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Brenna M. Munro. 2012. *South Africa and the dream of love to come: Queer sexuality and the struggle for freedom*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press. 352pp. ISBN: 978-0816677696.

An axiomatic ‘rainbow nation’, in 1996, post-apartheid South Africa was the first country in the world to recognise gays and lesbians as full citizens in its constitution. Brenna M. Munro’s book, *South Africa and the dream of love to come: Queer sexuality and the struggle for freedom*, informed by queer cultural studies and historiography, sets out to systematically chronicle the changing (and often contradictory) status of queer sexuality and citizenry in South Africa, as presented in diverse literary and artistic media. This book places particular emphasis on the often disregarded role played by queer citizenry in the construction of new imaginings of the ‘rainbow nation’.

In the introduction, Munro systematically traces queer sexuality in South Africa from the 1960s right through to the present day. She explores the ramifications of queer sexuality and identity on the closely interconnected discourses of nationhood, sexuality and race. In the introductory chapter, Munro exposes how in the period between the 1960s and the 1990s, queer sexuality was considered at once as a ‘perversity of apartheid’ (p. viii) and paradoxically also as an extended metaphor of the mores of the authoritarian apartheid regime which had attempted to control, for the sake of social purity, the sexuality of all South Africans. She moves on to show how this conception of queer sexuality and identity changes to fit into the scope of the creation of a multiracial democracy, as from 1994. Munro’s main thesis in this introductory chapter, as in the entirety of the book, is that queer sexuality is a pivotal locus of power relations and transformation in the fledgling democracy of South Africa.

The book is organised into three major sections, each composed of closely related essays. In the first section, entitled ‘Fraternity and its anxieties’, Munro examines several prison narratives that she contends made it possible for the emergence of mainstream gay rights in South Africa. Not only does she convincingly argue that prisons were an important space for the proliferation of homosexual and homosocial behaviour, she also contends that queer prison narratives played a central role in creating a protest culture against an imposing trope of the depravity of apartheid. In this first section she surveys the intersections of homosexuality and whiteness through an interrogation of multiple opposing ‘imagined fraternities’ which bring to light different relations to nationalism and sexuality. The paralleling of whiteness and queerness reveals the manner in which both are in a precarious and uneasy state, in the face of the end of apartheid.

Entitled 'Gender, apartheid, and imagined spaces of nation', the second section analyses several literary texts by apartheid-era writers. These texts befuddle post-apartheid discourses on sexuality as a result of a specific vision of imagined topographies of the nation. The overarching argument in this section is that South African literature from the 1980s offers a different set of opportunities for envisioning the intersecting notions of sexuality and race in the desired democratic nation of the future. Munro is convincing in examining the production of queer sexuality in the post-apartheid public culture; paralleling the delicate new legitimacy of queer citizenry with South Africa's struggle for multiracial democracy.

The ultimate section, 'Writing the rainbow nation', examines literary and artistic productions that engage with issues of nationalism and sexuality in post-apartheid South Africa. For example, by bringing to conversation the works of Nobel laureates Nadine Gordimer and J.M. Coetzee, Munro analyses the struggles of white middle-class South Africans as they grapple to integrate themselves into the post-apartheid 'rainbow nation'. These fictional white middle-class South African families equally have to deal with the homosexuality of their offspring. Munro argues that the gay sexuality of the younger characters represents the creative destabilisation of whiteness, as it attempts to carve its own place in the new socio-political dispensation. The final chapter of the third section is particularly fascinating for the manner in which Munro offers a comparative analysis of the literary oeuvre of the late writer K. Sello Duiker and contemporary lesbian photographer Zanele Muholi. Munro analyses how Duiker and Muholi reflect on the emergence of a queer township culture in post-apartheid South Africa. She considers at length the manner in which contemporary lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activists and artists such as Muholi steadfastly decline to be viewed as emissaries for post-apartheid South Africa, and refuse to be stooges for the professed disillusionments in the face of enjoyment of civil liberties by different citizens of the new 'rainbow nation'.

The overall strengths of this book lie, first, in its unique and thought-provoking contextualisation of queer citizenry in different historical periods in South Africa. Munro's book is punctiliously comprehensive and theoretically solid, and offers an admirable and effective mix of history, theory and literary and cultural analyses. Second, the text provides a comprehensive historical and contemporary outline of important issues on sexuality, race and citizenry in South Africa's struggle against apartheid, as well as its transition to democracy. Munro does not downplay the struggles that remain in the fight by LGBT individuals for full inclusion in the democratic space and processes in South Africa, which certainly centres on freedom of expression, association and liberal thought. She equally calls attention to the fact that the new legibility of queer identities can lead to a disregard of indigenous marginal sexualities and practices, thus representing them as both backward and outmoded.

Perhaps one key weakness of this book, on a thematic level, is the lack of a nuanced justification of why little is said about lesbianism. Despite attesting in the introductory chapter to the ostensible invisibility of lesbianism and female same-sex intimacies, Munro does not offer a plausible explanation as to why they are not caught up in the anti-apartheid and democracy discourses. Except for the enthralling analysis of the photographic oeuvre of Zanele Muholi, Munro ostensibly sidelines female queer sexuality and intimacy.

Analytically and stylistically, another apparent failing is that Munro occasionally tends to rely on the excessive use of long quotes from secondary sources to make her point, jumping between quotations without exhaustively explaining how these support each other, as well as the thesis argument. Moreover, the quotes from the primary literary texts of analysis could also have been explained in greater detail. This weakness is, however, more than made up for by the simplicity and accessibility of the argument.

*South Africa and the dream of love to come: Queer sexuality and the struggle for freedom* is an insightful text that undoubtedly deserves a place on the bookshelf of any student or person interested in the history of queer sexuality and identity, as well as its artistic representation in South Africa and indeed other African countries. The volume of clearly articulated information in this book makes it an important read, whether one approaches it for theoretical insights into queer theory and citizenry or for its geopolitical implications and contexts in South Africa. Munro has certainly learnt from the diverse criticisms of queer theory, and her book is thus both intelligible and readable in its reflections on the multiplicity of LGBT experiences and artistic representations.