

# Understanding Sexual Violence through its Timing in Kagiso Lesego Molope's *This Book Betrays my Brother*

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## Summary

In this article, I seek to understand why male sexual violence happens. I look specifically at the temporalities, and inevitably the spatialities, of a rape incident in the novel *This Book Betrays my Brother* by Kagiso Lesego Molope. In other words, I seek to answer the question: how does the timing of the rape enhance our understanding of *why* the rape happens and *how* the perpetrator conceives it? My feminist analysis combines theories of sexual violence and theories of women's time to unravel the motive for rape as represented in Molope's novel. Through the analysis, I extrapolate three major arguments from the novel: first, that male sexual violence is the result of masculine territorialisation of women's bodies; second, that the rape of lesbian and bisexual women is the result of heterosexual men's *failure* to accommodate alternative sexualities, hence their action to "discipline" the deviant bodies of women for transgressing the patriarchal sexual order; and lastly, that intra-racial sexual violence in particular is a consequence of the black man's desire for revenge against racial denigration.

## Opsomming

Hierdie artikel het ten doel om te verklaar waarom manlike seksuele geweld plaasvind. Ek ondersoek spesifiek die temporalieë, en noodwendig die ruimtelikhede, van 'n verkrachtingsvoorval in die roman *This Book Betrays my Brother* deur Kagiso Lesego Molope. Met ander woorde, ek poog om die volgende vraag te beantwoord: hoe verbeter die tydsberekening van die verkrachting ons begrip van *waarom* die verkrachting plaasvind en *hoe* die oortreder dit bedink? My feministiese ontleding kombineer teorieë van seksuele geweld en teorieë van vroue se tyd om die beweegrede vir verkrachting, soos voorgestel in Molope se roman, te ontrafel. Deur my ontleding ekstrapoleer ek drie belangrike argumente uit die roman: eerstens, dat manlike seksuele geweld die resultaat is van manlike territorialisering van vroue se liggame; tweedens, dat die verkrachting van lesbiese en biseksuele vroue die resultaat is van heteroseksuele mans se *onvermoë* om alternatiewe seksualiteite te akkommodeer, daarom hul handeling om vroue se afwykende liggame te "dissiplineer" vir oortreding van die patriargale seksuele orde; en laastens, dat intraras-seksuele geweld in die besonder 'n gevolg is van die swart man se begeerte vir wraak teen rasseverkleinerung.

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## Introduction

Kagiso Lesego Molope's novel, *This Book Betrays my Brother* (2012), won the English Academy Percy FitzPatrick Prize for Youth Literature in 2014, owing to its riveting representation of the complexity of young women's victimisation in the context of intimate partner violence. The novel's narrator is Naledi, a young woman who witnesses her older brother, Basi, rape his girlfriend in a back room in their house. Compelled by loyalty for her family and paralysed by the shock of her brother's brutality, Naledi keeps quiet about the incident, and Basi escapes prosecution from the law. By contrast, Moipone is shamed by the community for supposedly lying against a young man from a respectable family, and one with a flawless reputation. In their citation for the novel, the judges of the Percy FitzPatrick Prize state the following:

At the heart of this novel is a challenge to recognise the disempowerment of women who are abused. Society condemns women who have been raped or who know about rape to remaining silent. If they speak out, they are thought of as vindictive liars or loose women or even traitors. The title reveals the complexity of Naledi's decision to reveal her brother's guilt and makes the injustice of such action imaginatively inescapable.

(Ridge, Hunter & Viljoen 2015: 12)

The judges' statement highlights Molope's political agenda in questioning, through fiction, the double victimisation that young South African women experience: first, being raped by a dominating male and second, being coerced into silence by a patriarchal society. Sorcha Gunne (2010: 174) notes that Molope's writing is also engaged in "critiquing the shroud of shame that surrounds sexual violence". These two agendas frame Molope's feminist advocacy, especially if one considers that her protagonists are fundamentally disadvantaged not only by their gender and race but also by their class and sexual orientation. Within this context, Molope's fiction illuminates the ways in which gender, race, class and sexuality intersect to render young women vulnerable to sexual violence.

It must be acknowledged that there is a burgeoning body of South African women's writing on sexual violence, and rape specifically, which not only highlights the ubiquity of this problem but enforces the need for more complex engagements with the subject by looking not only at how the victims experience rape and trauma but also at what causes men to rape in the first place. Within the South African literary context, this rising trend of women writing rape represents a subversion of male *textual* domination in representing rape, a domination evident in the selection of texts appearing in Lucy Valerie Graham's comprehensive study of representations of race and rape in South African Literature (Graham 2012). Women's writing has re-appropriated this space in representing what is primarily a problem that affects women and doing so in ways that reveal that rape is "always gendered and

enacted against the feminine” – the feminine referring not to women *per se* but to all persons associated with femininity, including children and homosexuals (Gqola 2015: 21). As a black woman writer, Molope’s representation of rape is particularly significant because it offers a black woman’s perspective on intra-racial sexual violence. Embedded in the narrative is what Graham (2012: 121) calls “an acknowledgement of the intimate enmeshment of racial oppression and black-on-black violence”. Since the novel is set in the early 1990s when South Africa was transitioning into an apartheid-free state, its portrayal of intra-racial sexual violence projects a latent irony suggesting that the political transformation of that historical time was not matched by social transformation. A second reason why *This Book Betrays my Brother* is an outstanding narrative on rape is its evincing of a new direction in feminist writing where the story, while projecting the rape victim’s agency in accessing healing and recuperation, also lays emphasis on “the crisis of masculinity and the social factors that create rapists in the first place” (Bourke, cited in Thompson & Gunne 2010: 17). This new feminist approach makes the novel a rich text for a feminist criticism that looks specifically at understanding the social factors that create violent masculinities. Lastly, the novel is remarkable because of its foregrounding of time as fundamental to understanding the crisis of masculinity and the social factors that create sexual violators.

In this article, I seek to understand why male sexual violence happens by looking specifically at the temporalities, and inevitably the spatialities, of the rape incident in the novel. In other words, I seek to answer the question: how does the timing of the rape enhance our understanding of *why* the rape happens and *how* the perpetrator conceives it? My feminist analysis combines theories of sexual violence and theories of women’s time to unravel the motivation for rape as represented in Molope’s novel. Through the analysis, I extrapolate three major arguments from the novel: first, that male sexual violence is the result of masculine territorialisation of women’s bodies; second, that the rape of lesbian and bisexual women is the result of heterosexual men’s *failure* to accommodate alternative sexualities, hence their action to “discipline” the deviant bodies of women for transgressing the patriarchal sexual order; and lastly, that intra-racial sexual violence in particular is a consequence of the black man’s desire for revenge against racial denigration. Before I develop these arguments in a textual analysis, it is important to look at some salient existing theorisations of sexual violence, especially those proposed with the South African context in mind.

## **Theorisations of Sexual Violence: Understanding Intersectionality**

The theoretical understanding that gendered differentiation forms the basis for other forms of divisions, as a result of which women are subjected to violence, is the starting point to understanding male sexual violence. Diane Richardson explains:

The categories “woman” and “man” are relative and contingent, defined by a specific social and economic location. Gender categories would not exist if social divisions did not exist. In this conceptual framework, the binary divide between heterosexuality and homosexuality is seen to derive from gender.  
(2007: 461)

This suggests that in unravelling male sexual violence, it is important for us to understand the different ways in which specific social and economic locations construct hierarchies that define different privileges for different genders. As the unprivileged gender, women are often the recipients of violence which may come in the form of coerced sex. The rape of women evidences masculine displays of power. In addition, race, class and sexuality conspire to exacerbate performances of male power.

The intersections of gender, race, class and sexuality are important sites for uncovering discourses of power where sexual violence is concerned. The intersection of gender and sexuality, for example, can be seen as the point at which cultural energies converge and create certain gendered identities while suppressing others. Intersectionality is therefore an important theory in feminist studies through which to read fictional representations of gendered violence. Although the theory is originally associated with feminist law scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw whose 1989 article “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscriminatory Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” (cited in Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays & Tomlinson 2013) formed the genesis of her generation of a significant volume of scholarship on the subject, it is necessary to acknowledge that the theory has travelled across time and space to find meaning and relevance in the work of South African scholars. As Devon Carbado et al. (2013: 303) note, “intersectionality has moved across time, disciplines, issues, and geographic and national boundaries”.

South African scholars such as Pumla Dineo Gqola (2007) and Kopano Ratele (2011) have pointed to intersectionality as critical in schooling us on the ideologies that underpin male sexual violence within the South African context. Ratele (2011: 407) explains that sexual violence against lesbians is the result of patriarchy’s institutionalisation of heterosexual masculinity where lesbianism comes to signify men’s loss of control over women’s bodies. He states:

Violent practices and stigmatising language against women who dare to love women rather than men arise from the fact that patriarchy – especially expressed as patriarchal heterosexual masculinity – instanced by sexual and marital relations between an older man and a younger woman, cannot abide such freedom for women. The most important reason for this oft-violent intolerance to women’s sexual and gender freedom is because such women’s sexual preference of other women over men is indicative of lack of control of men over women’s bodies and lives.

(2011: 407)

From this perspective, male sexual violence becomes the recourse to reclaiming male control over lesbian bodies – the bodies needed to maintain the dominance of heterosexual masculinity.

Similarly, Gqola (2007) notes that the scourge of gender-based violence in South Africa emanates from endemic patriarchal beliefs that have been normalised through pretence about their existence and refusal to confront them. She states pointedly: “Those who pretend to be stunned by the statistics are lazily not making the connections between the various ways in which what is ‘normal’ heterosexual ‘play’ contain codes that inscribe feminine passivity and masculine aggression” (Gqola 2007: 117). She illustrates that twisting the arms of teenage girls, for instance, is based on “the assumption that girls ‘play hard to get’ and therefore should be pursued at all costs regardless of what they say” (Gqola 2007: 117). In addition, there are “the bizarre and oppressive claims that women cannot say what they mean and mean what they say” (Gqola 2007: 117). Such beliefs justify, endorse and even condone masculine sexual aggression against women, to the extent that “a man can see that an out lesbian is aroused and decide to have ‘sex’ with her since an aroused woman cannot be left alone” (Gqola 2007: 117). Thus, society becomes complicit in the sexual violation of women through both its normalisation of patriarchal assumptions and its protection of men who enact these assumptions.

My contribution to the scholarship that these scholars have already generated on sexual violence is to highlight the ways in which temporality enhances our understanding of the intersectionality of gender, race, class and sexuality in the perpetuation of sexual violence against women. Only by understanding the multivalent dimensions of a phenomenon that has become commonplace in South Africa, so commonplace that Gqola (2017: 22) calls it “a language”, can we begin to understand just how resistant patriarchy is to transformational processes in South Africa. Looking at the time frame in which the rape in *This Book Betrays my Brother* happens, the element of timing in the understanding of male sexual violence becomes significant, because the timing of the act both underscores the perpetrator’s partisan sense of masculinity in assuming the female body a territory for male domination and illuminates his psychological limitations in misconstruing the female body as the object of revenge for racial denigration.

At this point, it is important to map out the time sequence within which the rape of Moipone takes place so as to underscore the significance of feminist theorisations of time in elucidating the intersectionality of gender, race, class and sexuality in the sexual violation of women.

### **Feminist Theorisations of Time Relevant to *This Book Betrays my Brother***

As alluded to earlier, the ways in which gender, race, class and sexual orientation come into play to render Moipone a victim of rape can be better understood by looking at the timing of Moipone's rape. The term "timing" as used here does not evoke the sense of predictability; rather, it broadly encompasses different phases and experiences in a character's life that lead up to a significant act or event. To speak of the timing of rape is to speak of the series of events that *lead up* to the rape, as well as the circumstances surrounding those events. Timing therefore allows us to draw links between different events in the novel in an effort to unravel the ways in which they function *interconnectedly* to shed light on the rape of Moipone. Analysing the timing of rape in *This Book Betrays my Brother* helps us to understand that rape is not a random, spontaneous act of violence, but a measured, calculated act which is an externalisation of imbibed patriarchal beliefs about masculinity and, by implication, the use of women's bodies to service that masculinity.

To start off, Basi rapes Moipone on a Saturday. The Saturday of the rape is the Saturday on which Marapong community converges at Kgosi's house to celebrate the release of Aus' Nono from prison. Aus' Nono, the mother of Basi's best friend, Kgosi, had been imprisoned for allegedly killing her husband, Bra Speed. Her early release from prison necessitates a party which is organised by Basi and Kgosi. The Saturday before the party was the Saturday of Basi's rugby match, an important event in his sports life. The relationship between the two Saturdays is highlighted in Naledi's statement: "That week didn't feel right from beginning to end. The first day of rain was that Saturday of my brother's rugby match. The following Saturday was the hideous incident" (117). The rain, which Naledi describes as "unusual" (117) in Marapong at this time of the year (April), is a fitting symbol for the trauma that is about to be visited on Moipone. By putting two Saturdays in juxtaposition – the Saturday of Basi's rugby match and the Saturday of the "hideous incident" – the novel constructs timing as an important category in the understanding of the ways in which various social categorisations intersect in fomenting the sexual violation of women.

Molope lays great emphasis on time and temporality in this novel, as evident in the way Naledi, the narrator, refers to times of the day, days of the week, seasons of the year, and epochs of South Africa's history in telling her story.

For example, Chapter 7 opens with the words “Monday lunch at school” (57), and Chapter 8 opens with the statement “It was exactly two days later that Mama came in as harried as I had ever seen her” (78), while Chapter 9 starts off with Naledi referring to a Saturday morning on which Ole visits her and noting in a fragmented statement: “that Saturday morning, only three weekends before what was to be Basi’s last weekend at home” (83). These references to times and temporalities put the events in their appropriate contexts and help the reader to follow the logic – not necessarily the chronology – of the events as they intersect with one another at various points in the *time* of the story. Since time is a relationship and time, space, being and movement are necessarily intertwined (Milojević 2007), we see in the novel how different events happening at different times involving different people become interconnected in leading up to male sexual violence.

The novel, however, does not perpetuate a patriarchal conception of time by presenting a plot founded on linearity. Ivana Milojević (2007: 335) argues that, as with many other concepts which have been “theorised from within the masculinist/patriarchal lens”, time has been conceptualised as “‘clock time’, ‘industrial’ time as well as linear time with a clear beginning and an end”. Patriarchal time is therefore “linear, clock dominated, industrial, historical”, and is “built on exclusion of women and everything ‘feminine’” (Milojević 2007: 335). Molope subverts patriarchal time and its emphasis on a linear progression of time by presenting a narrative in which the story starts in the present and moves back in time to situate and reflect critically on a particular incident that has defined the life of the narrator in over 20 years. In other words, the novel adopts a *feminist narrative point of view* in which the story is recounted retrospectively, with Naledi in her adult life looking back at her brother’s rape of his girlfriend and offering deep critical thoughts about his actions as well as her own silence. It is a feminist narratological device because it counters the linearity of patriarchal time by showing how in women’s experiences of trauma the past intrudes into the present and even becomes the present. This is evident in the following confession made by Naledi in her retrospective analysis of the rape incident:

I see it now as if it’s happening still. I see it every night in my dreams, or when I’m awake. I see it from the corner of my eye when I’m at my desk sometimes, trying to work. It appears unexpectedly when I’m going about my business, looking at the post or just hurrying out of the house, when I’m thinking about nothing but the weather or the shape of the moon. And when I’m thinking about my brother or Moipone. I watch TV and random images of an advert or a silly show morph into the scene in the back room so that I have to turn off the TV and shut my eyes. It’s like a film that never stops rolling.

(133)

Naledi’s words suggest that the past lives with her in the present and therefore time past for her is simply time replaying itself, like a film that plays

continuously. Molope's use of the present tense in the narration further engenders the notion that for traumatised rape victims or, in Naledi's case, rape witnesses, the past constantly intrudes into the present. The novel's construction of time in this instance espouses "the ways in which temporal dynamics play out on the bodies of women and how these bodies retain and speak traumatised experience in ways that defy abstract, linear and masculine hegemonic time" (Murray 2017: 8).

To continue with Molope's feminist contestation of patriarchal linear time, I now look at three significant temporalities in the novel and how they *intersect* to illustrate the three key arguments about sexual violence. I start with the Saturday of the rape, then rewind back to the Wednesday of Basi's shuffle with Moipone on the street, and finally fast-forward to the Saturday of the rugby match.

### **The Saturday of Partying: The Female Body as Male Territory**

As mentioned earlier, the Saturday on which Basi rapes Moipone is a Saturday of partying at Kgosi's house in the township. Although Basi is busy playing host at the party and often has to join his friends "to dance and sing" (127), he makes it a goal to engage in public displays of affection with Moipone. At some point, Basi leaves his friends on the dance floor and "went back to where Moipone was sitting, linking his fingers with hers and pulling her to stand up" (128). Their coming on to the dance floor in this way makes a statement about Basi's "conquest" of the beautiful Moipone. Like the other boys present, Five Bop gets the message and immediately "danced his way out to make room for them" (128). The entire party then witnesses "Basi and Moipone dancing in the middle of the circle, his hands on her hips" (128). This gesture of intimacy arouses excitement through the crowd, with Fezile screaming: "Ayeye, Bafana! ... *Di a bowa!*" (128). His cheering of Basi not only elevates Basi above the rest of the boys present in suggesting that "he is the man", but also insinuates that Basi will get some sexual action tonight.

Naledi notes "how perfect it seemed to everyone" for Basi and Moipone to be seen as a couple. Before now, Basi and all the boys in the community have been infatuated with Moipone, with Basi taking her out to places as "his way of telling our parents that he was in love and showing Moipone his world at the same time" (110). It becomes clear at the party that "the boys were all as infatuated with Moipone as Basi was", because "just her calm eyes took your breath away" (128). By staging a couple's dance with Moipone and placing "his hands on her hips", Basi therefore succeeds in sending a coded message to his friends that Moipone is now his possession and that the rest of them interested in her should back off, so to speak. Now he has staked his claim on



Moipone's body publicly, in the presence of eyewitnesses; he has to prove his manhood by having sex with her.

The urgency of this need for Basi to defend his masculinity is seen when he decides to leave the party before it is over. Naledi confesses: "I thought we would be there all afternoon, but soon after Basi came over and told me that it was time to go. I was surprised because it was early, especially considering that Basi was one of the hosts" (128). For Basi to tell Naledi that it is time to go implies that there is something requiring his urgent attention and he is racing against time to accomplish it. Naledi is to find out only later that "Basi had other plans" (129) which involve Moipone. And these plans require that he takes Moipone out of the party space to a different place in order to be able to put his plans into motion.

In her research on temporality, Jenny Shaw (2001: 120-121) asserts that "people change places to change pace", because they associate a good life with life that goes at a slower pace and that "it is the pace of a place which would appear to render particular places more appropriate for such identity maintenance". Applying this insight, I argue that Basi leaves the township to return to his house in the suburbs in order to be at a place with a slower pace, a pace conducive for sexual relations with Moipone which would effectively maintain the new identity he has just acquired among his friends as the "conqueror". The party space is evidently on a fast pace with the eating, drinking of beer, singing and dancing and he needs to leave with Naledi to put his plans in motion within the right place. Timing is therefore everything here, because it constructs male sexual violence as a quest by heterosexual masculinity to maintain its identity – its image of sexual virility – by penetrating women's bodies.

The timing of the departure from the party is carefully chosen such that everyone can see Basi leaving with Moipone, again an act sending coded messages to the crowd about his victory over his peers in securing the affections of the contested virgin. When Naledi thinks it is only her and Basi going home, Basi tells her to sit at the backseat of the car to make room for Moipone, and when Moipone comes out to enter the car there is total excitement among the crowd. Naledi states:

Out came Moipone in her short denim skirt, black clogs and a flowy white top with thin straps. She had tied her hair back so that you got the full effect of her perfectly made-up face and no one – I mean no one – could help but stare at her flawless skin, her full lips and her big, round eyes.

(129)

This description of Moipone projects her as a very beautiful girl, desirable to all – men and women alike. It suggests already not only the idea of masculinities in contest to possess this body but also that of masculinities in competition with femininities in the race for domination of this body. The very ethereal language in the description of "flawless skin", "full lips", and

“big, round eyes” projects Moipone’s body as the virgin territory over which different masculinities, and sexualities, are in contestation.

By taking Moipone to his house in the middle of the party, Basi again transmits to his friends a coded message insinuating victory in acquiring what they can only admire from a distance. It is a signal to his male peers that he is “the man”, the heterosexual man in tune with his masculinity. As Ratele (2011: 402) notes, “the more women a man possesses and the more sought-after he appears to be in the eyes of other men, the more a ‘man’ he is”. When Basi then tries to have sex with Moipone some minutes later in his room and she rejects his advances, his resorting to violence can be understood as an enforcement of his sense of ownership over a body he has already publicly declared as his. It can also be read as evidence of his quest for the ‘good life’ constructed as sex with a beautiful girl in his own home. The home provides the right pace for his sexual adventure, which is why on getting home he immediately leaves Moipone with Naledi and goes off to prepare himself for the experience. Naledi confesses that “he was taking quite a long time” (130) to come back to them, and when he returns he comes with a rose flower tucked behind his back. He has all the right props in place for penetrative sex, the ultimate indication of his possession of Moipone’s body.

Moipone however puts up a resistance against Basi’s sexual advances. At the party Moipone did not resist him when he placed his hands on her hips – a very symbolic gesture as the hips are associated with sexual activity. Now in the privacy of the back room he seeks to extend his masculine domination over her body by coercing her into sex regardless of her verbal and physical resistance. Moipone’s resistance is not half-hearted, but at this point in time they are ineffective as the force against her is indomitable:

He hears nothing she says, it seems, because he runs his fingers up her leg, and then pulls her close to kiss her neck. She tries again to push his hand away, but this time he grabs her thigh and she can’t push it away. She starts to stand up but he pulls her back down. She starts again and again he pulls her back down.  
(134)

At this point, Moipone’s resistance is futile because Basi is a man determined to prove to himself and his friends that he is capable of possessing this beautiful body. His acts of sexual violence have a clear aim. To quote Ratele (2011: 402), “it is not about making love. It is about possessing”.

Basi therefore rapes Moipone with the intent to possess her body, as evident in Naledi’s observation that “he doesn’t even take off his pants, just unbuttons his buckle and is swiftly on top of her, his hand still on her mouth” (135). Once his mission has been accomplished, “Basi walked back into the party that evening, sat down with his friends and carried on until late” (139). In his defence of Basi later when the news of the rape spreads, Five Bop asks Naledi: “Now, you tell me who would do that if, let’s say, something like that had happened?” (139). The answer to his question would be: it is precisely

because “something like that had happened” that Basi returns to the party, for he has to “report back” to his friends that he has done what a man should do with a woman he calls his own.

Thus, the timing of Moipone’s rape – coming right after Basi’s performance of heterosexual masculinity at the party and the exhortation of his friends therein – projects male sexual violence as the physical enactment of masculine power over female bodies construed by patriarchy as the possession of men. In addition, timing illuminates the notion of rape as a form of men deriding the masculinity of other men where the rapist proclaims that he is more of a man than others are. In the words of Gunne (2010: 169), “rape situates [Moipone] as an object between the subjectivities of two men, where she embodies the contested space of the battlefield”. Sexual violence becomes the means by which the rapist maps out his “territory” in a landscape of stiff competition from other men, as well as from women.

The collusion of gender and sexuality in the sexual violation of women is revealed in *This Book Betrays my Brother* through another significant event which happens at a time before the Saturday of the rape, showing how the temporality of the novel disrupts patriarchal linear time.

### **The Wednesday of Shopping: The Female Body as the Object of Discipline**

The timing of sexual violence in Molope’s novel reveals more than just the argument that sexual violence is the result of male territorialisation of the female body in the face of contesting masculinities. It also suggests that the rape of lesbians, bisexual women and other gender non-conforming persons is pursued as a disciplinary mechanism to reconstitute women’s “deviant” bodies into the property of the patriarchy. The novel exposes masculine anxieties over the possible loss of heterosexual virility in the face of lesbian proclivities. A week and a half before the Saturday of Moipone’s rape, Basi encounters Moipone in a seemingly romantic gesture with Ole, a self-declared lesbian in the community. Basi, Naledi and their mother are returning from shopping in town on this particular Wednesday. Naledi states that “Mama took us to town to buy smart outfits for the matric dance at Basi’s school” (96). We glean from here their middle-class status which places them above township folks, for they can afford the luxury of shopping for “smart clothes” in the city. Temporality is highlighted as being important here when Naledi places this day in relation to other important upcoming days:

It was only three days before the big match – the one where there would be selectors picking the best boys from the team. The match that would most definitely turn my brother into a national rugby player .... Basi was an experienced player, quite obviously one of the big stars of his team.

(96)

aledi's fast-forwarding to the future – the Saturday of the rugby match – at a time when her story centres on the Wednesday of shopping before the match allows us to see how Molope's novel constructs women's time differently from patriarchal linear time. Milojević (2007: 340) asserts that "it is important to expand our time perspective to be able to better understand all kinds of events". In this case, Molope's expansion of our time perspective through a narrative that vacillates between the present and the future enables us to perceive Basi as a successful rugby player in his school, on his way to becoming a national star. This achievement and the prospects it holds, coupled with Basi's middle-class status, position Basi as a young man who has all the good things in life. Thus, when on driving into Marapong from town with his mother and sister on this Wednesday, Basi sees Ole and Moipone walking down the street holding each other in a manner that is suggestive of more than just friendly closeness, it is understood that the sight shatters his sense of self-confidence.

Prior to this, Moipone has welcomed Basi's romantic interest in her, entertaining his public displays of endearment and moving with him in his middle-class circle of friends and family. Simultaneously, she spends time with Ole whose company she enjoys and whom she sees "like a big brother ... except she's a girl" (113). Ole, on her part, is very much in love with Moipone, for she confesses to Naledi that "she's *very* pretty" (105, emphasis in the original), referring to Moipone. At this point of the encounter between Basi and Ole, it is clear that both of them are in contestation for the affections of beautiful Moipone. Thus, when Basi's mother asks "Isn't that Ole?", pointing to Ole on the street, Basi's reaction is one of violent anger. Naledi explains:

Because Ole wasn't alone. She was with Moipone. It wasn't just as if Ole was standing on a street corner idly chatting away with Moipone. Ole wasn't just having a cigarette with a couple of boys – although that would have been scandalous and reproachful enough for Mama.

She was smoking a cigarette in one hand, while her other arm rested comfortably around Moipone.

... They were absorbed in conversation and sharing a laugh.

(100-101)

Ole's public display of affection for Moipone enrages Basi and when he storms out of his mother's car it is to pull Moipone away from Ole: "Basi stepped in and pulled Moipone by the hand without saying anything" (101). His reaction is that of a man reclaiming his possession assumed to be under usurpation by someone else, and not just anybody but a lesbian. Ole's action of smoking a cigarette while putting her arm around Moipone translates as a performance of masculine qualities which are deemed unacceptable for women. In addition, her showing affection for Moipone publicly conveys the usurpation of masculine privilege, the kind of privilege Basi thinks is his

prerogative when he puts his hands on Moipone's hips at the party the following week. Thus, what is evident here is a contestation between heterosexual masculinity and lesbian femininity over possession of the female body. Masculine anxiety over the possible loss of a girlfriend to a lesbian pushes Basi to react violently by physically separating Moipone from Ole, a gesture symbolic of authoritarian control over woman's body.

That Moipone seems to be dating him and is, at the same time, attracted to Ole is a double blow to heterosexual masculinity since Basi is now confronted with a bisexual woman who, to borrow Cheryl Stobie's words, "transgresses even the homosexual/heterosexual boundary" (Stobie 2007: 140). Bisexual women are seen as an even bigger threat to heterosexual masculinity because, in turning around and having relationships with women, they make a mockery of the power heterosexual men assume to have over their bodies. Thus, when Basi forcefully penetrates Moipone a week and half later on the Saturday of the party, his action can be read as a patriarchal execution of punishment on a transgressive female body; in fact, a *doubly* transgressive female body, for it is transgressive in both sidestepping masculine domination and crossing the homosexual/heterosexual divide. In a Foucaultian sense, rape becomes a mechanism for *disciplining* women whose sexual behaviour contravenes patriarchal codes of acceptable female sexuality. In Basi's actions, we find both "the ceremony of power and ... the deployment of force" (Foucault 1977: 184) by which Moipone is objectified.

The point being made here is that sexual violence is more than just a violent performance of masculinity for social acceptance into the cult of hegemonic masculinity. It also underpins the collusion of gender, class and sexuality in forcing women's bodies into the service of patriarchy. Moipone's rape is motivated by Basi's deep resentment of Moipone's "lesbian" inclinations towards Ole. In the words of Ratele (2011: 406), "the gender of [her] sexuality bothers patriarchy". Therefore, the rape comes to serve as a "corrective" measure to reconstitute Moipone into a heterosexual woman.

At the party on the Saturday of the rape, it is apparent that Basi takes as an insult to his sexuality Moipone's equally open display of sexual attraction for Ole. As they leave the party, Moipone "climbed in the front seat of the car. Then she quickly stepped out and gave Ole a hug before going back in" (129). This action not only dents Basi's sense of conquest, but effectively suggests Moipone's direct abrogation of the sexual order by which his society operates. Even Naledi acknowledges that "it wasn't what was supposed to happen" (129). Moipone's suggestive preference for lesbian intimacy relegates heterosexual norms to secondary position. Her seemingly innocent hug of Ole is seen by the entire crowd at the party as a sign of women threatening a fundamental principle by which an entire system functions: the principle of heterosexual masculine domination, to the exclusion of every other form of sexuality. The consternation this threat causes for Basi in particular is conveyed in Naledi's words: "Even I felt the sting when my brother cheerfully

said, ‘Sharp, Ole!’ then stopped and asked politely, ‘Do you want to come with us? You could sit in the back with Nedi?’” (129). The sharp sting in Basi’s voice reflects, not just his present anger, but an overflow of rage that has built up since the Wednesday of the shopping ten days ago. Now shortly after the trio gets to Basi’s house, Basi rapes Moipone, suggesting a direct link between sexual violence and masculine anxieties over the “intrusion” of lesbian and bisexual women into the social space.

There are two points being made here. Firstly, because lesbianism threatens the heterosexual order, sexual violence becomes the tool with which to “normalise” lesbian women. Rape then exerts what Foucault (1977: 184) calls “a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish”. Secondly, because bisexuality threatens the homosexuality/heterosexuality binary, sexual violence becomes the means by which bisexual women are *disciplined* for transgressing this binary. In the light of these two points, I argue that the timing of Moipone’s rape reveals a desperate attempt by Basi to restore a phallographic order sustained by heterosexual masculinity. We come to understand “the time of the now” (Benjamin, quoted in Butler 2008: 20), which is the rape, by understanding the way in which temporalities converge, an understanding “necessary for any complex description of [the] present” (Butler 2008: 20). Another important time in the novel which illuminates the intersection of gender, race, class and sexuality in the sexual violation of women is the Saturday of Basi’s rugby match.

### **The Saturday of the Rugby Match: The Female Body as a Site for Revenge**

The third and final way in which the timing of sexual violence in *This Book Betrays my Brother* is significant is its illumination of the interconnection between male sexual violence and the racist humiliation of black men. It is exactly a week earlier, on the Saturday before Moipone’s rape, that Basi is humiliated in public by being refused the opportunity to play a rugby match which, as noted in the previous section, is crucial to his advancement as a national rugby player. Regardless of his position as the captain of his school’s team, Basi is unfairly put out of this important game because “the other team declared they wouldn’t play with the Black guy” (116). Basi leaves the rugby field dejected, disappointed, but most of all infuriated, having finally come to the realisation that rugby is a white game. In a discussion of identity politics in post-apartheid South Africa, Lynda Spencer (2009: 76) points out that “in a liberated South Africa, the polarizations produced and maintained under apartheid continue to exist” for young black people. Naledi’s conversation with Basi later on reveals the extent to which the maintenance of apartheid

polarisations through rugby's resistance to racial transformation creates in Basi feelings of betrayal, worthlessness and self-pity:

"I'm the captain. I've stuck my neck out for a lot of those blokes," he later said – more to himself than to me.

"Why didn't the coach say anything?" I asked – and this I still wonder about. Basi, at this, shook his head. It's the closest I've seen him come to crying.

(116)

Basi's reaction suggests his broken spirit, a spirit crushed by the racist politics of school sports. The public humiliation affects his masculine pride because it suggests that he is less of a man, and even less of a sportsman, because he is black. This is where gender and race collude to create fertile grounds for male violence. In Basi's case, the violence takes on a sexual shape, since Moipone, the girl for whom Basi has affection, is a witness to his public humiliation. Having not fully recovered from the humiliation of Ole publicly courting Moipone on the Wednesday just past, Basi's fragile ego is still in need of mending, only for the rugby match to squash it completely.

Basi's anger builds up throughout the week, and by the following Saturday his pent-up emotions have accumulated into a destructive force that is unleashed on Moipone mercilessly, as if raping her is a means of avenging himself and restoring his black dignity. It is quite significant how Naledi's description of the rape links sports and violent sex:

His voice is a very strange cross between soothing and commanding. He is moving with a brutish force that I have only seen him in when he plays sports. He is so focussed, unaware of anything else around him. His eyes narrow as if he is facing an opponent in a game – or a fight. He seems unaware of her even as he places his hand firmly over her mouth. His face is up, looking somewhere above her, behind her.

(135)

Basi's brutish and forceful penetration of Moipone is compared to a sports contest in which he tries to outplay his opponent. In sports activities, men are often highly competitive and resistant to any threats to what has been termed their "fragile masculine identities" (Messner, quoted in Crous 2006: 23). Thus, figuratively, Moipone's body becomes the rugby field on which Basi attempts to outmanoeuvre his opponent – Ole in this case – by taking forcefully that which he perceives as his ultimate trophy.

Murray (2017: 2) notes that "feminist engagements with gender, time and temporality ... shed light on the extent to which women's experiences continue to be shaped by temporally and spatially located constructions of gender". In the light of this argument, one can infer that by raping Moipone on the Saturday following the rugby match, Basi not only attempts to transfer his pain onto her body, but also subconsciously seeks to enforce on her the same humiliation he felt on the rugby field the Saturday before. It is as if he

is saying to Moipone: “I want you to know what it feels like when you are deprived of something you really want”. We see in the rape then a “reproduction of a violated and violating masculinity” (Graham 2012: 168). Looking at the time frame between his public humiliation and his own humiliation of Moipone, the two events happening a week apart of each other, it can be argued that Basi’s experience of racism dents his masculine self-image to the point that he desires to inflict pain on another. Sexual violence in this instance is a means of revenge by which the racially denigrated black man expresses his anger against a system by violating the bodies of the more vulnerable – those beneath him – if only to regain a semblance of the power he once wielded.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, *This Book Betrays my Brother* projects timing in the case of male sexual violence as fundamental in unpacking the intersectionalities of gender, race, class and sexuality, since within the novel’s temporalities are embedded notions of the female body as the territory on which masculinities contest for domination, the transgressive female body as the object of heterosexual disciplining into conformity with the heteronormative order, and the female body as a site of revenge for the racial denigration of black men. As this article has illustrated, Moipone’s rape is not coincidental; neither is it simply the “unfortunate” outcome of irrational thinking. The novel’s foregrounding of time constructs the rape as a deliberately orchestrated act emanating from a mind-set that is socially conditioned to be masculinist, race-conscious, class-conscious and sexuality-constrained. In the epilogue of the novel where the temporality shifts back to the present of Naledi’s adult life, Basi finally admits to his sister that he was wrong to have raped Moipone and that his social condition was severely faulty: “It got out of hand .... You’re not taught to read women’s minds. You’re taught that they want whatever you want” (179). Molohe’s feminising of time by not adopting the linearity of patriarchal time but rather presenting time in its fluidity where the past is a constant presence in the present allows the reader then to understand sexual violence in its complexity. The novel constructs the internalisation of patriarchal values on gender, race, class and sexuality as fundamentally sustaining a rape culture. Within the patriarchal status quo, women’s bodies are brutally violated, violently dehumanised and viciously objectified. Molohe’s novel advocates that we see rape “as more than a moment, a singular event” (Gqola 2015: 22). As this analysis has demonstrated, we need to see rape as *a constellation of moments linked in time and space* to maintain a system of male dominance and women’s service to patriarchy. Only then can we devise appropriate feminist measures to end it.



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