

Deconstructing and Re-mapping the Phallic in *Toasted Penis and Cheese*

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Abstract

In the context of sexuality and power in African literature, a kind of writing the body, that is, to bring the body into play as a narrative paradigm as a site of pain, anxiety, conflict, subversion, recreation, and emancipation is what I find most suitable for describing my close reading of African women's writing in Southern Africa. Corporeality is a central agent in the constitution of female identities and subjectivities in the works of writers such as Yvonne Vera, Bessie Head, Zoë Wicomb, and Dianne Case, just to name a few from the southern African region. The following article deals with Dianne Case's *Toasted Penis and Cheese*, a novel which focuses on the crux of gender stereotyping, closely connected with sexual (in)activity. The body is central in the protagonist's story. Jennifer explores this along the line of what I call "the distressing body," "the body as discovery," and "the recreated body". Her distress is not only uttered to explain her torments but, above all, to underpin stereotype behaviour and alleged character traits. Likewise Trinh T. Minh-ha's hypothesis: "to use stereotypes in order to attack stereotypes is [...] an effective strategy" (qtd. in Gqola 2001, 48), Jennifer's focus takes on a rebellious function which never leaves out humour, wit, and irony.

"[...] they say size does not matter."

"That's a myth to protect the male ego," Veronica argues knowledgeably. "Of course size matters, believe me, I'm a big girl, I should know. I'd rather go to bed with a good book and my vibrator. And I don't need to get up early to make my vibrator breakfast or fetch him an ashtray."
Dianne Case, *Toasted Penis and Cheese* (1999, 178-179)

Introduction

In *Toasted Penis and Cheese* (1999)¹, a novel written by the South African writer Dianne Case, the protagonist's personal revelations, are dedicated to the alleged perfect man: James Bond. Though Jennifer, the protagonist of the story, suffers from depression, she approaches rigid attitudes towards sex and sexuality, gender roles, and what are considered "desired feminine attributes" with light-hearted pleasantry and mockery.

The novel stands out from most works written by African women in South Africa. Similar to Rayda Jacobs's *Sachs Street* (2001) which focuses on women's lives in the Muslim community of Bo-Kaap, a district of Cape Town, and which refers in the first third of the novel to the latent conflict of race matters, but which in the remaining two-thirds focuses on the problem of religious fundamentalism²; and similar to *Confessions of a Gambler* (2003) by the same author, which centres around a Muslim woman's lost loves and her compulsive gambling, *Toasted Penis and Cheese* does not delve into the consequences and legacy of apartheid, the search for one's roots, or the consequences of apartheid's violence, of violence perpetuating violence – a topic which is dominant in novels such as Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story* (2000), Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother* (1998), and other works published in South Africa during the 1990s. What is at the heart of *Toasted Penis and Cheese* is the crux of gender stereotyping, closely connected with sexual (in)activity.

The body is central in Jennifer's story. She explores this along the line of what can be described as the distressing body, the body as discovery, and the recreated body. The distress, however, is not only uttered to explain her torments, but above all to underpin stereotype behaviour or alleged character traits. Likewise Trinh T. Minh-ha's hypothesis: "to use stereotypes in order to attack stereotypes is [...] an effective strategy" (qtd. in Gqola 2001, 48), Jennifer's focus takes on a rebellious function which never leaves out humour, wit, and irony. She dedicates her story to the so-called perfect man, James Bond, a man who tackles all disasters, never fails, and who is the epitome of desired manhood.

¹ For easy reference, the following abbreviation for citations is used: *TPC*.

² The character Khadidja practices an open and uncomplicated view of Islamic religion whereas her lover, Storm, tries to force Christianity on her in which he fundamentally believes.

Her dedication, though, is a persiflage as all the men in her story are everything else but James Bond. To her daughter she has once mentioned that her husband, Raymond, from whom she is now divorced, was James Bond to her when their love was still new, but he later turns out to be an “insensitive [...] bastard [...] and an] [e]go on the loose” (TPC 44) who still drops in for a short love-making on the rug with his ex-wife. Peter, Jennifer’s brother-in-law, who suddenly becomes an object of desire for her, is shown later in the course of the story to be a bleak example of lust. Clive, whom she met at a party, has to remain a platonic lover, as he is HIV-positive. In the end of the story one notes that James Bond, the epitome of what is considered a hero, has to make way to a phantasmal woman called Genevieve who, as Jennifer notes, “loves herself completely so she does not lust after the lukewarm love of a man” (TPC 242). I will come back to this transformation in the course of this essay.

The Distressing Body

Representing women with a headless body was a pleurably applied metaphor: the headless woman, senseless – no(n)sense, the crazy, the mad, the muted, the castrated, the lacking ‘Other,’ the dismembered. Still to date one sees women displayed in arts as either headless and/or with a missing abdomen from the navel downward on exhibition fairs, in magicians’ performances or circuses. It is exactly this picture in which Jennifer conceives her body from an outside perspective. She sees herself dismembered. Her head and torso roam independently from the lower part of her body:

“While the headless half is trying most futilely to keep its feet on the ground, the head and top part is floating in outer space somewhere looking for its missing half. [...] I am trying so desperately not to feel that way. Every morning before I get out of bed I tell myself that I am a whole person, courtesy of my psychologist, of course.” (TPC 9)

She feels this way as her mother and sister persistently insist that she is handicapped because she is without a man. Decent women have to be married or engaged, they cannot be on the loose. And indeed, Jennifer runs havoc. Her hormones, she tells us, are overproducing and her story begins with the confession:

“I have a phallic preoccupation. It is the most distracting obsession. Everything I see or touch makes me think of a penis [...]” (*TPC 1*).

She feels unsettled about her body’s reaction as she fights against her urge to seduce her brother-in-law, Peter, who is busy repairing her kitchen sink. While Peter is attending to a blockage in the pipe bend, she fantasises, staring at his behind, about their love-making in the kitchen and delves into every detail. The male becomes the object of a female gaze. The contradiction of picturing women on the one hand as having no desire, of being passive lovers, and on the other as animalistic or perverse is ironically subverted in this scene. Jennifer introduces a good and a bad angel who constantly hold a conversation with her conscience. In the midst of her sex fantasies, the bad angel scolds: “Thank the Almighty that you are a woman and not a man, little sister! [...] What would you have done with a hard-on the size your mind played with right now?” But, Jennifer likes the idea: “A woman with a penis ... interesting ...” she says (*TPC 14*).

On her good days, Jennifer takes pleasure in sarcastically looking at things from a man’s perspective. As to marriage, which she considers is a farce and “an institution designed for men,” she muses on the blissful life she would have if she were a man. She praises women’s sacrificing, their having no other interests than comforting their husbands, being truly devoted angels in the house (*TPC 3*). On the other hand Jennifer suffers and desperately needs a man, not to marry, but – as she ironically puts it – to compensate for the overproduction of her hormones and to fight against the depression which persistently haunts her and lets her fall into a deep, dark, and bottomless pit (*TPC 43*). In her desperation, she has sex with her ex-husband and feels devastated and unclean afterwards. She tries to wash her feelings of guilt away just as she scrubs her body after her visits to the psychologist. The performance of excessive washing hints at the effort to get through to the inner core of self in order to cleanse/erase that which is considered as dirty/guilt. It is guilt for having to live with double standards. On the one hand, she is entrapped within stereotype constrictions and acts in just the very same way – she lets her ex-husband use her, she tries to conform to beauty norms which have a terrorising effect on her, she is the decent woman though she would love

to let herself go loose. On the other hand, she fantasises about non-conformist behaviour, fantasies which dominate her life to a considerable extent and sometimes even take on the form of maddening scenes. In a flashback she relates the day when she came to know of her husband's infidelity. In a fit of shock and unlimited hatred she shattered plates, cups, glasses, and turned the kitchen upside-down. This was the first time that the angels appeared. She remembers that they did not like the idea of her husband coming home and finding the kitchen in an utter mess – he should not realise how much he had upset his wife. The two angels started to clean up the kitchen and to put everything back in place while Jennifer could relax with a cup of tea. From that day they promised her to be there whenever she needed them, and as of then they permanently accompany her days and daydreams. The next morning when she entered the kitchen everything was clean. No broken plates or cups, everything was in its place. Was she mad? Indeed, yes she was and still is – at least this is what she says other people think: “[E]veryone thinks I am mad” (*TPC* 22). Even her best friend, Veronica, is of the opinion that she is neurotic. Jennifer thus assumes: “Maybe I am. Maybe it's part of my craziness, my insanity” (*TPC* 247). She suffers from depression and panic attacks. She then feels herself “sinking fast,” her body heavily perspiring, her “mouth uncomfortably dry,” her breath coming in “short, erratic gaps,” followed by a “frightening cloud, trapping [... her], holding [... her] so tightly in its invisible grip, threatening never to let [...] go,” and she hears a voice “laughing loudly [...] somewhere far off as if through a vacuum,” it is a voice only she can hear (*TPC* 22). She holds onto the wall to prevent losing the ground under her feet. On occasions she tries to flee this awful cloud which grows into a monster and then, when she thinks of having escaped, it vanishes into the ground and grows like an octopus or a python making her immobile and paralysed. “I run away with my sanity. I run away from insanity” (*TPC* 86) is how she puts it and when a panic attack subsides she is one more time left to bear its mortification. This phobia even follows her into the hairdresser's salon:

“She [the woman who washes her hair] scratched my scalp with her long, French-manicured, false nails and pulled my hair through her fingers as if she enjoyed it. I imagined raw, inflamed pathways forming on my scalp

and it took all my self-control to stop myself from screaming and running out of the salon." (TPC 61)

Panic attacks, a form of *angst*, can accompany the act of fleeing as much as they can be a reaction to the cognitive realisation of being in a state of hopelessness (Benesch et al. 1997, 227). Jennifer tries to escape this hopelessness by repeatedly playing with the thought of suicide. Just to turn her back on all that which is troubling her and walk out of that door into nothingness has a great appeal to her. In those situations, when she was so close to death, she could feel and smell it with all her organs. She definitely believed that, so she says, death offered such a powerful freedom that she started to long for it so badly (TPC, 31-32). On her bad days she has severe difficulties coping with life; on her good days she rebels against patriarchal stereotyping and oppression.

The discourse between the virtuous, good angel (the super ego; the moralistic conscience) and the naughty, bad angel (a representation of the desiring and needing, and therefore dismissed as „bad“ ego) juxtapose the so-called ideal woman who dutifully conforms to high moral standards and the alleged disobedient woman who acts beyond conventional principles. Both influence Jennifer's thoughts and behaviour and their partly pungent conversations add to her suffering. Their views and persuasions support or dismantle stereotype opinions which go along with the characters' convictions in the novel: A woman is crippled without a man, her mother and sister knowingly tell her; Jennifer vehemently opposes, but at the same time desperately looks for Mr Right to cross her way; a woman has to be beautiful as men marry for the sake of beauty, again Jennifer vehemently opposes, but at the same time thinks she is too ugly to be loved by a man and hates her legs and bulging belly which after so many years is still "sitting on [.. her] lap, lying next to [... her] in bed, [and] following [... her] from side to side as [... she] roll[s] over" (TPC 123). She loathes her belly as it is a mocking image of pregnancy, which she will never experience again. In a flashback she recounts her post-coital bleeding which set off a hysteric reaction in her husband as he was of the opinion that her blood would contaminate him. Not asking for her opinion, he and the gynaecologist decided to tie her tubes "while," as the doctor said, "I'm in there" (TPC 71). Her husband's addressing her in the *majestatis pluralis* belittles her as a person and the

doctor ignores her totally, only speaking of his decisions by addressing her husband. This is when it all started, she remembers. At first there was a deep sadness when she thought of all the babies she could not have: the “[c]old semen would be dripping down my legs long after their father had fallen to sleep. [...] I would [...] sit in a bath of hot, salty water to kill them quicker, to put them and me out of our misery and all-consuming sadness” (TPC 74). Then she would start to swallow her husband’s sperm and fantasised how all the babies would enter her body, all alive and becoming a part of her, not being wasted and running down the drain, dead. This was the psychic part of it. The other side-effect was a corporeal one. One third of her hair fell out, she gained twenty-three kilos, and her belly started to protrude like a balloon. Without noticing, she all of a sudden realised that she has fallen into what she called “a deep, deep depression that snuffed the lights out in my soul” (TPC 75).

Jennifer also confesses that she sometimes has a phobia about being out on the streets or in a supermarket. Yet, the more she tries to dissolve the border between outer and inner space by obsessively scrubbing off the layers of her skin under the shower, the more she panics about the possibility of being invaded by the outside world. She is a vulnerable person and she dreads being vulnerable.

The right to speak, not to be oppressed in airing one’s opinion; not just to consider oneself, but also to feel as a subject, is an important element of enfranchisement and of not feeling like one’s body is drifting in two halves somewhere in a vacuum. Jennifer’s voice, however, fails when she gets those attacks – just as her voice was suppressed on the day when her husband and the gynaecologist decided on what to do with her sexual parts:

“My voice is not my own as it refuses to co-operate with my brain’s instruction to speak. I want to hear myself say something, anything, just to confirm that I am in control. But I am not. This is the confirmation, that I cannot speak, and when I do, the sounds make no sense for they are not words, just desperate sounds from a pleading voice deep, deep within. [...] This happens often when I am afraid and sometimes it happens for no reason at all.” (TPC 23)

Her voice also fails when she is being raped by a man. Taking the perspective of the raped, she portrays the rapist's body in such detail, one might get the impression she is a by-stander, detached from her body – a cinematic focusing on a sickening, violent act performed by an even more nauseating body. Her rapist is reduced to mere body parts: stale bodily odours emerging from armpits, mouth, and penis; patches of oily skin full of blackheads and pimples, inflamed and secreting puss, a frothy mouth, grunting like an animal (*TPC* 199-201).

The Body as Discovery

Jennifer's distressing body experiences a turn when she meets Clive at a party. She feels ugly and uncomfortable in her dress, but Clive does not seem to pay any attention to, what she considers, her unattractive appearance. They are both attracted to each other and their relationship develops differently than what she normally would have expected. She praises his spirit and discovers her body anew:

“He makes me feel like a woman. It's absurd, I know, since we did not go to bed, but there you have it. He makes me feel soft and feminine. He makes me feel vulnerable without that dreaded feeling of being at risk [...] He makes me smile [...]. He makes me look in the mirror with confidence [...]. I felt that I was hideously ugly – too ugly to be loved by any man. I couldn't look in the mirror without condemning myself. [...] Clive is good for me. He is beautiful and he makes me feel beautiful too, from somewhere deep down in my soul.” (*TPC* 135-137)

She becomes confident, but still fails to take an active part and is only left with her sexual fantasies. On their trip to the mountain she anticipates that this is her day, but Clive escapes every possibility. In a now or never situation she challenges him who, again, retreats from her. When Clive keeps on walking, she stays behind. She releases her all-confined self and urinates in the stream of a river: “I [...] stand in the stream, enjoying the sensation of the water running over my feet, my toes squelching into the sand [...]; the wee glistening golden in the moonlight as it joins the flow [...]” (*TPC* 173-174). She takes possession of her self and her surroundings, flings off her clothes, immerses herself in the cold water and caresses her body until she reaches an orgasm. On descending the

mountain she muses, “[s]omething happened to me on the mountain, something magical that set me free” (TPC 176).

Her relationship to her body is carefree, yet she still misses what is colloquially termed as “the real thing.” One morning, after having watched a few pornographic videos with her friend Veronica, she awakes in a surrounding which obviously hints of a night of shared sexual pleasures. She does not contemplate the night itself, but discovers that, while Veronica has found the night with her interesting and worth repeating, the morning after is like a stale hangover to her. Her description of Veronica’s breasts, nipples, and pubic hair match the decaying atmosphere of scattered empty whiskey and wine bottles, a moth floating on the stagnant water in the ice-cube bucket, the repulsive smell of cold cigarette butts, and the buzzing sound of the grey TV screen (TPC 184-185). This brief sexual encounter remains notably confined in its representation, it is not even taken into consideration as a possible alternative in spite of her questioning her dependence on men.

The relationship between her and Clive remains platonic and stays that way as he tells her the reason for his abstinence: he has AIDS. It comes as a deep shock to her, but she manages to enjoy their close friendship and to accept Clive’s bad days when he does not feel good and wants to stay alone. AIDS is a topic which remains in the dark. The story reflects the common notion of a knowing, but not talking about. When things turn out bad, the infected retreats. Clive handles AIDS in a matter-of-fact way, very sterile, very distant. Nevertheless, is he a man read against the grain. He is, in another way, very sensitive and caring. Jennifer learns from him that life and death go hand in hand, that love can be spiritual and that a moment can hold all the magic. Her story could end here – but it does not. Jennifer does not hide from the fact that no matter how fulfilling platonic relationships may be, she may still have sexual desires. The confession she has made right at the beginning of her story is still true and she now reveals the secret of how she comes to terms with it when the desire becomes too persistent:

“I have a creative brainwave. There are still all those cucumbers at home. I will take one of the condoms and put it on a cucumber and work myself over like that. And when I am finished I will break the cucumber open

and rub it all over my belly, like spent sperm. [...] I found the experience liberating [...].” (TPC 204, 211-212)

The Recreated Body

On her forty-second birthday Jennifer decides to write a book and on that day she has a dream. Through a window she sees in the midst of a huge audience a beautiful woman called Genevieve, a highly successful writer, who is autographing her books. Suddenly the woman turns to the window and looks Jennifer right in the eye. Jennifer realises that she is Genevieve. She panics and wants to hide her “huge freakish abdomen” (TPC 232), but realises that there is no stomach. On awakening, she decides that if the book becomes successful, she will have a tummy tuck. Not because men will find her more attractive with a flat stomach, as Clive muses, but because she will find herself more attractive. She wants to please herself. She takes the Genevieve-dream into her days. The window pane – other than in Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) where the female protagonist, Lyndall, tries to shatter the glass with her fists – does not induce a barrier symbolising the limits of woman’s authority who is constantly confronted with oppression and affliction, but it is a symbol of progress.³ Jennifer’s flight through fantasy is not escapist, but strategic. Genevieve becomes not only her ego-ideal, a model which through its principle character contributes to her personality development, but she also incorporates her: “I am Genevieve. I am a new woman. Genevieve loves herself completely so she does not lust after the lukewarm love of a man” (TPC 242). This is how Jennifer decides to cope and turns to speak about herself in the third person when referring to herself as Genevieve: “Genevieve does not have a decent sex life. [...] Maybe she should in the meantime become empowered financially so that she can buy the services of call-boys. She’d like that” (TPC 242). Until then, Jennifer/Genevieve has found, as she puts it, “a good compromise for a sex-life that no man can match” (TPC 243) and she goes on to describe a comic scene which threatens to drift off into an abstruse performance:

³ As to the symbol of window glass in Olive Schreiner’s novel cf. McClintock (1995), “Olive Schreiner,” 264.

“I fill her bed with cucumbers and she lies on them naked, rolling from one side of the bed to the other. Sometimes she dresses them up in condoms, glow-in-the-dark condoms in neon blue, neon pink, neon yellow, neon green, neon orange, neon red, neon whatever else they come in! Genevieve feels that she has hundreds of penises at her disposal. And she gives them names. ‚Stop rubbing yourself up against Angus, Rustum, you kinky so and what! Enough now Clyde, give Mark a chance. I love you James, you are my favourite’.“ (TPC 243)

They become objects of her desire and as in the past when Jennifer swallowed her husband’s sperm in a grotesque anticipation of all those unborn babies having no option to live and becoming a part of her, she now fantasises in a cannibalistic illusion about her penises being sliced for a toasted cheese sandwich – an illusion which, so I argue, alludes to the “monster/curiosa” discourse (Holdenried 2001, 123). However, in Jennifer’s context it is to be understood as a subversive discourse since the monster/curiosa discourse in fact is known to offer no basis for justification. It is more a product of a “collective phantasm”⁴ as Michaela Holdenried remarks; women were closely linked with cannibalism. She gives examples: Menninger Staden, a prisoner of the Tupinambas (Red Indians) who allegedly witnessed cannibalism during his detention underpins his reports with self-made wood engravings. All engravings show an explicit accentuation of women having an active part in the preparations of cannibalistic ceremonies. The copperplate engravings of Theodor de Bry also display women in the preparation of the festivities and in the later feasting on the cooked or roasted body parts. The sexual organs are reserved for women. These engravings latently show, so Holdenried wrote, that women are the ones who initiate and profit from these ceremonies; men play a compliant role only. Their depiction of hanging breasts and protruding bellies closely link women to hags (Holdenried 2001, 129-138). Their bodies seem to be engrossing, engulfing, incorporating.⁵ As Holdenried remarks, these traits become obvious in the depiction of witches during the 16th century: “The therein

⁴ My own translation from the German language: “eines kollektiven Phantasmas” (Holdenried 2001, 129).

⁵ Holdenried (2001, 138) uses the term “soghaft einverleibend”.

expressed form of sexual violence, which is effected by women, aims at castration.” (Holdenried 2001, 138)⁶ It may be assumed, I speculate that Jennifer’s fantasising about recycling the penis(es) as a savouring garnish for a toasted cheese sandwich cannot be deduced to the common interpretation of incorporation, that is, incorporating the cucumbers which symbolise penis(es) which, in turn, signify the phallic. Her fantasising more pointedly displays a metaphoric act of aggression aiming not only at castrating the phallic, this is the male (master)discourse or the “privileged signifier of difference on a linguistic and a bodily level” (Campbell 2000, 78), but at pleurably cutting it into slices in an effort to deconstruct and re-map this discourse, a mode which runs through Jennifer’s story telling. She addresses the reader with a grotesque approach: “Can you imagine going into a take-away café and ordering: ‘Can I have a penis and cheese sandwich please, toasted on wholewheat, and a can of coke?’” (TPC 247-248). Thus, instead of linking Jennifer and her potential copy cats with the hags and witches of past centuries, her cannibalistic fantasising might, in a figurative sense, hint at their having a lot more in common with the so-called cannibal of Oswald de Andrade, as described in Holdenried’s essay, who turns out to be “an energetic figure, whose menace has something totally non-psychological carnivalesque: [...] a self-secure representative of cannibal reason takes up the word at last after European reason has destroyed itself” (Holdenried 2001, 140).⁷ That is to say, the “cannibal reason” of the so-called hags and witches of today (Jennifer and her likes) anticipates with the figurative cannibalistic act the fallen patriarchal, phallic reason.

As I have demonstrated above, in crossing the bodily territories of distress, Jennifer discovers her body and self. It becomes a space of recreation. Yet, she is also confronted with the limits of this discovery.

⁶ My own translation from the German language: “Die darin ausgedrückte Form sexueller Gewalt, die von Frauen ausgeübt wird, zielt auf die Kastration” (Holdenried 2001, 138).

⁷ The German original runs: “Der Menschenfresser wird [...] zu einer vitalistischen Figur, deren Bedrohlichkeit etwas ganz unpsychologisch Karnevaleskes hat: Mit ihm ergreift endlich ein selbstbewußter Vertreter kannibalistischer Vernunft das Wort, nachdem sich die europäische Vernunft selbst vernichtet hatte” (Holdenried 2001, 140).

However, she finds a way to live up to depression and panic attacks, by playfully subverting that which threatens her most: the phallic which metaphorically stands for the phallogocentric discourse and violence under which she suffered severely. Besides her engaging personal voice, her story includes a plurality of women's voices, a concept which Michail Bakhtin described as polyphony or dialogic and which offers different versions and interpretations of reality (Birk and Neumann 2002, 132): the good angel; the bad angel; her friend Veronica; her mother; her sister Melanie; and to a certain extent Genevieve who has not a voice of her own, but receives a voice through Jennifer who uses her as a medium. Whereas the good angel, her mother and Melanie function as a deterrent to what is socially unacceptable, the bad angel, Veronica, and Genevieve are iconoclasts, that is, nonconformists. Though her mother, her sister Melanie, and the good angel are not counter-productive in their divergent voicing. In supporting the phallic discourse, the grand narrative, which in contrast with the other iconoclast voices of the bad angel, Veronica, and Genevieve receives an ironic tint, the very discourse is in fact attacked, deconstructed, and re-mapped.

As to Jennifer's repeated reference to her madness, a madness constructed and implied by a repressive and patriarchal culture and described as a typical characteristic of the so-called woman's psychology, also hints at, in borrowing Odile Cazenave's words, "another type of behaviour, that of the [...] heroine who refuses to play an active role or even participate in basic social functions" (Cazenave 2000, 68).⁸

This conduct, however, is decisively different from the madness which befalls Elizabeth, the protagonist in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* (1973) – hers is a mode to make healing possible, Jennifer's may, in the first place, be read as a purely strategic means which gives her the opportunity to play the card of madness in the complete awareness that this allows her to do anything in actions and in words on account of her 'malaise.'

Cazenave's claim for francophone African women's writing is also true for Jennifer:

⁸ On this issue also cf. Cazenave 2000, 76-77; 80; 199.

“[b]y denouncing the female body as object, by exploring the body as an erotic zone, a zone of pleasure, but also as a zone of suffering and a privileged site for self-knowledge, [... she has] broken the silence to create a new space. [She ...] now demands her right to pleasure, to orgasm, refusing to be only man’s plaything in the satisfaction of his pleasure.” (Cazenave 2000, 140; 159)

This notion also reflects Luce Irigaray’s and Hélène Cixous’ view on a woman’s self-government and self-identification, taking herself from the marginal position of the abject into the centre of, what Cazenave refers to, the “sexualization of space” (2000, 195).

Zusammenfassung

Writing the body, das Schreiben über den Körper, ist in der Literatur des südlichen Afrika für afrikanische Autorinnen ein geeignetes Mittel, um die Mechanismen „Sexualität und Macht“ zu beschreiben. Der Körper wird als narratives Paradigma eingesetzt, als ein Ort des Schmerzes, der Angst, des Konflikts, der Subversion, der Wiedererschaffung und der Selbstbestimmung. In den Werken beispielsweise von Yvonne Vera, Bessie Head, Zoë Wicomb oder Dianne Case spielt Körperlichkeit eine zentrale Rolle in der Formierung weiblicher Identität und in der Subjektfindung. Der nachfolgende Beitrag befasst sich mit dem Roman *Toasted Penis and Cheese* (1999) der südafrikanischen Autorin Dianne Case; ein Roman, der ungeschminkt und pointiert die bewussten und unbewussten Mechanismen des *gender stereotyping* bloßlegt. Der Körper zieht sich wie ein roter Faden durch die Erzählungen der Protagonistin. Ihr Leid fungiert nicht nur, um ihr Leiden zu erklären, sondern – vor allem –, um stereotypes Verhalten und vermeintliche Charakterattribute zu beschreiben. Jennifer nimmt eine rebellische Position ein, ganz im Sinne der von Trinh T. Minh-ha geäußerten Hypothese: „to use stereotypes in order to attack stereotypes is [...] an effective strategy“ (siehe Gqola 2001, 48); ihre kritische Zwischenbilanz ist geistreich, humorvoll und zuweilen durchgreifend grotesk.

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