survey and its Community Social Network Mapping exercises. That sampling process demonstrates just how the perspectives of girls below the age of 18, and who are experiencing menstruation or the onset of menarche, are often not represented – a point raised by Kirk and Sommer (2006:11) when they say that “pre-adolescent girls are often an invisible group whose needs and perspectives are marginalized compared to those of younger and older girls”.

Denov and Maclure's (2006) research with girls below the age of 18 and involved in armed conflict in Sierra Leone definitively regarded them as children. Despite some girls' experiences of menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth, all corporeal experiences that feminist literature (Young, 1980; Grosz, 1994) recognises as unique to women, the literature that informed Denov and Maclure's (2006) research methods was predominantly 'child centred', rendering an emotive account of girl soldiers and the atrocities they endured at the hands of their adult compatriots in the Sierra Leonian rebel army. The widespread variations between, and somewhat overlapping understandings of 'adolescent', 'child' and 'woman', reveal the complexity that comes from attempting to think about girlhood as a particular personal developmental category, at least for the purpose of outlining a research focus and when developing appropriate research methods. Therefore, a review of literature that highlights the relationships between adolescence, reproductive health and toilets is necessary to provide context to how the question that guided this research was formulated. The connection between girls and toilets that has been explored here proves to be a significant one in relation to an adolescent or pre-adolescent girl's experience, particularly in contexts of poor sanitation facilities.

Kirk and Sommer (2006) examined relationships between adolescent girls' health and well-being, with a particular emphasis on the intersection between girls' menstrual management and their levels of education. Mostly focusing on developing country contexts, where physical, socio-cultural and economic challenges may render girls' menstrual management in school particularly difficult, Kirk and Sommer explored how poor sanitary facilities, inadequate provision of sanitary supplies, and particular educational practices can impact negatively on girls in terms of school access and experience. From a practical perspective, they found that girls who lacked access to adequate sanitary materials tended to miss school each month during their menstrual periods. Moreover, if girls attended schools which lacked adequate toilets and water supplies for girls to change sanitary pads and wash themselves in privacy – as many do – they were reportedly unable to remain comfortably in class during their menstrual period (Kirk, 2005 cited in Kirk and Sommer 2006). Furthermore, Kirk and Sommer highlight that inadequate toilet facilities, and those that do not separate girls from boys, discouraged girls from attending school during their menstrual periods.

Moletsane *et al* (2008) affirm Kirk and Sommer's (2006) findings. They assert that using toilets of the kind found in many Southern Africa schools is a risky business for girls, particularly in the context of prevailing gender based violence and sexual abuse. Moletsane *et al* (2008) found school toilets to be both public, in the sense of open to all, and private spaces (emblematic of private bodily functions, particularly for girls), a tension which rendered them interesting spaces for researching the experiences of girls and women.

A plethora of available literature explores the natural reproductive process of menstruation as associated with strong cultural taboos demanding, if not commanding, that it remain hidden, cannot be discussed nor, in most ways, even acknowledged (Schooler *et al*, 2005). Girls' and women's reported desire to manage menstruation as discretely as possible is often paired, in the literature, with references to a perception of menstrual blood as dirty and disgusting, indeed polluting (Douglas 1966). Many girls are reported to express shame about being seen with a menstrual product or, worse yet, about bleeding through clothing; and some adolescent girls are reportedly embarrassed simply by the fact that they menstruate (Lee & Sasser-Coen, 1996 in Schooler *et al*, 2005).

Monica Hunter (1936) in her ethnography *Reaction to Conquest* described the ritual impurity associated with menstruation, referred to as *umlaza* by Pondo people in South Africa. "A

woman has *umlaza* during her period until she washes after the flow ceases, after a miscarriage or the death of a husband or child for about a month, and after sexual connection until she washes” (Hunter, 1936:46). People with *umlaza* were reportedly regarded as dangerous to cattle, which is why women would avoid going to the cattle kraal when menstruating. They would also never touch spears or sticks in fear of making these weapons ‘soft’. It was believed that, “If a woman disobeys these taboos, her flow will never cease” (Hunter, 1936:165). Hunter also described the experiences of women who commonly suffered from severe menstrual pain, and noted the variety of remedies available.

More recently, Steenkamp (2003) has reviewed the nature and range of traditional remedies used for female complaints in relation to gynaecological conditions and disorders among South African women. She found that a wide spectrum of herbal traditional remedies are used to regulate the menstrual cycle, to enhance fertility and as either abortifacients or antiabortifacients. There is no shortage of research confirming negative associations and experiences with menstruation, menstrual management and associated disorders. However, it must be noted that, as Burton (1978:60) has pointed out, this is not the “universal pattern” that can be expected in all contexts. Following from this, Buckley and Gottlieb (1988) in *Blood Magic: The Anthropology of Menstruation*, caution woman researchers working with female informants against ethnocentric assumptions of menstruation as universally devalued and oppressive of women.

Other recent literature (Nuttall, 2005; Moletsane *et al*, 2008) has taken a somewhat different tack and revealed girls’ experiences of toilets in Southern Africa as places of sexual violence, as lacking in privacy and as being in many ways ‘unclean’. With this in mind, my approach in this dissertation is to recognise the role of public toilets in girls’ experiences of their changing bodies and to consider and investigate what they regard as a sufficiently ‘private’, safe and sanitary space to manage their ablutions, including those relating to menstruation. It is also to understand the kinds of social pressures that affect girls as they enter and begin to experience puberty and how they respond to those pressures, both by succumbing and at times quietly resisting - indeed how they find themselves as persons in the experience of “becoming-woman”.

The research question around which the dissertation hinges is: to what extent is Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept “becoming-woman” useful as a lens through which one can articulate the imposition of the socialisation process in which girls’ find themselves, and how

does this line of thought regarding girls' bodies and their experiences of change provide insight into the gendered relationship between girls/woman and public toilets in Zwelihle?

## Chapter Outline

**Chapter 2: *Methods, Ethics and Challenges*** details the various research methods that were used during my fieldwork in Zwelihle with the girls who participated in my research group. It also documents the ethical considerations that were relevant to the nature of my research as well as some of the challenges that I encountered. The chapter concludes with a short discussion of the role of a researcher as a story-teller in order to highlight the subjective interpretation and analysis of the data gathered hereto.

**Chapter 3: *Becoming Woman?*** discusses Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept "becoming-woman" and considers its possible use as a lens to consider the challenges that girls encounter to possess certain freedoms pertaining to their bodies and their behaviour; freedoms that are captured when one is a woman. It looks at the extent to which this concept is relevant to how the girls within my research group experienced their bodies during menarche and menstruation, and the changes that they experienced in and of the self.

**Chapter 4: *Encountering the imaginary and the real*** explores the sampled girls' perceptions of toilets in terms of privacy, safety and cleanliness, and how they made sense of happenings and events by interweaving the imaginary and the real. Drawing on verbal and written narratives as well as song, the chapter locates the girls in a socialisation process in which they have learned to fear 'dark' spaces; and it argues that sexual violence towards children, girls and women is a significant concern for residents of Zwelihle, and one that has a serious impact on the accessibility of public sanitation, particularly at night, when many women and children choose rather to use buckets inside their homes as an alternative.

**Chapter 5: *Stolen bodies? Becoming and Overcoming*** is the dissertation's concluding chapter. It draws on the content of chapters two and three to highlight the political nature of sexual violence and the irony in providing public sanitation facilities to restore 'dignity' to citizens even whilst the prevalence of violence continues to hinder accessibility to these facilities. The desire of women and girls to be "brave", to break 'the molar' or at the very least, to resist it by using toilets at night and encountering such 'dark' spaces even though they are fearful, reflects the body's potential to overcome imposed gender roles and

limitations by becoming different to what one once was and to change how one relates to the world.

## Chapter 2

### *Methods, Ethics and Challenges*

#### **Introduction**

During the course of my fieldwork, I met a shy twelve year old girl whom I have named Zintle and whom I tutored three afternoons a week over a period of two months at the Zwelihle library. At the time, she lived in Transit Camp in Zwelihle, with her mother and older brother. Their small shack had a blue front door, but it was located conveniently close to a toilet block directly across the road. It was therefore not only convenient to use the toilets, but that a tap was nearby meant that collecting water did not entail a long walk with a heavy bucket, making washing, cleaning and cooking that much easier than had it been differently located. However, despite the toilets being an approximate seven strides from her front door, Zintle reported never venturing to the toilet block alone late at night or when darkness lingered on winter mornings.

Exploring how people who do not have a toilet or a tap with running water in their homes might share public toilet facilities requires one to become a part of, and engaged in, the lives of those in whose neighbourhoods this is an everyday reality. It was while pondering on such experience, that I found myself taking another glance at the lives of girls like Zintle to explore how they perceived these public toilet spaces in relation to their experiences of menarche, and their changing bodies. While doing so, my own perceptions of their ‘menstrual management’ and ‘changing bodies’ were both challenged and changed. I had anticipated that the process of coming to manage one’s menstrual flow each month, with access to predominantly public toilets, would involve interesting tales of how girls in Zwelihle negotiated these spaces and opportunities to privately and quietly manage the significant and at times inconvenient event. Yet as I did that I soon realised that this was based on my own assumption that the toilet or toilet cubicle would play a significant part in this experience, as my own bathroom at home did, it being the most suitable place to manage my personal bodily ‘leaks and flows’. In a similar mode of thought, my initial conception of girls’ ‘changing bodies’ favoured the physical, and mostly visible changes associated with their reproductive health and sexuality, and neglected to consider how their encounters with other bodies, spaces, and places could facilitate other ‘change’ in them. As a consequence, when I refer her

to ‘change’ I not only refer to physical bodily changes, those that typically fall under the label of ‘puberty’, but also experiential change in and of the self, occurrences described by Deleuze and Guatarri as “becoming-woman” (1987).

## **Fieldwork Methods**

The research that I undertook for the purpose of the dissertation involved six weeks of intensive participant observation in and around Zwelihle, and spread over a period of ten weeks between November 2012 and February 2013. I engaged in various research activities with a group of teenage girls on various days during this period. I also had conversations with residents of Zwelihle’s informal settlements, men and women of various ages whom I encountered day to day.

In order to conduct research in Zwelihle, it was necessary to obtain permission from various ‘gatekeepers’. Legally, persons under the age of 18 are positioned as minors with few decision-making rights, with the consequence that they are regarded as not able to give independent informed consent. Consent was therefore sought from those who were deemed to have responsibility for them (James *et al*, 1998:187). I am privileged to know a committee member of Ward five in Zwelihle who connected me with two ward councillors and with the principal of one of the local primary schools. I discussed my proposed research with each of them, and they were very supportive, granting me their approval to pursue my research interests in Zwelihle.

I began my first week of research at a primary school in Zwelihle once the school principal had granted me permission to observe lessons in the grade seven classes. The majority of grades had, however, completed their school syllabus for the year and were merely attending school for the remainder of the final term to adhere to the Department of Education’s timetable. Expecting to attend the classes with the grade seven learners and observe in this manner, I was surprised to learn, on my first day in class with them, that this was not expected of me. Rather, with all eyes staring at me in anticipation as I sat down in the class room, I realised that I alone was to facilitate our interaction and that it would entail far more participation on my part than passive observation. I thus found myself spending my days in a classroom of grade seven girls aged between twelve and sixteen years having, in a sense, to come with lesson or at least activity plans. At our first meeting I passed my

notebook around the circle we were sitting in and asked them to write down their names and ages. Age alone is not enough to determine whether a girl has experienced menarche and I was aware that for them to mention this detail to a stranger they had only just met could be uncomfortable. I therefore created a game called ‘Anonymous Answers’ which I introduced a few days later. With them seated in a row facing me, each with two coloured square pieces of paper in hand; green to signify ‘yes’ and red to signify ‘no’, I explained that the most important element of the game was to close their eyes when they revealed their colour square so as not to see how anyone else had answered, and that who said what would not be recorded, so that their responses were assured anonymity. Many of them were fidgeting, while their feet were tapping, sliding and rocking underneath their chairs. They were smiling and giggling in anticipation of the questions, a record of which can be found in Appendix A.

I planned further activities for us every school day in those last two weeks of the school term. Although most of the activities comprised games, competitions and crafts that had little apparent or direct relevance to my research topic, it meant that we could begin to build familiarity with one another. I was able to explain why I was conducting research in Zwelihle, and why I was interested in having them involved in it. The time we spent together was important for the girls to determine for themselves whether to talk to me or to keep me at a distance through minimal or no engagement. As a familiar face around the school after such time, I hoped that my presence in and around Zwelihle would seem less arbitrary.

As the days passed, ever fewer learners were attending school, and this reflected in the group of grade seven girls that I was meeting with each day. On the second last day of school, I handed letters of consent to those girls who were there to give to their parents, and requested they return the signed section of the letter to me if they were interested in being involved in the research during their school holidays. For those who did return their consent forms and showed great interest in my research, I explained the need for them to give me their own direct consent as well.

### ***Negotiating Consent: The Thumbprint Tree***

As we sat on the floor, surrounding the bare tree outline I had drawn on a large piece of cardboard, I explained how we would each place our thumbprints on the tree to represent our signatures. I explained that one’s thumb and fingerprint symbolises individuality and

uniqueness. I did not wish the girls to feel as though they were one generalised group, or that their individual thoughts, stories or opinions would be lost in those of the crowd. We each pressed our thumbs onto ink pads and printed them on a piece of white paper. We then cut each of them out in a leaf shape and we used Prestik to attach our leaves to the tree, marking them with our names, as illustrated in Figure 2.1. The girls understood that, by placing their respective leaves on the tree they were each demonstrating willingness and consent to being involved in the research. I explained that, should they wish to withdraw from the research group at any time, they could simply remove their leaf from the tree.

Walking out of the school gate with Ziyanda one afternoon soon thereafter, I asked her whether she was looking forward to spending some time in her school holidays with the research group. She replied, “Yes, it feels good to be a part of something”. I endeavoured to convey to the girls that I wished none of them to feel pressurised to participate in any of the research activities, and that each should be free to decide for herself what she wished to share.



**Figure 2.1:** The *Thumbprint Tree* to represent consent

### ***Song-writing and Performance***

After interacting with my research group of girls for a week, it became clear to me that they enjoyed singing and listening to music from their mobile phones. They would sing together as we walked, harmonising melodies and improvising with lyrics. Inspired by this, I asked them to divide themselves into three groups and for each group to write a song about being a teenage girl. Each group then performed their song for the rest of us, and I filmed them doing so. Two of the three groups wrote and performed their songs in isiXhosa, while those in the third wrote and performed their song in English. They also wrote out the lyrics of their songs for my reference. The lyrics are recorded in Chapters 3 and 4.

### ***Creative Writing***

I also requested the girls in my research group to author a fictional story of their own, about anything they chose. Rather than work solo, they opted to work in pairs. From the stories they created I hoped that issues that were important to them would be revealed through the characters they chose and the events that took place.

### ***Participant Observation***

My presence in “the loxion” as Justine referred to Zwelihle, generated much confusion among residents. While many concerned individuals believed I was lost, some assumed I worked for the municipality, while others approached me to enquire whether I was able to organise them some form of employment. With a very high unemployment rate in Zwelihle,<sup>9</sup> and despite an increased seasonal demand for workers at the time of my research, I found the number of unemployed youth my age to be most striking.

Having someone accompany me in and around Zwelihle when the girls in my research group were at school proved valuable, as demonstrated by my association with my research assistant, Lucia, a resident of Zwelihle whom I had met serendipitously at the

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<sup>9</sup> According to the Sacred Heart Parish, only 29% of residents have some form of employment.

municipal offices and then employed as my aide. She brought me into contact and conversation with many people who would have had no ready reason to speak with me otherwise.

Justine's question as to whether I was "afraid of the loxion" was a common enquiry I received from residents. "The loxion" appeared to be considered an unsafe place, particularly amongst the girls with whom I worked. Being a woman, I was certainly intimidated by groups of men, and particularly by those men who accosted me on occasion demanding an explanation as to why I was present in their neighbourhood.

Bernard (1995:344) describes participant observation as "learning a new language and learning to act so that people can go about their business as usual when one shows up as a researcher". My experience of negotiating my way in and around Zwelihle, and of developing a degree of comfort there, reflects such a process of my learning to act in such a way that people were no longer suspicious of my intentions or uncomfortable with my presence. Ultimately, as a researcher, it requires an openness and willingness to abandon one's fears and learn to live in an unfamiliar place.

The time that I spent at school during the first two weeks, from 07:45 to 13:00 daily, was substituted during the subsequent school holidays with my roaming freely around Zwelihle with members of my research group, visiting their homes when necessary and, if invited, facilitating our research activities in the community centre. Importantly, we also went on outings to the beach, Fick's Pool, a large natural rock pool near the Hermanus Waterfront, the Old Harbour, and to a picnic spot in town where we managed to find shade. The intimate topic of my research did not allow me to observe the girls' toilet usage or their menstrual management practices directly. I therefore had to rely on written and oral descriptions of, and occasional innuendos about these, rather than observation.

### ***Informal Interviews***

I conducted informal interviews with Winnie Nywebeni, an auxiliary social worker with the Hermanus Rainbow Trust in Zwelihle, Sister Dunn at Zwelihle Clinic, Constable Gqoli of the South African Police Service at the Zwelihle precinct, various Overstrand Municipality officials and the Ward Councillors of Zwelihle. I conducted interviews in order to gain

insight into the significant health and safety issues pertaining to the provision of public sanitation facilities in Zwelihle.

### ***Photography***

On a particularly hot morning in December, my research group of girls and I divided ourselves into four groups of three, and spent just over an hour walking around Zwelihle taking pictures. I gave each group a theme, asking them to take photographs of what they associated with the words ‘private’, ‘clean’, ‘dirty’ and ‘safe’. The product was four sets of photographs which they later used to make a collage poster, assigning captions to each photograph. A collage is included in Chapter 4.

### ***Drama***

I also asked the girls to work as a group to write, direct, and perform a fictional story about day to day interactions between people around a public toilet block in Zwelihle. We met in the community hall, as we had numerous times before. There they created a story and a script whilst I scribbled down some fieldnotes. They notified me when they were ready to perform their play and to have me film it, and I started rolling the camera. They performed their drama in isiXhosa and, although I did not understand all the dialogue, their acting enabled me to follow the storyline. I then re-watched their drama with my research assistant and asked her to translate their script into English. The English transcript of their drama and associated images are included in Appendix B.

### ***Journals***

As some girls proved to be more comfortable voicing what they wanted to say than others, I gave them each a journal and asked them to write in it as often as they wanted over the month that followed. My goal was both to give them a place to record their day to day experiences of school, friends, family and home, how they felt, stories that they wanted to share about themselves, challenges they faced, and new experiences, and to create a small locally

produced data base. I told them not to write their names on their journals if they wished to write anonymously. I did not know what the girls would share with me, but I hoped that I would get a good idea of what were significant issues or subjects in each of their lives at the time. I draw on some of the data thus generated in later chapters.

### ***Maps***

Pamela Reynolds (2012) has described having used maps in her research with both young children and adults. In her most recent publication, *War in Worcester: Youth and the Apartheid State* (2012), about young men's experiences of resistance during the late apartheid period, she described how she introduced a map of the Worcester area in which the men she was working with had lived, and asked them to mark on the map the homes of people in their community that had either helped them during their apartheid activism, or betrayed them. She writes that it was a useful way to start a conversation between the group of men who had known each other as youths, and was a way for them to start to revisit those days, days that were remembered as being both victorious and painful. The map, she suggests, served as a visual platform to allow the men to speak about their lives as they tried to locate their memories on the map. In a similar way, I wished to use a map to initiate a conversation among the girls about the neighbourhood they lived in.

I placed a map of Zwelihle on the floor in the middle of the classroom and wrote in a coloured pen on the map the name of their school so they could see where we were in relation to the street names and the many small blocks that represented homes (see Figure 2.2). I wanted to get an idea of where each of the girls lived in relation to the public toilet blocks in Zwelihle. I was also interested to listen to the girls speak about the different landmarks, the names of those close to which they lived, and how they at times corrected one another and pointed to where their friend should put their star to mark their home. Interesting too was that, since the map had first been drawn up, many parts of what appeared as open spaces on the map had been occupied by residents living in informal houses in spaces which the girls referred to as "eKampini" (Transit Camp).



**Figure 2.2:** Map of Zwelihle showing the location of the public toilet blocks and girls' homes

### *Body Maps*

As an exercise to focus on the body and consider lived experiences of how one's body is changing, using a mixture of colourful, wet, powdery and oily drawing mediums, I intended the making of each girl's own body map to be a creative and expressive tool for her to engage with her own self. The idea of a 'body map' was a new concept for the girls. I explained that, by creating a body map, we are thinking about our experiences and translating them onto an outline of our bodies in ways that are meaningful to us. The theme I introduced was "how I feel about my body" and I asked the girls to try to map their experiences of their bodies. Aware that drawing a map of one's body can be experienced as an intrusive exercise, I emphasised that the girls were free to refrain from participating and that they had no need to share anything on their maps that would make them uncomfortable.

### *Ethics*

To adhere to the ethical guidelines and principles of conduct for anthropologists, the names of the girls who participated in this research have been changed, and in some cases removed from certain images, to ensure that their identities are protected. The exclusion of

photographs that might reveal their identities is an additional measure I have employed to maintain their anonymity. However, I have retained place names and the real names of many adult research participants, since they would in any event be evident from my identification of the offices they occupy.

## **The Researcher, the Story Teller**

A theme of stories and story-telling threads through this dissertation as a way to recall and represent experiences and interactions that, when pieced together, provide insight into the micro-politics of those living in informal settlements in relation to sexuality and sanitation. I have selected specific events, narratives and observations that I believe effectively articulate my on-going journey of discovery in coming to understand the complexities and contradictions in the social lives of girls and women in Zwelihle.

Lincoln and Denzin, writing about ‘turns’ in anthropology in terms of how ethnography has evolved from detailing preserved ‘whole’ cultures of exotic peoples to documenting the multiple temporalities of ordinary daily life, comment:

We [anthropologists] are now the ultimate bricoleurs, trying to cobble together a story that we are beginning to suspect will never enjoy the unity, the smoothness, the wholeness that the Old Story had. As we assemble different pieces of the Story, our bricolage begins to take not one, but many shapes (Lincoln and Denzin, 1998: 425).

By our using different narratives, comments, and observations from those around whom we centre our research, and in order to piece together a story of our own making, we portray the different shapes of life as we try to make sense of them all. Willis (2000: xiv) has urged ethnographers not to overlook the seemingly mundane aspects of life, to view “everyday relations as if they contained everyday creativity” and see with a “sensitivity to life, like we perceive art”. He further contends that people make and remake the material and social conditions of their lives, and “survive by making sense of the world and their place in it”.

One aim of the presently recorded research was to explore how girls in Zwelihle’s informal settlements made sense of their place in the world as their bodies changed and they began to experience their bodies differently as well as how they responded to how others perceived them during that life phase. Another was to determine whether the sanitation

facilities available to them introduced serious challenges to their management of menstruation and, if so, how they negotiated such challenges. During the course of my fieldwork, these aims came necessarily, because of the local circumstances, to be viewed through a lens of sexual violence and how it manifested in the social lives of those with whom I conducted my research. That in turn related to the girls' experiences of local expectations of them as pubescent and immediately pre-pubescent youngsters and to their behaviour and attitudes in response to those expectations - behaviour and attitudes that reflected the experiences of what Deleuze and Guatarri (1987) refer to as "becoming-woman".

## Chapter 3

### *Becoming-Woman?*

#### **The Concept and the Critiques**

Deleuze and Guatarri (1987) have attempted to make sense of the world by examining interactions, social relations and encounters between bodies that can potentially escape or reinforce imposed societal constructions (Colebrook, 2004). I was drawn to Deleuze and Guatarri's notion of "becoming" and in particular that of "becoming-woman" as it is a line of thought that considers the potential for persons experiencing "becoming(s)" rather than being; the idea of "becoming(s)" implying one's potential to change, to become different. In brief, Deleuze and Guattari aimed to articulate a body's experience of itself whereby becoming-woman is the marker for a general process of transformation. The necessary condition for becoming-woman, as Lawlor (2008) explains, is ageing, albeit not in the sense with which we are perhaps most familiar. Rather, "micrological" ageing, to which Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer, does not come to an end in "a molar form"; in other words, one does not simply grow up to be an adult, a girl does not simply grow up to be a woman (Lawlor, 2008). Micrological aging does not follow a gendered developmental trajectory with physical milestones as markers; rather it is marked by becoming(s).

Using becoming-woman as a lens to look at the interactions between the girls within my research group and others, as well as how we interacted with each other, this chapter explores a way of thinking about bodies, specifically girls bodies within a particular kind of socialisation process, that allows one to notice the moments in which the girls in my group chose to resist or free themselves from the 'molar form' being imposed on them, and change how they related to the world, and the bodies around them. I aim to demonstrate how the girls with whom I worked were at times pushed to behave and be 'woman' (the molar form), and the limiting effects that certain interactions, societal constructions, perceptions, and expectations had (and indeed also have) on their (as on others') individual freedom to be or behave differently from what is socio-normatively prescribed. Lawlor notes, "If we want to change our relationship to the world, to others, we must understand how it is possible for us to change - how it is possible to enter into the experience of becoming (Lawlor, 2008: 171).

At this juncture I must mention that, in feminist philosophy, the concept of becoming-woman has been thoroughly interrogated amongst a slight readership, with notable critiques from Rosi Braidotti (2003). Braidotti's primary contention, the "unresolved knot" as she describes it, in Deleuze and Guattari's theorising concerns how they relate the becoming-woman and the feminine (2003:47). She argues that Deleuze's work empathises with the feminist assumption that sexual difference must be recognised whilst reducing metaphysical difference to a "multiple and undifferentiated becoming" (Braidotti, 2003:47). While it is difficult to deny the validity of Braidotti's critique, accepting it does not undermine the potential usefulness in applying Deleuze and Guattari's concept to the encounters and experiences of the girls within my research group and the extent to which it proves to be a valuable way of thinking. That is because my concern is less with the girls' specific relation to their femaleness and how it is constituted metaphysically than with their experiences of, and responses to others' expectations of them as they enter and undergo menarche.

### **Bounded Bodies and the 'Molar'**

Deleuze and Guattari aim to articulate a body's experience of itself that is not confined to its gendered developmental trajectories and that can experience "other contemporaneous possibilities" (1987:273). In line with this, menarche, for instance, is not necessarily a physical marker of one's entrance into womanhood, a key that propels one forward to the next stage of female development. As the girls within my research group revealed, regardless of the onset of menarche, they were not adult, and they did not recognise themselves as women. For instance, with her eyes wide and mouth drooped, Anele spoke with a look on her face as though she wanted still to have the freedom to not yet be a woman and said, "Just because I have my period does not mean I am a woman, I am still just a girl". While Deleuze and Guattari recognise the destruction of the molar form as the necessary condition for one to experience becoming-woman, for those who are not yet considered to be 'adult' and are no longer considered as 'child' one could argue, as in this instance, that Anele displayed resistance to the molar being imposed upon her. Although the arrival of menarche signifies a change in one's body that makes it different from what it was before, it is also accompanied with a newfound awareness of one's body and the choice to engage with the molar, that being the socio-normative ideas and expectations of what it means to be 'woman', or to resist it.

As I watched the girls hovering over their long sheets of brown paper with their paint brushes during the body mapping exercise, some making careful strokes on their maps whilst others sat looking at their outlines in contemplation, I was eager to know what they were thinking and how they felt about mapping their bodies. Aware that a few of them had recently begun menstruating, that Anele had just had her thirteenth birthday and that they would be attending their first year of high school in only a few weeks time, I wanted them to engage with all the socio-culturally induced changes taking place in and around them. I imagined the body maps that they were busy creating to become abstract artworks that would express their intimate emotions, fears and desires. But as I observed them, I must admit that a wave of disappointment came over me. I watched Qhama as she meticulously applied colourful spotted detail to the bow she had drawn in her hair, the white buttons on her jeans and the print on her pink t-shirt. Amy had similarly paid more attention to making patterns on the clothing she had drawn on her body map than on detailing her other body parts as she had outlined them. None of the girls was eager to talk very much in the oral discussions of their respective body maps. Rather they spoke predominantly about their favourite colours, about visible scars they had acquired during their childhood, on activities they enjoyed doing such as reading, shopping, dancing and singing. Their body maps showed clothed bodies, bodies that appeared contained, concealed by decorated clothing without which they would have been bare. I had thought that perhaps they did not understand my instructions on how they were to freely draw of how they experienced their bodies. I had said something akin to, "Use colours and symbols to capture memories, emotions, and how you feel about your body - let your body map express who you are". Only looking back did I have a revelation of the irony in my expectation of the girls 'freely' depicting their bodies whilst doing so in line with my instructions. I did not consider the possibility that perhaps my expectation of them to depict their bodies' experiences within an outline of their physical body was more limiting, indeed constraining, than it was liberating. It is here that I found Deleuze and Guattari's theorising to be useful in thinking about encounters between bodies, specifically this encounter between the girls in my research group and me during our body-mapping exercise.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) initiated their discussion on becoming by introducing the idea of "the Body-without-Organs", which they describe on a molecular level as a body that can at any moment be constituted as varied collections of force, energetic emanations, intensities that pass and circulate (Dawson, 2008; Lawlor, 2008). "This body without organs is permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or

nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 40). However a "Body-without-Organs" comes to be formed into a body with organs, an organism, when ideas, instructions, commands, identifications, subjectifications and expectations are applied to and inscribed upon these bodies (Lawlor, 2008).

As I thought about it, it became apparent to me that the imposition of my expectations, my ideas of what I had hoped the girls in my research group would create and share through their body maps, my instruction to draw freely and openly within their body-outline only to reveal to me and my academic audience the intimate illustrations of how they saw themselves and experienced their bodies, had bounded and constrained the creativity of their expression, causing them to conceal and contain their bodies behind clothing (Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1:** Body maps of participants

Clothing, it appeared from the body maps, played a very significant role in the lives of the girls within my research group - something that became more evident in my other interactions with them. An example is when the school year started at the beginning of 2013, the grade 7 girls with whom I had spent the summer holidays began high school. I had given them each a journal and asked them to write down, if only one thing each day, how they were experiencing their new schools. I was interested to know what they regarded as significant

encounters in their experience of attending a new school with new teachers and many unfamiliar faces. Nambitha wrote about her first day and highlighted that “many people said that the uniform suits me!” Kim who attended a different high school to Nambitha wrote, “The first day of school was not good at all! The Matrics initiated us and made us dance in front of the school”. The importance placed on the appearance of one’s body, how it looks in clothing and how it moves is evident in their comments. It appears that how they were perceived by others strongly influenced how they experienced their bodies.

As subtle as some interactions may be, it is through these kinds of encounters that one becomes increasingly aware of one’s self amidst other bodies, and increasingly exposed to the molar and what it means to be ‘woman’.

## **Becoming ‘Other’**

There are times when one can choose to break the molar form, or to resist it by not conforming to the ways of ‘woman’. However, what does resisting the imposition of the molar look like, and what are the repercussions?

As time went on, I noticed that the girls in my research group became increasingly aware of what was considered normal, acceptable, appropriate and desirable behaviour in their social scenarios. I also noticed how they expressed fear at the possibility of being regarded as anything other than what these discourses prescribed. For instance, Kim’s apparent reluctance to experience menarche seemed to be rooted in the ‘risk’ that comes with it. Having just started high school, she said, she was “nervous” to go to school as she was so worried that she would leak, Kim used the word “show”, and that people would gossip about it since “everyone is always looking”. “It is worse because there are boys [at the school]” and, she said, they would find a girl with a bloody stain on her school dress<sup>10</sup> to be repulsive. “So you need to be careful!” she explained. As we walked together talking, she shrugged her shoulders and dragged her heels. Kim’s apparent anxiety relating to the experience of menarche seemed to arise out of a fear she had of being unable to manage her monthly flow in a silent and concealed manner. Any mishap, she feared, would reflect her irresponsibility to ensure such propriety and, as a consequence, she expected she would be subjected to

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<sup>10</sup> Kim’s school uniform comprised an emerald green skirt and white shirt, whilst the other girls within my group wore grey skirts and white shirts to their school. Both skirt colours are likely to show a blood stain.

deriding commentary, rejection, humiliation. I did not ask any of the girls whether they had witnessed an incident where fellow students had responded in such a way to a visible blood stain on a girl's dress. However I recognised that, whether they had or had not, they were convinced of the risk and the likely repercussions that were to occur.

Within South Africa's climate of heightened HIV awareness over the last two decades one must acknowledge that the sight of blood and the danger it represents as a carrier of HIV is likely to evoke negative responses to blood that is visible (Snodgrass, 2010). Those that bleed on a monthly schedule are therefore tacitly mandated with the responsibility to keep it concealed and safely out of the sight of others.<sup>11</sup>

The excerpt below is from a story<sup>12</sup> written by Nambitha and Ziyanda, both then aged thirteen.

There is a girl living in shack in an informal settlement in Philippi [in Cape Town]. She is HIV positive and asking people for help; but they were avoiding her because they knew she was sick. She was staying alone because both of her parents passed away so most of her time she spent sleeping. One morning she went to use the toilet and she overheard people say that they didn't want her to use it as she would infect them with AIDS. She didn't know where to turn for help.

At the core of the above narrative is a fear of becoming 'other', of being perceived by others not just as a person who is sick, but as the sickness itself that must be avoided. The consequences of becoming branded as 'abnormal' or, as in the case of the above narrative, undesirable and therefore unaccepted are social exile, rejection, isolation. As Foucault has suggested, there is a "constant division between normal and abnormal to which every individual is subjected by applying binary branding and exile" (Foucault, 1977: 199).

The drama production the girls wrote and performed as a group contained certain parallels in its story line to the fictive piece above. For instance, there was a scene where Anele and Nambitha acted as two newly employed janitors for the public toilets and refused to allow Siphe access to them as she approached them, portraying herself as a sick person who was frail and coughing. This scene reflected the girls' sense of their community members' reluctance to associate with people that might pose,

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<sup>11</sup> Here Monica Hunter's discussion on *umlaza* that I referred to in Chapter 1 regarding how women were expected to isolate themselves from men during menstruation and other 'unclean' states of one's body, remains relevant to present day attitudes towards menstrual management.

<sup>12</sup> The complete story appears in the following chapter.

or be imagined to pose a health threat and might thus be stigmatized as ‘dirty’, ‘contagious’, a source of germs and consequent illness. In the dramatic scene, Siphe was treated as though she herself was the illness.

From these tales, and from my observations, it became apparent too that the public toilet blocks were not merely functional spaces. They were significant social spaces that were culturally constructed. I observed each day how groups of predominantly women gathered daily at the water stands alongside the toilet blocks, washing their laundry together; how the janitors on duty were often accompanied by their friends; how residents living opposite the toilets blocks frequently sat outside their homes talking to one another and with passing toilet users, exchanging stories, watching the toilet users and their other fellow residents go about their business in that space.

It is here that Foucault’s theorising of ‘spatial surveillance’ comes to mind as one focuses on this aspect of the public toilet as a social space, rather than focusing on the toilet itself. It is the sociality of this space that the girls in my research group tended to emphasise in their story telling. Toilet users such as themselves potentially became the subject of comments, opinions, and gossip of those they encountered on their visits to the public toilets, comments and gossip which, in the stories the girls wrote, were powerful enough to instigate life changing events. The following examples exemplify.

Prior to filming their drama, I had watched the rehearsal of their play. Then I had seen calm, composed actors saying the lines they had agreed on as a group. In contrast, the filmed version of the play was notably loud and chaotic, emotional, and in a sense organic in that the story line erupted into a tense portrayal of community tensions around employment, health, jealousy and retribution.

My research assistant, Lucia, without having seen the girls’ play, commented on the high unemployment rate in Zwelihle, and said, on more than one occasion, “People want work, but once they have work they are lazy. People are jealous when you have a job, and spread rumours about you.” She was speaking from her own experience during a time when she was employed by Child Welfare; and her words echoed a sentiment that the girls depicted in their production when, during the final scene, an angry mob chased away those who, having intended to help the community, had introduced a

system of ‘hygiene management’, but one that soon collapsed under the weight of the settlement’s volatile micro-politics.

The narrative below, drawn from a story by two of the girls, highlights the dramatic effect of being pushed out or excluded from a place of belonging and acceptance that one once had. Such a devastating encounter resulted in a serious change, one where Mapule, a fictional character in the girls’ story below who had initially experienced inclusion, then experienced exclusion as ‘social death’ to the extent that it had led her to attempt to end her life.

Once upon a time there was a girl that was called Mapule. She loves her friends but they didn’t like her the way she loved them. One day she heard them talking about her and she didn’t like it; and she was angry with them; and didn’t know what to do. She tried to kill herself but her brothers saw her and tried to talk to her, but she was rude and didn’t want to hear anything. And Mapule’s friends came to her home and they told her everything and apologised to her and she accept[ed] the apology. They were friends forever and lived a better life (Ondela and Amy, age 13).

Similar to fictional narratives, songs often tell a story, albeit to a tune that captures the mood or atmosphere embodied in the story’s events. As the girls in my research group performed the songs they had composed about being a teenage girl, I filmed them lamenting issues that angered them, hurt them, and that ultimately reflected their fears and negative encounters with others. An example is the song below which was sung in a slow, minor key, the verses being repeated a number of times.

*isiXhosa*<sup>13</sup>

*English*<sup>14</sup>

**Haisuka Madoda**

**(A word to convey one’s dismay or anger) Men**

*Haisuka madoda*

*(A word to convey one’s dismay or anger) men*

*(Iyelele)*

*(Iyelele)*

*Haisuka madoda*

*(A word to convey one’s dismay or anger) men*

*Nababantu behlekisa ngam*

*Even these people are laughing at my expense*

*Nababantu bekhuluma ngam*

*Even these people are talking about me*

*(Iyelele)*

*(Iyelele)*

<sup>13</sup> The girls wrote out the lyrics of their song for my reference which are recorded here verbatim in isiXhosa.

<sup>14</sup> *Haisuka* does not have a single or similar word to assign to it in English but is typically used to communicate a negative response. *Iyelele* has no meaning and was used as a bridge in the melody.

These lyrics speak of the proclivity of men to humiliate girls or women, to gossip about them, to spread rumours about them within their communities, and to expose a moment of embarrassment or vulnerability. The girls danced as they sang, swaying from side to side and clicking their fingers to keep the beat. Seemingly shy in the beginning, with some of them looking down and others looking out of the window, they appeared to gain confidence in themselves and their performance as the song progressed and, when it came to an end, the smiles, ecstatic applause, shouts of praise, and standing ovation from their class mates indicated that their performance of the song stirred up a sense of agreement and unity among them.

From the tales and sentiments expressed above it is clear that the girls within my research group recognised that, within a social environment where gossip, jealousy and rumours are rife and very much a part of the everyday, conforming to the molar form can be an attractive choice to make and in some respects a 'safe' place to be.

The following narrative reflects an instance where the girls in my research group experienced, albeit in their own individual ways, a moment where an encounter with other bodies created awareness among them of how their bodies differed from those of others – others from whom they differed not in terms of age or personal developmental stage, but in terms of apparent wealth. We went to the beach together early on in their holidays. The beach was not very busy as it was a week day. We chose our picnic spot and the girls threw off their outer clothes and ran into the icy water, some in their bikinis and bathing costumes, others in shorts and t-shirts. We ate some lunch, lay in the sun, and talked together, until the girls decided to return to the waves. As they stood up to run into the water, we noticed behind us a large group of approximately fifty girls and boys walking towards us. As they settled down on the sand in pockets all around us, the girls in my group sat down. As I observed the new arrivals, I noticed a wealth of designer sun glasses, fashionable beach attire and much usage of iPhones to take photographs. I noticed my group of girls looking on at the newcomers to the beach and how their typically loud and jovial demeanours were dulled as conversation fizzled out to a few murmurs whilst a few of them stared at those around them and the others looked down drawing circles in the sand. They looked at one another, their facial expressions having lost the confident and cheeky grins I had come to know. They whispered in isiXhosa

between themselves before informing me that they were going to swim in the rock pool on the opposite side of the beach from where we were then sitting.

During the car ride home, I asked the girls why they had chosen to swim in a rock pool frequented primarily by young children. Anele smiled and turned to look out of the window to avoid answering. Ziyanda put her tongue in her cheek and did the same. Kim looked ahead with a blank expression. Finally, Nambitha blurted out, “We just didn’t want to be there anymore”.

I of course had noticed a clear economic disparity between the girls in my group and the new arrivals. The girls’ own recognition of this difference had apparently produced a notable change in each of them. Their encounter with these particular other bodies, with their own dress and other accoutrements, had produced a change in the girls in my group from one embodied state to another; from comfortable, confident and accepted, to different, economically inferior ‘other’. However, their response - to remove themselves from the space in which they had earlier been happily confident - illustrates how their agency emerged to change their environment and thus to regain some sense of their previous state.

In line with Deleuze and Guattari’s line of thought one could argue that the girls within my group experienced a “micrological crack of aging” where they were confronted with an awareness of themselves that was a moment for them to choose how they wanted to experience their bodies (Lawlor, 2008: 173). Encountering other bodies does not necessarily require physical interaction; bodies need not touch. They need merely to share a space and, through doing so, enable an emerging effect of difference in the making, so that a becoming other than what one is prior to that interaction begins (Curti and Moreno, 2010).

Typically, the kind of casual interactions I have described above would receive little attention or not be regarded as significant in much analysis. However, when exploring, through a lens of becoming-woman, how girls experience their bodies in relation to other bodies and shared spaces, these seemingly mundane interactions highlight important aspects of how the girls within my research group experienced their bodies.

## Bleeding Bodies

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the necessity that girls feel to carefully manage their bleeding bodies, of their sense of responsibility to keep their flows of blood hidden, and of their sense of propriety in managing their leaks and flows effectively.

During the final weeks of the school term, Nambitha had accompanied me to the learners' toilets that the girls used at their primary school. This was despite her initial insistence on rather showing me to the toilets used by women on the teaching staff. I understood her reluctance to show me the learners' toilets immediately I had seen the dilapidated and dysfunctional state of the toilets, the cubicle doors, the taps and the basins. Most of the toilets did not flush, resulting in a build up of waste in each toilet bowl. The floor was wet, the taps were temperamental, and the cubicle doors were mostly absent.

Soon thereafter, I spoke to the girls in my research group about their experiences of using the primary school toilets and they said that they tended not to use the toilets at their school, at least if they could help it. Nambitha explained that, if she needed to change her sanitary pad at school it meant having to ask her teacher for extra toilet paper and to give her a reason why she needed it, as well as to seek out one of the woman caretakers to request a plastic packet for her used sanitary pad and then to be directed by the caretaker as to where it could be disposed of. The girls complained about the fact that the teachers, apparently concerned about wasting toilet paper, dispensed it only when needed. They fretted that, if they were to request more toilet paper, either to wipe the seat or to clean themselves during their periods, the teachers often refused, ostensibly because they did not always believe the girls.

This reveals how toilet use at primary school, at least for the girls in my research group, was mediated by their teacher and, when it involved disposal of sanitary pads, also by an adult caretaker. Moreover, it reflects their concerns about that kind of mediation, a mediation that, for those of the girls who resided in an informal settlement in Zwelihle, was replicated during their daily visits to a toilet block where normally a toilet block janitor dispensed toilet paper on request only.

Whether at school or in the public toilet blocks, therefore, such girls found need to complain that the amount of toilet paper they were given was insufficient, particularly during menstruation when a large amount of the toilet paper had to be used to wrap the used sanitary

pad. This meant that they had to inform the janitor or their teacher that they were “on” in order to be provided with additional toilet paper; and that they therefore had to break the accepted taboo that one not discuss such a condition.

My point here is that, although this form of mediation may be a functional and necessary element for managing shared toilet facilities, it also meant that the management of the girls’ ‘leaks and flows’ involved their having to divulge that which they wished so desperately to keep unseen, secret, private, personal. That they all told me that they had no choice but to trust that neither mediator would say anything that could lead to their humiliation and indicated clearly that for each of them it constituted an experience which they could not control and in which they felt vulnerable and at risk.

It is therefore unsurprising that most of the girls and women I spoke to tended, where they could, to manage their menstrual experiences at home rather than in a public toilet cubicle which, especially in any case of those in and around Zwelihle’s informal settlements, did not cater for ‘feminine hygiene’. As Patricia, who had lived in Zwelihle for sixteen years said, “You see, before the toilets were built, we used buckets, so I always did it [rinsed and changed the menstrual material] at home. Now [that] the toilets are here, there is no place to wash, you see; so I do it at home”.

Although it was also common for many women to use rags and newspaper, none of the girls in my research group mentioned doing so. They would typically speak of their menstrual period with disdain, most preferring not to speak about it at all. Often their silences and the glances they exchanged when I raised the issue in the group indicated to me that it was not a desired topic for conversation.

Interestingly, this was in contrast to the way older women I spoke with in Zwelihle’s informal settlements on the subject shared stories about their first experiences with ease, jovially reminiscing about their experiences of menarche. Grace, a woman in her forties, mentioned how her discovery of blood in her underwear had taken her by such surprise that she had thought she had been bitten by a snake during her then most recent visit to the toilet. She described having been stressed and confused by the event and having confided in her older sister who explained to her that it was no snake bite but natural bleeding that would thenceforth occur each month. Nomnikelo, Grace’s neighbour, also in her forties, said that her younger sister had been shocked when she had told her that she had started bleeding, and had asked, “Why are you having this? Do you have a boyfriend?” The two women laughed as

they shared with me and each other these moments of their youth. Both also said that they had used rags that they made by cutting up old t-shirts to absorb their menstrual flow each month, and continued to do so in the present. Sanitary pads, they added, are considered a luxury that they could not afford.

The reluctance and heaviness which hung on the words of the girls in my research group who had already experienced menarche, as they spoke of their daily interactions with those to whom they had to turn to mediate their visits to the public toilets, if that was where they went in order to manage their monthly bleeding, stemmed, it appeared, from their awareness of what they considered to be appropriate and desirable behaviour whilst amongst those they encountered daily. The risk of humiliation that they associated with managing a bleeding body in public spaces required them to practise self surveillance in order to hide the fact that they were menstruating. From what I was told, most girls and women in Zwelihle consequently chose to wash themselves and change their menstrual management material at home, away from any possible public gaze that might occur during a visit to the public toilets. Their doing that reflects both the kinds of social pressures on them as menstruating women, and the inadequacies of the public toilets for managing that monthly event. It also reveals an aspect of 'the molar' in terms of what constitutes being a woman and how even the simple functional dispensing of toilet paper produces a kind of surveillance that, despite adult women's willingness to talk to me about their own experiences of menarche, continues to limit how they are able to manage their monthly periods.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I introduced the notion of becoming-woman as a theoretical concept to describe and highlight the multiple changes – physical, perceptual, behavioural – that Zwelihle girls experiencing menarche encountered. I have done that in order to show how I addressed the challenge to my own starting assumption that menarche is merely a physical experience, and to suggest that it is better to consider social interactions and encounters with other bodies and their significance for how they influence girls' experiences of menarche and menstruation. The emphasis that the girls in my group placed on self surveillance, and the importance they attached to preserving their acceptance and social standing in their communities, have been highlighted through my having considered their expressed fear of

becoming 'other', of becoming the subject of humiliation and of experiencing social exclusion. By my doing that, I have shown how social pressures limit their freedom to remain 'girl' as they experience imposed expectations of 'woman'.

## Chapter 4

### *Encountering the Imaginary and the Real*

“Most of the basic material a writer works with is acquired before the age of fifteen.”

- Willa Cather, Author

“Above all, ‘becoming’ does not occur in the imagination...it is neither dream nor phantasies. They are perfectly real.” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987)

#### **“Looking for Trouble”**

I had arranged to speak with auxiliary social worker, Winnie Nywebeni, at the Hermanus Rainbow Trust, a social enterprise that works with, and offers support to children and families from impoverished communities of Overstrand in the Western Cape. My goal was to learn about her engagement with children in Zwelihle as well as about the relationships that she had with the local schools and Zwelihle’s small clinic. She sat opposite me, stirring her Rooibos tea, as she relayed stories from the cases she worked on day to day and about her efforts to create awareness among high school students as part of their Life Orientation syllabus. “I visit the high school to speak to the learners about issues like HIV, safe sex, teenage pregnancy... You see, sexual violence has become normal in this country, and it is getting worse in Zwelihle. My youngest [rape victim] is three years old. Her uncle is now in prison, but it is still difficult for the parents to accept.” She added that, despite there being no incidents to her knowledge of women being attacked at night as they walked to use the public toilets, women must not walk alone. “Sometimes women drink, then they feel brave, you see, and walk around alone at night, that is when it is dangerous [for them]”.

It was not the first time I had heard a comment such as this regarding women ‘putting themselves’ in dangerous situations. Sister Dunn at the Zwelihle clinic had responded to my question regarding the number of rape or sexual assault cases that they treated by saying that there have been “Plenty! Often women drink and walk around at night by themselves, which is when they are accosted”. Again, a similar sentiment was expressed by Constable Gqoli at the Zwelihle police station: “I’ve seen women walking around at 2am in the morning – they are looking for trouble!” It would appear from these comments from local community figures

that, since sexual violence has become a ‘norm’, women are being held responsible for putting themselves at risk – an attitude that is fast becoming, if it is not already, ingrained in the understanding of many people in Zwelihle, and in South Africa on a wider scale. What is interesting or perhaps rather peculiar is that the people who shared these sentiments with me could not recall an incident or a story that they could relate in detail regarding a woman being attacked whilst walking around at night in Zwelihle. Nevertheless, within the imagination of many South Africans, such behaviour is regarded as irrational and dangerous considering the prevalence of sexual violence.

In the previous chapter I mentioned that in order to experience becoming-woman one needs either to destroy one’s molar form or to resist the imposition thereof. For the girls within my research group I suggested that ‘the molar’ that is imposed upon them is that of ‘woman’; a body conceived dualistically and inscribed with dominant expectations and gender roles. Considering the worsening of sexual violence in Zwelihle, as noted by social worker Winnie Nywebeni, and the societal pressures placed on girls to succumb to the molar form of ‘woman’, I continue to employ Deleuze and Guattari’s theorising of becoming-woman to reflect upon how the girls with whom I worked in Zwelihle experienced fear in the everyday. I draw on various forms of narrative to suggest that their engagement with the imaginary is a form of resistance to being ‘woman’ and therefore a space for them to choose to experience ‘becoming-woman’.

## **Black Friday**

On Tuesday 15 October 2013, the bodies of two little girls, aged two and three, were found in a public toilet in Diepsloot, a settlement to the north of Johannesburg. The girls had been abducted, raped and killed (Damon *et al*, 2013). Incidents such as this have set in motion, in South Africa, what is now called the Black Friday campaign. It is a campaign that encourages one to wear black clothing on one Friday per year and to draw attention to the prevalence of sexual violence in the country as well as to show support for those who have survived being victims of such brutal ordeals. Drawing from the data I gathered during my time in Zwelihle, I understand the ‘black’, the ‘darkness’, not only to speak to the depravity of rape, abuse and murder inflicted on women and children but also to represent that which remains hidden, a lonely silence rooted in fear and futility and that reflects the tragedy of injustice that persists,

and continues to discourage victims from reporting what has happened to them.<sup>15</sup> Auxiliary social worker, Winnie Nywebeni, mentioned to me one specific case about a girl of similar age to those in my research group, a case that depicts an experience of such ‘darkness’.

There was a girl in Zwelihle who was twelve years old when she was raped but she told no one about it. As a result of the rape, she would sometimes wet her pants and her bed because she could not control it [her bladder] you know, and [she] started misbehaving. Her father would discipline her when she was naughty but it didn’t help. She did not want to talk and acted out passively aggressively. She took scissors and cut up her step-mom’s skirts. Her father had remarried and had two young children with his new wife. He continued punishing her for bad behaviour, until one day she ran away, and they learnt that she was staying with her boyfriend who was twenty five years old. That is when her father came to speak to me. I was so busy at the time, but I couldn’t say no. When I met with her, she didn’t speak to me at first; but after meeting a few times she told me what happened. She cried; oh she cried, that poor girl. When I asked her why she did not tell anyone about the rape, she said she was afraid that they would not believe her. Then they moved from here and I didn’t see that family anymore.

I heard the metaphor of ‘darkness’ on another occasion echoed in a conversation I had with three of the girls in my research group. On a long walk one day to Fick’s Pool, a large natural rock pool near the Hermanus Waterfront, I spoke with Siphe, Amy and Ondela, whilst Nambitha, Kim, Anele and Beth lagged a few steps behind singing songs from the film *High School Musical*. Ondela was still very shy at the time and spoke to me only through Siphe. Siphe conveyed that one concern they had had as they started high school in the New Year was that the toilets at the high school were “dark” and that “no one sees what goes on there”. They were worried about the “bullies”, the older learners that smoke in the toilets so that the teachers do not find them. They said, “They are bullies and will beat you and steal your lunch money. Telling your teacher doesn’t help because no one will believe you if no one saw it and the bullies will deny it”.

When I visited the girls’ toilets at the high school, I looked to see if they were literally “dark”, as Siphe and Ondela had described them to be. They appeared in good condition and were, in fact, painted a bright peach colour. I therefore inferred that by “dark” the girls had meant that the privacy afforded by the closed doors of the high school toilet block allowed

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<sup>15</sup> 88% of rapes go unreported, only 7% of reported rapes lead to conviction (Smith, 2001)

things to happen without any witnesses to bear testimony, so that it would seem as though such things had never happened at all.

I found that the literal darkness that is ushered in by night time is feared for similar reasons to those described above. A young mother I spoke with in Thambo Square expressed concern over venturing into the dark to use the public toilets. She explained that she lived with her partner and their two children and that, if either of the children needed to use the toilets during the night, she would have to wake up her partner to accompany them as they would not consider going alone. If he was not able to accompany them, they would use a bucket in their home.

Having noticed that, in Zwelihle's informal settlements, the homes were positioned close to one another with the toilet blocks conveniently close to certain shacks, I enquired of the young mother as follows: considering that when one walks to the toilets one is surrounded by people's homes, is it not likely that if one had to be attacked that people would respond to cries for help? She shook her head, and replied, "Even if I scream, no one will come out of their homes to help [in fear that they too will be hurt]."

Having heard this response, I later posed the same question to Songezo, a twenty year old man who lived by himself in Zwelihle's Asazani informal settlement. Songezo explained, "By the time people have heard the woman shout, and if they come to help her, it's too late". He went on to say that "the *tsotsis* (thugs, gangsters) come out when it is dark as no one can see them and they can do what they like without getting caught. You see, they like the dark, and they like winter because it is dark in the morning and in the evening...when it rains they can also hide easier".

I found it interesting that Songezo assumed that the person to be targeted would be "the woman", which reveals a glimpse of the molar form of 'woman' and the gendered constructions around what it means to be 'woman'. Although none of the women that I spoke to could recall any cases of any women or girls being attacked en route to Zwelihle's public toilets, there remained a common understanding of the precautions that needed to be taken to stay safe, to stay away from the 'dark'. It is not because Zwelihle is a particularly unsafe place in relation to similar kinds of settlements in the rest of the country that women there are fearful of walking to use the toilets alone. Rather, it is their perceptions of the 'dark' and what can happen to them in spaces where there are no witnesses, without anyone knowing or coming to their aid, that make them fearful and sense that their area is unsafe. As Veena Das

writes, “fear that is real but not necessarily actualised in events, comes to constitute the ecology of fear in everyday life” (2007: 9).

## Telling Stories

Artist Penny Siopsis’s *Pinky Pinky* series follows the emergence of an imagined character, sometimes described as a bogeyman, a white *tokoloshe* (witch’s familiar) or a stranger who is recognised as a manifestation of the fears and anxieties that girls face as their bodies develop and their social standing changes, particularly in a society in which rape and the abuse of women and children is extremely high (Moletsane *et al*, 2008). Because I had recognised from the outset of my research that the relationship between girls and toilets in South Africa is an issue that needs to be explored with much sensitivity, as traumatic lived experience is often associated with the space of public toilets, I sought round-about ways to discuss that relationship by tapping into the imaginary<sup>16</sup>. I asked the girls in my research group whether they had heard of, or were aware of the character Pinky Pinky, and they all confirmed that they had heard stories about it. The details about Pinky Pinky that they mentioned they were aware of differed from girl to girl. A few said that Pinky Pinky apparently sings, “My name is Pinky Pinky” and that when one sits on a toilet seat it pulls you in; Busi mentioned that it bites you but that it does so only if you are wearing pink clothes or pink underwear. According to Anele, Pinky Pinky also asks for bread and jam. Although they were all aware of the character Pinky Pinky, and had each imagined Pinky Pinky with unique variations, none of them admitted to believing that Pinky Pinky really existed or that there was much truth to the stories they had heard.

Despite their disregard for the possible reality of Pinky Pinky, however, the girls all revealed that they thoroughly believed in the emergence of a character that targeted primary school learners in the learners’ toilet blocks at one of the local primary schools during the time of my fieldwork in Zwelihle. In the journals that I had asked the girls to write up for me, Kim relayed a story that she had heard from her cousin, as well as from various other children who attended this primary school. In the story, a figure that the learners referred to as a “mermaid” had appeared to children at the primary school’s toilet blocks. According to

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<sup>16</sup> What I refer to as imaginary may well be linked to ideas about the supernatural that the girls shared and may have learned from their Xhosa speaking parents. Space constraints however have precluded the expansion of my analysis to consider this issue.

Kim's account, which corroborated others I was told by various girls in my research group, it had presented itself to both boys and girls, and even a caretaker at the school had allegedly told of seeing the mermaid. Kim explained that the mermaid assumed the appearance of a school teacher whom one sees when one enters the school toilets. "If there are lots of children in the bathroom,<sup>17</sup> the school teacher asks you to fetch your school books and return to the bathroom. But when you return to the bathroom and you are alone, the mermaid turns back to its original appearance, which is man on the one side of its face, woman on the other side, and snake in the middle. Just as Pinky Pinky would sing, the mermaid sings to you, asking you to come nearer and, when you do draw closer out of intrigue and curiosity, it "throws your books to the ground, bites you on your side, and touches your forehead making you faint". When you awaken, the mermaid is gone. Just as with the imagined character of Pinky Pinky, although the girls within my research group seemed to agree on the general description of the mermaid and the sequence of events that is common to the experiences of those who had been attacked, how the mermaid looks in their imagination, as well as their feelings attached to the possibility of their being attacked by the mermaid is unique to each of them.

According to Kim's cousin – said Kim's journal – the learners at the primary school blame their parents, their school teachers and the school principal for the mermaid's presence in their toilets. Again according to Kim's journal, the parents of the school's learners had attended a parent-teacher meeting held at the school one evening, and then, the following day, a child was attacked in the toilets by the mermaid. This, Kim wrote, was the first sighting of such a being.

"The mermaid" is a combination of man, woman and snake, it has no gender, it is not conceived dualistically, and it apparently attacks both boys and girls. Although neither the mermaid nor the space it allegedly inhabits was birthed in the imagination of the girls' within my research group, it is something they had chosen to adopt in their imaginations and that they believed to be true.

I would suggest that the fact that the girls within my research group chose to recognise the existence of the mermaid, and that Kim chose to write about it in her journal,

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<sup>17</sup> Kim's usage of the term 'bathroom' is interesting here as it is an American-English expression that was not typically used among the girls in my research group. I assumed that since Kim did not attend the local high school in Zwelihle as the majority of the girls in my group did, but rather one in which her exposure to such terminology is greater, her adoption of the word perhaps derives from this context.

reflects a form of resistance to thinking like the molar, and an effort to think rather outside of gendered and dualistic boundaries. Lawlor explains, “this kind of writing...would challenge and question common sense. It would question what we call the truth. Therefore, it would be a writing that fictionalizes, that fabulates, that writes tales” (2008:174). It is indeed because the mermaid is neither man nor woman, neither adult nor child, and does not discriminate against those it accosts based on gender, that its existence “question[s] common sense” and challenges thinking like the molar.

An interesting and important element of this story is the lack of trust that it suggests that the children displayed in their parents and teachers through their identifying those adults and their actions as the cause of children’s discomfort. Ideally, teachers and parents are those responsible for the well being of their students and children, rather than those that initiate harm and ill intent. However, as shown in an article in *The World Post*, an international internet domain that produces news articles from around the globe, “[From] statistics that estimate more than 30 percent of girls have been raped by the time they are 18...It seems there are few places for South African girls to be safe: Many are raped in their homes by a relative or family friend; many are raped at school, often by teachers; ...[others] are raped by someone they do not know (Faul, 2013).”

That the learners attributed blame to their teachers and parents for the emergence of the ‘mermaid’ seems to reflect the betrayal that is inherent in the act of an adult intentionally inflicting harm on a child. The story of the mermaid, and the events that preceded its arrival, illustrate how, as Deleuze (1997) suggests is the case, the imaginary – what could be – is a vital part of what is or what was. As Deleuze (1997: 63) explains, rather than the real and the imaginary being distinct from one another, the imaginary and the real must be like “two superimposable parts of a single trajectory, two faces that ceaselessly interchange with one another”.

## **Is anyone listening?**

When I asked the girls within my research group to author a creative writing piece about anything they might choose, Nambitha and Ziyanda wrote the fictional tale below that tells the story of a girl who was “alone”, who “didn’t know where to turn for help” until she eventually was taken to a place that “accepted her”.

There is a girl living in shack in an informal settlement in Philippi. She is HIV positive and asking people for help but they were avoiding her because they knew she was sick. She was staying alone because both of her parents passed away so most of her time she spent sleeping. One morning she went to use the toilet and she overheard people say that they didn't want her to use it as she would infect them with AIDS. She didn't know where to turn for help. One of the ladies in the community gathered the people around and told them to dismantle her shack so that she must move away from the township. That's what the people did. She went to approach the social workers to tell them what happened, and the social worker helped her as she had dirty clothes and was covered in sores. She took her to the nearest hospital and they accepted her. She then went back to school and went to study nursing. The other day she went back to visit the place where she used to live in the informal settlement to go and explain to people what HIV and AIDS was and how it infects other people, but the people didn't believe her and what she said. She told them what they did to her the previous year, and told them to get tested for HIV and AIDS. One of the ladies in the community did have HIV but had kept quiet about it all this time and denied that she had it claiming that she knew her body very well (Nambitha and Ziyanda, Age 14, English Translation).<sup>18</sup>

The story details the stigma, shame and denial associated with HIV and the challenge of speaking out when one is alone and ashamed; “but the people didn't believe her and what she said”.

A Johannesburg news report that detailed the sentencing of a male *sangoma* (diviner) by the Pietermaritzburg Regional Court for raping two teenage girls, echoed the same sentiment in the words of the victims: “we did not report it because we were afraid our parents would not believe us” (Drum, 26 August 2014). The fear of telling one's story and having it returned void of belief or consideration can deter one from telling it at all. Some therefore choose, as Das (2007: 8) points out, “to be mute and to withdraw their voice to protect it”. In an interview for ABC's 20/20 in April 2000, the South African Commissioner of Police, the now recently deceased, Jackie Selebi said, “Most South African women who report rape are lying” (quoted in Smith 2001: 302). It is this line of thought, this attitude towards women, and especially those who have spoken out about their experiences of rape, that is reflected in the fear that the girls in my research group described; the fear to not be heard, the fear that, although you may tell you story, there may not be someone willing to listen.

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<sup>18</sup> An abridged version of this story was presented in chapter 3.

I had asked the girls in my research group to work in small groups in preparing songs around the theme of being a teenage girl in the present moment. I did so because songs in themselves tell stories, and music can be expressive of some of the seemingly mundane aspects of young people's everyday lives. The song below was written by one of the groups of grade seven girls.

*Teenagers*

*Our mothers' hearts  
are hurt because of us (×2)  
We smoke, we drink, we give birth  
in this world. We are children  
of this world. We are raped  
in this world. Our Father  
forgive those who sin  
against us (×2)*

The song begins with mention of the girls' mother's hearts, and ends with addressing their Father in an apparent excerpt from The Lord's Prayer. The girls have highlighted the choices they have made that may have hurt or disappointed their mothers, as well as the choices of others that have inflicted harm on them and "sin[ned] against them". At the same time that they have highlighted the choices they have made, or may make, they also highlight how their encounters with other bodies "in this world" are an important element of how they experience their bodies. I recognise in the phrase "in this world" the girls' efforts to remark on the imposition of the molar form, what Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 41) regard as the prevalent forms of "capture" such as history, culture, language, established ideas, opinions, expectations which one can escape only by creating other relations through becoming-woman.

## Words and Pictures

In their study, Moletsane *et al* (2008) provided data from students who had written about how unsanitary the toilets were in their environment. They illustrated this with photographs of toilets without doors, taken by their student research participants. They report girls in particular to have commented that the toilets they were expected to use were unsafe, and that there was no sense of privacy in those facilities.

Wanting to follow a similar method, I aimed to use the relationship between pictures and words to gain insight into what the girls in my research group associated in their environment with their understandings of ‘safe’, ‘unsafe’, ‘dirty’ and ‘private’ spaces. We thus set off one morning, cameras in hand, walking in and around Zwelihle, meandering between homes, cars and taxis, shops, churches, toilets, hair salons, along roads and pathways, playgrounds, schools and crèches, all taking photographs.

Once the photographs had been printed, I asked the girls to make a poster of the photographs they had taken under their particular chosen theme and to add a caption to the images they had captured. On Amy, Siphe and Ondela’s poster (see Figure 4.1) I noticed that a church, the school yard, and the public toilets were considered unsafe spaces, alongside taverns, the road that runs through Transit Camp (*eKampini*), and a *sangoma’s* home. I asked them to explain why they had selected such spaces. The church was the Ethiopian Church that, they explained, sat dark and vacant for most of the time, except during Sunday church services. The public toilets, they said, were not safe to use at night, especially on evenings when the taverns near the toilets were busy and tavern customers frequented those toilets. The school yard was considered unsafe both outside of school hours and when it lay vacant during school holidays. A common theme that arose in relation to most of these spaces was that they were considered both ‘dark’ and unoccupied by people meaning that if anything had to happen in such spaces there would be no witnesses, no one to call out to for help, and no one to verify one’s ‘story’ if something were to happen.



**Figure 4.1:** Unsafe spaces poster

A conversation with Sister Dunn, a nurse at Zwelihle Clinic who had been working there for the past fifteen years, revealed the ripple effects of avoidance of ‘dark’ spaces, specifically public toilets. Responding to a question regarding the most treated illnesses among children, she listed diarrhoea, gastroenteritis and skin irritations all of which, she explained, were common due to the “lack of sanitation” in Zwelihle. She added that many people defecated and urinated in the open and that most still used buckets in their homes. Given my experiences with the public toilet facilities in Zwelihle’s informal settlements, I initially doubted her causal explanation for a high incidence of diarrhoea among children. I soon discovered, however, that Sister Dunn’s observation was not unfounded. Within a climate where sexual violence is prevalent, there is a profound sense of fear and anxiety among women and girls that limits their access to the public toilets, particularly as many will not risk walking alone.

The widespread use, in homes and especially at night, of buckets as toilets therefore dramatically reflects that fear. Buckets are then emptied in the public toilets in the morning, in a road to flow into a stormwater drain, in a nearby open space, or at the solid waste disposal site which is not very far from Zwelihle. When it rains, or when puddles form from tossed greywater, children who play in the road or in between shacks interact with water that is contaminated by human waste and are exposed to water related illnesses such as those mentioned by Sister Dunn (c.f. Snodgrass, 2010). Bucket usage in Zwelihle's informal settlements is even more noteworthy when one considers the residents who, during the 'dark' winter months when the weather is icy cold and strong wind and rain storms are frequent, would rather remain in their homes than brave the elements and low temperatures to use the nearby public toilets during daylight hours.

In a conversation I had with a woman living in Transit Camp, in a shack located only a few steps away from the nearest toilet block, she recalled how she had recently experienced diarrhoea, and had woken up during the night needing to use the toilet. She noted that she remembered that it was a Thursday evening, which meant that the taverns near the public toilet block would be busy. She then explained that she had had a difficult decision to make, since she did not want to use a bucket in their small home and to disturb her husband and children, yet she had felt unsafe to go out to use the public toilets, particularly if, she explained, she had anticipated encountering people who had consumed fair amounts of alcohol. In the end, she opted to use a bucket at home, even though she said she was embarrassed to admit it.

South Africa's Strategic Framework for Water Services is a national policy document entitled "Water is Life, Sanitation is Dignity" (2003). Ironically, the efforts of the Overstrand municipality, much like those of many other local authorities around the country, to restore dignity to residents of Zwelihle's informal settlements by providing public sanitation facilities to replace the 'bucket system', has a gendered outcome that hinders girls and women from being able adequately and sufficiently to access the services intended to provide a dignified form of sanitation. Even though it is a service that is provided for the benefit of all residents in Zwelihle, it ends up affording access only to boys and men during night time. This is primarily because, as MacKinnon (1989:180) phrases it, "to be rapable, a position that is social, not biological, defines what a woman is"; womanhood is defined by vulnerability to rape (du Toit, 2005).

## Conclusion

Through considering data that I obtained from story-telling and narrative, I have highlighted in this chapter how the girls in my research group chose to engage with the imaginary, and how their imaginary can be, and indeed often proves to be, reflective of the real. I have suggested that their engagement with ‘the mermaid’; an image that stands outside of dualistic gender norms, and therefore outside of ‘the molar’, can be recognised as a form of resistance to the molar, and the pressures they at time feel are moulding them into ‘woman’, the molar form defined in opposition to ‘man’. I have shown too that, within a cultural environment where sexual violations are frequent and yet mostly hidden, caution, fear, and anxiety is embodied in the behaviour of girls and women who avoid ‘dark’ and unoccupied spaces and opt to use buckets inside their homes instead of the public facilities that have been made available for them. In the imaginations of the girls in my research group, as well as of many women in Zwelihle, there was a clear fear that one’s cries for help are likely to be unheard, ignored, or dismissed by unbelieving ears. It is a fear that the statistics presented in texts such as Smith (2001) show is hardly unfounded.

## Chapter 5

### *Stolen bodies? Becoming and Overcoming*

“Who says girls don’t play enough sport? Using a public toilet is a sport alone...we build strong thigh muscles and adopt good aiming skills!”

*#ForTheGirlsWhoAreParanoidAboutTouchingTheSeat* (Anonymous, Facebook)

#### **Introduction**

I stumbled across the quote I have used above as an epigram for this chapter whilst browsing on social media; and I found the phrase “we build strong thigh muscles and develop good aiming skills” a useful metaphor that reflects the force of ‘overcoming’ and the dexterity of girls’ bodies amidst the challenges they face in their environment. Yet, the very fact that girls and women believe they need to develop such skills reflects the kinds of everyday threats they experience, especially when living in South African urban informal settlements where sanitation facilities take the form, at best, of public toilets.

That sense of everyday threat is reflected in a story I was told towards the end of my fieldwork in Zwelihle, during a conversation I had with Mrs R, a teacher at a government run primary school in a poor area of the Eastern Cape city of East London. A short-term visitor in Zwelihle at that point, Mrs R had been teaching in East London for the previous twelve years. She was the teacher of the school’s ‘special needs’ class, a class which comprised children with various troubled home environments that had, she explained, inhibited their ability to learn alongside other learners their age. She had to thus frequently engage with the learners’ parents and guardians. Mrs R related a story of one of her students, a girl she called ‘Letty’, who had enrolled in the ‘special needs’ class because she was seriously affected by foetal alcohol syndrome and was consequently struggling to read and write despite having been in the schooling system for some seven years. When Letty found it too difficult to write her birth name, Mrs R gave her the name ‘Letty’, which, Mrs R reported, she was soon able to write with ease. Letty had joined Mrs R’s class when her adoptive parents relocated her to the suburb in which the school is situated. This was at the time that she began menstruating.

Letty's adoptive parents had explained to Mrs R that they had always feared that Letty would be vulnerable to rape as they lived in what they referred to as a "bad area". But since Letty had now experienced menarche, they told her, their fears were amplified by the possibility of her being raped and by that leading to her falling pregnant, which is why they had taken precautionary measures, such as relocating, to protect her.

As I explored the relationship between public sanitation facilities and girls' experiences of menstrual management and their changing bodies in Zwelihle, I found myself having to take account of the broadly experienced everyday political issues that women and girls in South Africa face day to day. Letty's story above depicts one instance in which fear of rape is present in the everyday and is an important concern that influences decisions people make and how they inhabit certain spaces. Drawing on arguments put forth in the previous chapters, as well as the narratives that follow, I here apply Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) notion of "stolen bodies", as it appears within their discussion on becoming-woman. I also consider the potential for girls and women to overcome imposed realities through the choices they make daily. This concluding chapter also summarises the main arguments that thread through the dissertation in order to clarify the extent to which Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'becoming-woman' proves to be a useful lens, and in what instances it is limited in its application.

## **Political Insincerity, Social Distrust**

In *Chapter 3*, I have discussed how girls conveyed their sense of the 'risks' involved in managing their menstruation at school where opportunities for their humiliation were ripe, and the propensity of others to gossip about them were important aspects of how they were experiencing their bodies. I have highlighted the emphasis that girls placed on keeping their 'bleeding body' or any evidence thereof hidden and how they sought to keep it a private issue that should not be readily discussed. I have considered how their experience of menarche brought about an increased or heightened awareness of their own selves in relation to encounters with other bodies in their environment; and I have suggested that taking note of seemingly mundane interactions in which girls engaged through the lens of 'becoming-woman' reveals both fear of being ostracised for falling short of 'the molar' as well as a

desire on their part to resist imposition on them of ‘the molar’ and thus to resist the imposition on them of societal norms regarding ‘woman’.

In *Chapter 4* I have presented ‘the imaginary’ as an important aspect of ‘the real’. I have done that through recalling the various stories that the girls in my research group wrote, both written stories, and those presented in song. I have used those to illustrate that, whilst access to sanitation is an issue that continues to plague South African municipalities as they aim to restore ‘dignity’ to residents by replacing buckets with public toilet technologies, the experiences of women and girls of public toilet facilities in Zwelihle’s informal settlements highlights the irony of such efforts within South Africa’s violent climate. The fear girls and women experience of placing their own self in a space where one is likely to be vulnerable to sexual assault prohibits, I have indicated, severely hinders and, indeed more often than not, prevents most women and girls from using the public toilets when it is dark. Their doing that therefore leaves them with no other option than to use buckets inside their homes – buckets which are then typically emptied after daybreak into various places, in many instances creating health hazards, especially for children.

The songs that the girls in my research group wrote have provided insights not merely from the perspective of academic interest where an excerpt of everyday life can be examined, but also from a policy maker’s perspective. That is because they reveal “the power relations that constitute this form of everyday life” (Lashua and Fox, 2007:155). The girls’ songs, *Haisuka Madoda* and *Teenagers*, both depict how girls’ bodies experience, among other things, humiliation, rape, pregnancy and birth and how girls then come to fear unequal power relations in ways that tend to limit and control their exercise of personal freedom.

Louise du Toit (2005) discusses the political and public nature of rape. She does that in order to challenge any understanding of rape as a ‘private’ issue and to show that it is often trivialised on the assumption that rape should remain tucked away in what is to be regarded as ‘personal’ rather than public knowledge. Just as there is a common expectation that menstruation should be managed discretely, as though one’s body is not bleeding, so too is rape, with its association with an area of the body that is meant to remain ‘private’, often blanketed in a similar silence. Part of what du Toit illustrates is that sexuality and the ways in which it is played out are political issues. This implies that rape lies in the extension of how we politically and publicly shape our sexual identities as women and as men. Du Toit argues that rape is a matter of political and public concern precisely because “politics is about who

has power over whom, and rape, and its threat, is one of multiple ways in which people with penises wield power over people without penises” (du Toit, 2005:261).

Although Deleuze and Guattari do not describe becoming-woman as a process which empathizes exclusively with the experiences of ‘woman’, they do acknowledge women as a minority (Dawson, 2008; Lawlor, 2008) – by which they mean a category of persons who have been “oppressed”, “wronged”, those whose minor existence is one that is undergoing “abominable sufferings” (Lawlor, 2008). Deleuze and Guattari propose that when she becomes a woman a girl’s “becoming is stolen”. “The girl’s becoming is stolen first, in order to impose a history, or prehistory, upon her. The boy’s turn comes next, but it is by using the girl as an example, by pointing to the girl as the object of his desire, that an opposed organism, a dominant history is fabricated for him too” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 276). Deleuze and Guattari thus suggest that women are defined in opposition to men, in relation to the standard of what is proper and thus man. Du Toit (2005: 254) in turn argues that the realistic fears of women and children, especially girl children, of sexual violence being perpetrated against them by men in general helps to construct and sustain “a clear gender hierarchy within South African citizenship”.

Women and children in this country are taught from early on not to trust anyone, especially not strange men. But the crisis in social trust affects more than just the horizontal relationships of citizens amongst themselves. The government’s response to rape, and the actual rape statistics, also ensure that women have lost faith in the government’s sincerity in taking rape seriously and protecting women from its threat (du Toit, 2005:254).

The narratives of the girls in my research group displayed a lack of what du Toit refers to as social trust. They did so through the emphasis they placed on their fear of not being heard, of not having a witness to support their story, of their words being turned away in disbelief. All of this reveals the sentiment expressed by du Toit (2005), with girls revealing fear that they would not be taken seriously, that they did not feel adequately protected by those who are ultimately responsible for their protection, particularly their teachers and their parents and guardians.

In light of this, du Toit argues that as long as circumstances make it reasonable for girls, women and children to believe that reporting incidents of sexual violence is futile “the state and its structures are complicit in sustaining and perpetuating a culture of rape which

systematically humiliates and paralyses far more than half its population” (du Toit, 2005: 267).

On the basis of what I have seen in Zwelihle and as has been reported for various other urban informal settlements around the country (see Taing *et al*, 2014) one can justifiably suggest that the government’s sincerity in its consideration of women is also sorely lacking in the provision of basic services, particularly sanitation. The reason that most girls and women residing in Zwelihle’s informal settlements opted to wash and change their sanitary material at home was because, for them, it was not feasible to do so in a toilet cubicle in a public facility, one where the water tap was located outside and often some distance away from the cubicles. Considering that roughly half of the population of most informal settlements are women and girls, it is both interesting and very concerning that the issue of menstrual management has not been considered in the design and construction of public toilets in informal settlements – that is if those in Zwelihle’s informal settlements are an example.<sup>19</sup>

I raised the issue of facilities for menstrual management with the Overstrand municipal officials who had been responsible for installing the much needed public toilets in Zwelihle. Their initial response was an exchange of uncertain looks between one another and a moment of silence – until Buli, the only woman in the managerial office, eventually responded: “To be honest, we did not even think of that”.

Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) recognition of the minority status of ‘woman’, as a minor status that is defined in opposition to man, as one in which an oppressive history is imposed on the girl thereby capturing her body as she is directed to become a ‘woman’, speaks to the gender hierarchy that is evident in both the prevalence of sexual violence against women and girls, their fear that their voice will be stolen when speaking of an experience of such, and, crucially for the study which initially took me into Zwelihle, the minimal consideration they receive, as women and girls, in the provision of basic sanitation facilities. This is very clearly illustrated in my discussion at the end of chapter three about the limitations on women’s access to public toilet facilities in informal settlements, and in their having to manage their menstrual flows in their homes rather in the cubicles of those facilities.

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<sup>19</sup> WRC reports K2120/1/14 and K5/1827 point to water taps being, at closest, outside the toilet cubicles in a number of informal settlements across South Africa, and where, if there is any kind of more general ablution facility, basins (if they are present at all) are in open spaces.

## Overcoming

Despite all the forces of culture, history, language, dominant ideas, and expectations that capture the body of the girl, Deleuze and Guattari point clearly to the potential for women and girls to be revolutionary subjects by choosing to change the way they relate to the world. Since one can choose to destroy one's molar form, despite one's exposure to it as a girl, and despite one's engagement with the dualistic demands of societal constructions such as 'normal' and 'abnormal', girls' potential for experiencing their bodies in a way that challenges pre-established opinions, notions and perceptions remains. Moreover, this is what, as Wiese (2011) argues, constitutes agency.

Du Toit (2005) argues that the reality of women being raped so extensively and seemingly uncontrollably, without those in government taking action against this form of violence at all policy levels, translates for ordinary South African women and children into pervasive fear, humiliation and incapacitation. She suggests that there are numerous spaces in every woman's and girl's living environment that are dangerous to her, therefore resulting in each woman's freedom to exercise agency being seriously curbed. Du Toit mentions fear in the everyday, and how this becomes established in the expectations that are placed on women when she says,

She [each South African woman] forms the habit, (and teaches it to her daughters) of fearing men and to always look out for and avoid situations that may put her in danger...It is vitally important to remember that the fear of rape is never the fear of 'only' rape – inherent in the act of rape is the threat of death itself, and this is so, even without the added (realistic) fear of contracting HIV/AIDS (2005:260).

Du Toit (2005) further suggests that in response to their imbedded and embodied fear women and girls become "docile", "paralysed" and "incapacitated" in their ability to recognise the erosion of the human rights afforded to them in the South African Constitution. Although this may in part be true, one needs, as I have suggested earlier, also to consider the potential for girls' and women's bodies to 'overcome' the limitations placed on them in the midst of such violence. To revisit the opinions of Sister Dunn, Constable Gqoli and Winnie Nywebeni, all

of whom attributed the behaviour of women who dared to venture through spaces dark and dangerous, as reckless and provocative, I found that one could also interpret such behaviour as an expression of agency, an expression of women and girls overcoming the limitations of the fear that has been socio-culturally imposed on them. As much as the public status of the streets during the day changes when the darkness of night time arrives, and as much as an expectation is placed on women to remain in their homes during such times, there are girls, like 18 year old Abongile who lives opposite the public toilets in Asazani informal settlement in Zwelihle and who would likely be one of those considered to be, in the words of Constable Gqoli, “looking for trouble” for walking on her own at night, who exercises her agency to resist the molar. When I asked her whether she used the public toilets at night, her response was: “Although I feel scared walking to the toilet, I feel better once I’m inside [the toilet cubicle] and [have] locked the door. I just have to do it”; shaking her head she then added, “I have to be brave, ja [yes].”

Abongile was not alone in adopting such an outlook. Indeed I met various other girls who, like Abongile, were insistent that they would not use a bucket inside their homes and who chose to use the public toilets when it was dark, in spite of their fear.

It is evident, I would argue in light of the attitudes and behaviour of girls and women like Abongile, that no violence can contain the body completely and that it cannot nullify the body’s potential. In Wiese’s (2011) words: “the body is and remains a kind of matter that we will never be able to completely grasp, wherefore it will always be able to reassemble itself in unexpected ways, undermining its capturing in hegemonial power-relations. In other words, the body will always be able to become: other and otherwise”.

## **Conclusion**

In the words of Brian Massumi (1992) regarding Deleuze and Guattari’s theory on ‘becoming-woman’, “The question is not “Is it true?” but “Does it work?” What new thoughts does it make possible to think? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body? (Massumi,1992:8).

In writing this dissertation I have set out to consider the extent to which Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming-woman might be valuable for thinking about and understanding girls’ bodies and the changes they experienced, particularly girls’ bodies in

Zwelihle. I have found becoming-woman to be a valuable lens through which to view, unpack and to understand the forces that are evident in the socialisation processes that girls experience and that position them as ‘woman’ rather than ‘girl’, processes that Deleuze and Guattari (1987) would describe as the imposition of the molar. Applying the notion of becoming-woman has compelled me to think not only about how girls inhabit spaces but also about how they inhabit their bodies. It has prompted me to consider not only their management practices around the biological processes of menstruation and menarche, but also the social-cultural processes that are revealed in their desires to be accepted, to be heard, to be understood, to be respected instead of being humiliated. I must also mention here however that the concept of becoming-woman has, at times, proved to be too abstract in my efforts to identify all of the girls’ experiences of becoming-woman. Through the dissertation I have described moments of becoming-woman predominantly in terms of resistance to the molar and also in terms of the girls’ potential to experience becoming-woman in terms of choosing to change how they related to other bodies, and how they related to the world. Yet the abstract character of the concept is such that becoming-woman often escapes one’s attempts to capture its essence, as one attempts to describe, from on-the-ground experience, everything that might constitute “a play of singular, definable moments in time, intensities and affectivities, events and accidents” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:253). I have consequently therefore found that I could not always record everything that constituted their experience of becoming-woman on behalf of the girls with whom I worked. I could not write comprehensively for them because becoming-woman is an individual experience that only the person having it can write about. In that respect my usage of the concept is limited in terms of not being able to describe in full detail an experience of becoming-woman that is not my own.

An article in the *Cape Times* (6 October, 2014) entitled “The Rape of our Nation” stated that the reason that so many cases against alleged rapists are dropped is that “the victims could not articulate what had happened to them”. It is here that fiction, story-telling, and the seemingly ‘far-fetched’ tales of children are important modes in which one can discover and indeed uncover girls’ and sometimes also women’s endeavours to articulate an experience of violence, whatever its form, be it coercion, disrespectful behaviour and insincerity, or physical and sexual violence. Deleuze’s (1997) conception of the imaginary as an important aspect of what is or what was therefore offers a valuable line of thought that

opens up what are considered to be ‘acceptable’ modes in which experiences of violence will be heard.

In light of this, I conclude by reiterating a sentiment expressed by Bochner and Ellis (2003:507). My wish is that the product of this research is “not something to be received, but something to be used, not a conclusion, but a turn in conversation, not a way of declaring ‘this is how it is’ but a means of inviting others to consider what it (or they) could become”.

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# **Appendices**

## **Appendix A**

### ***Anonymous Answers Game***

## Anonymous Answers Game

A total of 19 girls participated in the game 'Anonymous Answers' initially. Here I record the numbers of yes/no answers that were conveyed to me through the use of colour-coded sheets of paper (see page 17). However the number of answers varies as girls came and went depending on their involvement in the school choir.

1.	Do you like school?	Yes: 12	No: 6
2.	Do you think all schools should wear uniforms?	Yes: 8	No: 6
3.	Do you like your body?	Yes: 12	No: 2
4.	Would you like to get married one day?	Yes: 1	No:13
5.	Would you like to have children one day?	Yes: 12	No: 3
6.	Do you have your period yet?	Yes: 9	No:4
7.	Do you know what a tampon is?	Yes: 0	No:13
8.	Do you use the toilets at school?	Yes: 10	No: 3
9.	Do you use the public toilets in Zwelihle?	Yes: 7	No: 6
10.	Would you want to visit a <i>sangoma</i> if you were sick?	Yes: 0	No: 13

## Appendix B

### *Drama Transcript*

#### **Drama Production**

##### ***Scene 1***

*Two women go to use the public toilets. They make noises complaining of the smell.*

Woman 1: "Hayi, I can't even breathe. I am leaving you and this toilet smell".

*Two women walk off.*

##### ***Scene 2***

*A woman visits her neighbour and knocks.*

Neighbour: "Come in"

Visitor: "Hey how are you doing?"

Neighbour: "I'm doing alright thanks"

Visitor: "Don't you want to take a walk with me?"

Neighbour: "Sure"

*The friends walk past the toilet block.*

Visitor: "Sho, can you smell that?"

Neighbour: "Oh that smell!"

Visitor: "Ja, it is these toilets!"

(Neighbour agrees)

Visitor: "Let's go and sit there and get some rest" (*She points to a bench further away and they go and sit down*). "Wow, the problem with the toilets really needs to be fixed. They need to get people to clean the toilets, because if we don't we are going to get diseases!"

Neighbour: "Is there someone who fixes these toilets?"

Visitor: "Yes there is!"

Neighbour: "Phew, I will never do that, I will never!"

Visitor: "Would you mind walking with me to the toilet? I really need it!"

*Neighbour agrees, and they walk to the toilet.*

Visitor: "Phew, the toilets smell so bad!"

*Neighbour holds her nose. The friends say goodbye and go home.*

## **Three Months Later**

### ***Scene 3***

...opens with the neighbour's visitor coughing violently and feeling sick.

*Neighbour goes to see her friend.*

Neighbour: "Wow, you have been sick for quite some time, you have a fever let us go to the doctor".

*Visitor groans in pain as they walk to the doctor. They arrive at the clinic a few minutes later and see the doctor.*

Doctor: "What is wrong, what is happening?"

Neighbour: "I don't know doctor"

Doctor: "What is wrong with you?"

Visitor: "I don't know doctor I can't stop coughing!"

*Doctor examines the patient.*

Doctor: “You feel like someone who has diarrhoea”

*The patient screams with fright.*

Doctor: “Don’t scream, we can cure this. I am going to give you some tablets, and an injection, and I will send a health inspector to your area to inspect the public toilets”.

*The neighbour and the visitor leave the doctor’s rooms and walk home. On the way they bump into two women.*

Women 1: “What, why are you walking with a sick lady? Don’t you know that diseases spread?”

*Neighbour leaves her friend and runs away. The women also run off afraid the sick lady will touch them. They chase her away saying, “Hamba!”*

*Women 1 goes to the toilet.*

Women 1: “Phew these toilets smell, I don’t know how people use them”

#### ***Scene 4***

*The health inspector and the doctor arrive at the public toilets.*

Doctor: “Hello health inspector, I called you to look at the toilets and the water in the area because people are getting sick, and they come to me, but I want to know the cause of their illness.”

Health inspector: “How so?”

Doctor: “My patients are all getting sick from the same thing, as they live in the same area”

Health inspector: “What sickness is that?”

Doctor: "Diarrhoea."

Health inspector: "Doctor, are you going to call the people for the meeting?"

Doctor: "Yes."

*Doctor informs the residents of a meeting regarding the public toilets.*

Health inspector: "I have looked at your toilets and seen that they are dirty. If you want to get well they need to be cleaned."

*People complain and say that no matter how they try to clean them they will always be dirty.*

Health inspector: "I understand, but you need to treat these toilets as you would treat the toilet in your own home and not spread faeces on the wall. I will try and get cleaners for these toilets; can I have a few volunteers?"

*Two women volunteer to clean the toilets.*

Doctor: "To add to what the health inspector says, you need to stop being stingy with your money and buy your own toilet paper."

Women 1: "But some of us don't work, so where must we get it from? No, the municipality must provide us with toilet paper?"

Health inspector: "You cannot use other types of paper, so I will try and get the municipality involved. I will also try and get another block of toilets built."

*Volunteers ask if they got the job and the inspector confirms. The women are happy.*

## **Scene 5**

*The new janitors walk across their neighbourhood to the offices of the health inspector.*

Janitors: "When can we start with our work?"

Health inspector: "You can start working today, I will bring you the supplies."

Janitors: “What do we do if people make a mess immediately after we just clean?”

Health inspector: “You have to be polite, and ask them nicely not to mess. You cannot talk to them roughly or hit them.”

Janitors: “And what if people make a mess while I am trying to clean?”

Health inspector: “Then you clean again because that is what you are being paid to do.”

Janitors: “Are we going to get paid?”

Health inspector: “Yes, R150 per day.”

Janitors: “If people throw their dirty water in the toilet will it block?”

Health inspector: “No of course not.”

Health inspector: “You deal with the people, I will bring the supplies.”

*Janitor 1 speaks to Janitor 2.*

Janitor 1: “Don’t tell anyone how much we get paid, because they will kill us for the money.”

*They walk to their neighbours. The janitors tell their neighbours that they have a job. One neighbour is excited, and asks if she can borrow R200.*

Janitors: “What! We have to go and clean all that mess and you expect us to lend you money while you sit and do nothing! Sorry we can’t.”

Neighbour: “I will return it at the end of the month!”

Janitor: “No you never do.”

Neighbour: “But you used to borrow money from me all the time!”

Janitor: “Well now I don’t even care. You waste your money on sunglasses and eyelashes.”

## ***Scene 6***

*Janitors start cleaning and exclaim at how dirty the toilets are. Residents come and use the toilets while they clean.*

Resident 1: “Can I have some toilet paper please?”

Janitor: “No you should have brought your own.”

*Resident 2 wipes her faeces on the wall and the janitors chase them away.*

Janitor 2: “I want to quit, the smell is too bad.”

Janitor 1: “Come on, just stay for one day.”

Janitor 1: “There is no way that the sick lady is going to come in here!”

*Janitor 2 agrees.*

*The sick lady and her friend walk by and the janitors scream at her and chase her away saying that they don't want her to infect them and others. They are also shocked that the neighbour is walking with the sick lady. They complain that the sick lady does not respect them.*

Janitor 1: “No she can't use these public toilets, she will infect us, is she crazy!? I don't care what she uses, she must just stay in her own house!”

*Janitors are tired of work so they throw down their things and walk off.*

## **Scene 7**

*The sick lady goes back to the doctor.*

Doctor: “What is wrong?”

Sick lady: “It is my stomach. My stomach, it is so painful doctor!”

Doctor: “I gave you medicine, you should be better! We even got ladies to clean the toilets.”

Sick lady: “No doctor, they don't allow people with diseases to use the toilets.”

Doctor: “You need to go to the toilet regularly and release what is in your stomach. Do you still have your treatment?”

Sick lady: “Yes doctor, I'll take it.”

Doctor:” I'll talk to the health inspector about the janitors.”

Janitor: "Where did you come from?"

Sick lady: "I'm going to the toilet."

*At first the janitors try to chase her away but they see the health inspector and the doctor coming and they allow her in. Sick lady uses toilet. Health inspector and doctor arrive.*

Health inspector: "What are you doing?"

Janitors: "We are cleaning."

Health inspector: "How can you have cleaned when it smells so bad?"

Janitors: "The people keep messing."

*The sick lady complains that the janitors did not allow her to use the bathroom.*

Health inspector: "But I'm paying you, you are sharing R150 per day!"

Janitor 1: "What!?! No we are each getting R150."

Health inspector: "You are fired! We are getting other workers."

Janitors: "We're done!"

## **Scene 8**

*The doctor and health inspector walk towards the group of community members and asks for workers, but the people chase them away.*

Community: "Haisuka, go away!"

Janitor 1: "If we chase you away, you are chased away. We want you out of here."

Health inspector: "Keep quiet!"

*One community member volunteers for the job and the previous janitors tell her to keep quiet.*

Health inspector: "Listen, if there is anyone who would like to volunteer to clean the toilets I will pay you R400 per day."

*The sick lady volunteers to clean the toilets. Janitor 1 threatens to kill the sick lady for going against the group. The community chase her away for going against what they think is right.*

Health inspector: "This lady has volunteered to work so we are going to build her a house. I hope you don't burn it down."

*The community get up and chase away the doctor, the health inspector and the volunteer.*

***---THE END---***