



Edited by
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ELLEKE BOEHMER

Versions of Yearning and Dissent: The Troping of Desire
in Yvonne Vera and Tsitsi Dangarembga | 113

UNOMA N. AZUAH

The Emerging Lesbian Voice in Nigerian Feminist Literature | 129

ALEXIE TCHEUYAP

African Cinema and Representations of (Homo)Sexuality | 143

TAINED BODIES

SUSAN ARNDT

Boundless Whiteness? Feminism and White Women
in the Mirror of African Feminist Writing | 157

JESSICA HEMMINGS

Altered Surfaces. The *Ambi Generation* of Yvonne Vera's
Without a Name and *Butterfly Burning* | 173

SARAH NUTTALL

Dark Anatomies in Arthur Nortje's Poetry | 187

ALIOUNE SOW

Forbidden Bodies: Relocation and Empowerment
in Williams Sassine's Novels | 207

VIOLATED BODIES

AKACHI ADIMORA-EZEIGBO

From the Horse's Mouth: The Politics of Remembrance
in Women's Writing on the Nigerian Civil War | 221

MARION PAPE

Nigerian War Literature by Women:
From Civil War to Gender War | 231

MARTINA KOPF

Writing Sexual Violence: Words and Silences
in Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue* | 243

LUCY VALERIE GRAHAM

Reading the Unspeakable: Rape in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* | 255

Notes on Contributors and Editors | 269

Notes for Contributors | 273

Altered Surfaces

The *Ambi Generation* of Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name* and *Butterfly Burning*

It was 1977, freedom was skin deep but joyous and tantalising. *Ambi*. [...] Freedom was a translucent nose, ready to drop. Freedom left one with black-skinned ears. A mask. A carnival. Reality had found a double, turbulent and final.¹

YVONNE VERA'S *WITHOUT A NAME* and *Butterfly Burning* both depict the use of skin-bleaching creams. The *Ambi generation*, as *Without a Name* coins it, refers to *Ambi*, the licensed trademark for the commercial brand of skin care, many of which contain chemicals to lighten the colour of one's skin. A recent advertisement for the product promised: "AMBI believes that when you look better, you will feel better. With a full range of skin care products for your various needs, you too will discover 'Skin Care That's More Than Skin Deep' with AMBI Products."² But *ambi-* as a prefix means 'both' or 'on both sides' (OED). It appears in words such as

¹ Yvonne Vera, *Without a Name* (Harare: Baobab, 1994): 26.

² www.texasbeautysupplies.com/amskincapro.html [accessed 10 February 2002].

ambiguous, which is defined under subjective usage as “Of persons: Wavering or uncertain as to course or conduct; hesitating, doubtful” and “Of things: Wavering or uncertain in direction or tendency; of doubtful or uncertain issue” (OED), and *ambivalence*, which is defined as “the coexistence in one person of contradictory emotions or attitudes (as love or hatred) towards a person or thing” (OED). Hence, the commercial brand name *Ambi* refers to a sense of doubling or multiplicity.

Skin-bleaching creams such as *Ambi* remove the natural pigmentation of the skin. The process is one of reduction rather than addition, destroying the pigmentation present and disrupting the creation of further pigmentation. Additive processes in cosmetics alter the colour or texture of the body’s surface through creams and powders that are applied to the surface of the skin. They remain on the surface and function through an act of concealing, rather than physically altering the surface in which they are applied. Reductive processes, such as creams that contain hydroquinone, penetrate the porous surface of the skin and physically alter pigmentation at the cellular level. A product that enters the body’s systems in order to change surface colour as opposed to a compound suspended above the surface of the skin, concealing but not altering the substance of the skin itself, is a dramatically different cosmetic practice seeking the same external result.

The fundamental difference between the two actions cannot be seen on the exterior skin, for it is established in the mind. One seeks a permanent and irreversible change, while the other allows two layers, one temporary and one permanent, to coexist. One is an act of erasure, the other an act of decorating. Erasure, permanent and irreversible change, is driven by a desire deeper than vanity. It is a need to not only be perceived as another, but to embody that other. Frantz Fanon defines the “epidermal schema” as responsible for the “internalization – or, better, the epidermalization – of this inferiority.”³ Francette Pacteau notes that Fanon’s term embodies “the reduction of another identity to its corporeal surface.”⁴ The “epidermal schema” recognizes that it is upon the skin, the surface of the self, that all manner of cowardice, greed, deceit and laziness have been projected. It is also upon the surface that humanity’s weaknesses have, with ignorance and prejudice, manifest self-loathing and denial in others.

Skin bleaching illustrates the idea that the body’s skin is no more than a surface. This myopic attention to the exterior transforms skin into a type of cloth. Like cloth, skin becomes a vehicle to drape and present an exterior

³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, tr. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove, 1967): 11.

⁴ Francette Pacteau, *The Symptom of Beauty* (London: Reaktion, 1994): 137.

identity to the world. Skin bleaching then amplifies the superficial rather than the structural, surface instead of substance. Numerous scholars have noted the similarities of cloth and skin, predominantly for the purpose of analyzing cloth in relation to skin. Renee Baert notes: "Clothing is a second skin, a membrane that separates and joins, that surrounds and divides. Like skin, clothing is a border."⁵ Ann Hamlyn writes: "The textile is always, it seems, a surrogate skin, a body at one remove, placed at a comfortable distance, even a given without a corpse."⁶ Ann Wilson remarks: "A part of the strangeness of dress is that it links the biological body to the social being, and public to private."⁷ Joanne Eicher, in her inclusive definition, describes dress as

modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body includ[ing] obvious items placed on the body (the supplements) such as garments, jewellery and accessories, and also *changes in colour, texture, smell, and shape made to the body directly*.⁸ [my emphasis]

If the textile is a second or surrogate skin, then Eicher's definition allows for skin to be read as a form of clothing; the first and original textile to cover the body.

In the context of Vera's narratives, the handling of skin as a form of dress is inspired by two passages. *Without a Name* describes skin, in place of the expected cloth, falling from Mazvita's distressed body:

Her skin peeled off, parting from her body. She had suffered so much that her skin threatened to fall pitilessly to the ground. It hung from below her neck, from her arms, from her whole silent body.⁹

Similarly, in *Butterfly Burning* Phephelaphi eventually chooses to end her life, shedding her skin as easily as a cloth:

The flames wrap the human form, arms, knees that are herself, a woman holding her pain like a torn blanket. [...] just her skin peeling off like rind as the fire buzzes unforbidden over her body. [...] Vanishing: the sound of her breathing swallowed by the flame, skin sliding off thin as a promise.¹⁰

⁵ Renee Baert, "The Dress: Bodies and Boundaries," in *Reinventing Textiles*, vol. 2: *Gender & Identity*, ed. Janis Jefferies (Winchester: Telos Art, 2001): 21.

⁶ Anne Hamlyn, "Textures of Memory," in *n.paradoxa* 6 (2000): 42.

⁷ Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (Los Angeles: U of California P, 1985): 2.

⁸ Joanne Eicher, *Dress and Ethnicity: Changes Across Space and Time* (Oxford: Berg, 1995): 298.

⁹ Vera, *Without a Name*, 4.

¹⁰ Yvonne Vera, *Butterfly Burning* (Harare: Baobab, 1998): 128–29.

While Mazvita and Phephelaphi's exposure is seen as a reaction to the harshness and cruelty of the world in which they attempt to exist, the *Ambi Generation* experience a self-willed mutilation:

The people had been efficient accomplices to the skinning of their faces, to the unusual ritual of their disinheritance. [...] They had lain in rows in the searing sun while their skin fell from their faces, pulled and pulled away.¹¹

Pauline Dodgson also notes the connection in *Without a Name*, remarking, "Mazvita's bodily disintegration is matched by the peeling away of skin as people in a state of false consciousness literally attempt to buy white masks."¹² In both books skin peels to represent the mental and physical traumas in a character's face.

The conflation of skin and cloth reveals a set of associations invested equally in both surfaces: protection, modesty, identity, and the boundary or margin. By virtue of their location, cloth and skin delineate margins. Conscious and unconscious alteration to either surface can be read as an attempt to control and even redirect the identity through which the world judges, celebrates and discriminates against. Mary Douglas illuminates the importance of the margin and offers explanation for the charged and exchangeable roles of cloth and skin when she writes:

All margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolise especially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind. [...] The mistake is to treat bodily margins in isolation from all other margins.¹³

Ann Wilson alludes to Douglas's sense of the corporeal margin:

If the body with its open orifices is itself dangerously ambiguous, then dress, which is an extension of the body yet not quite part of it, not only links that body to the social world, but also more clearly separates the two. Dress is the frontier between the self and the not self.¹⁴

¹¹ Vera, *Without a Name*, 27.

¹² Pauline Dodgson, "Coming in From the Margins: Gender in Contemporary Zimbabwean Writing," in *Post-Colonial Literatures: Expanding the Canon*, ed. Deborah L. Madsen (London: Pluto, 1999): 99.

¹³ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978): 121.

¹⁴ Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*, 3.

In the case of skin bleaching, skin evokes the margin on multiple levels. As membrane, frontier, boundary and border, skin defines the space between the interior organs and the exterior world of air, water, and contagion. The structure of skin, constantly growing new layers and shedding the old, produces a margin that is at once expendable and vital. Visually, it is from skin that the outward self is revealed to the world. Skin that has undergone bleaching projects two selves into the public world: the fabricated and the natural.

The trope of skin bleaching in Vera's fiction can be accessed through the metaphor of cloth. Thus it seems appropriate, but is in no way meant to dilute the severity of the topic, to draw on a text entitled *Color and Fiber*. Written as a guide to dyeing textiles, the authors introduce the topic with the following thoughts:

The phenomenon of color depends on four factors: the presence of light; colorants (pigments and dyes) contained in substances; the quality of surfaces and structures that may or may not contain colorants; and the mechanism of color perception contained in the viewer's eye and brain.¹⁵

The presence of light

In the communities depicted in *Under the Tongue* and *Butterfly Burning* the "presence [and absence] of light" exposes a racially divided nation. It is a space where one can find, "NO BLACKS signs, WHITES ONLY signs and CLOSED signs which say OPEN on the flip side and dangle CLOSED from ornate door handles."¹⁶ Space is coloured by the restricted movements powered by discrimination. Grey is difficult to discern, life is lived in the presence of white light, freedom and opportunity, or smothered by darkness, oppression and division. Francette Pacteau writes:

Western discourse construes blackness as palpable, entirely visible, and yet empty, null – the presence of an absence. It opposes the reflective 'power' of white – black does not reflect – to the absorptive property of black. Blackness, thus defined in a parasitic role, feeds off light, ever threatening its luminosity with total absorption and extinction.¹⁷

¹⁵ Patricia Lambert, Barbara Staepelaere & Mary G. Fry, *Color and Fiber* (West Chester PA: Schiffer, 1986): 11.

¹⁶ Vera, *Butterfly Burning*, 6.

¹⁷ Francette Pacteau, *The Symptom of Beauty* (London: Reaktion, 1994): 124.

Gertrude's murder in *Butterfly Burning* exemplifies this discourse. Unable to reflect innocence or worth as the white subject is able to, Phephelaphi's mother is murdered in the middle of the night.

The knock on the wooden door in the middle of the night. [...] the intense darkness outside. She saw her mother standing with her arm resting on the other side of the doorway. A darker screen from the darkness beyond. [...] She could not see who it was, so she watched her mother, a tall erect shadow, her head touching the top of the doorway. [...] When she went to her mother she was not even sure she was dead. [...] It seemed a long time before the blood rose to the top.¹⁸

This 'dark' crime is concealed both by the time at which it occurred and the race of the victim. But the event is framed by an equally threatening and parasitic version of whiteness. On one side is the perpetrator, a "white policeman who shot at her when he found her talking to another man at her door when he called on her after midnight" (122). On the other, the "white policeman" who returns her mother's blood stained and mislabelled dress days later. Pacteau's notion of the "presence of absence" is played out in the utter disregard (or guilty knowing) the authorities have for the identity of the murdered woman. "The policeman had not even bothered to ask her name, even when he collected her mother's body, and not even now when he brought her a dress from a woman he named Emelda" (28). As Phephelaphi cremates herself in the closing lines to *Butterfly Burning* she returns once again to the absence of light, recalling "Gertrude who had the foolishness to trust a man knocking on her door. At midnight" (130).

During daylight, umbrellas appropriated from the bus station cast shadows that attempt to shield the daylight movements of Bulawayo's inhabitants:

The people walk in the city without encroaching on the pavements from which they are banned. It is difficult but they manage to crawl to their destination hidden by umbrellas and sunhats which are handed down to them for exactly this purpose, or which they discover, abandoned, at bus stations. (4)

Here the embodiment of blackness acts as 'the presence of absence'. "To live within the cracks. Unnoticed and unnoticeable. [...] to walk without making the shadow more pronounced than the body or the body clearer than the shadow" (3-4) is the objective of the day. Personal freedom is determined by the colour of one's skin, but, rather than vilifying one colour and celebrating another, as Pacteau notes of Western discourse, here whiteness is inhuman.

¹⁸ Vera, *Butterfly Burning*, 27.

Both night and day are brutal and prejudiced. A person of colour must conceal their presence, make shadows to move in by day and witness unquestioned murders concealed by the dark. Darkness becomes the oppressive cloak, the accomplice in the racial divisions, but daylight does little to lift the oppression.

Pigments and dyes

Second to *Color and Fibre's* discussion is the presence of pigments and dyes. Fanon relates the experience of racism to a mordant recollection: "But just as I reach the other side, I stumbled, and the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye."¹⁹ The gestures of discrimination fix the subject's identity at the surface. To circumvent this fixity, the *Ambi Generation* purchases change. The act is tinged with the face of reality:

Newspaper headings covered the dark alley, promised no freedom to agitated people. But there were ample signs of the freedom the people had already claimed for themselves – empty shells of Ambi, green and red. The world promised a lighter skin, greater freedom.²⁰

The ironic and "unusual ritual of disinheritance" purports to offer a way out of the cycle of discrimination and oppression generated by racism.²¹

Fanon writes, hopefully with the same irony that plays through Vera's handling of the subject, of a serum for "degentrification":

For several years certain laboratories have been trying to produce a serum for "degentrification"; with all the earnestness in the world, laboratories have sterilized their test tubes, checked their scales, and embarked on researches that might make it possible for the miserable Negro to whiten himself and thus to throw off the burden of that corporeal malediction.²²

Zandile's day job is to sell skin-lightening creams, the reality of Fanon's serum:

Zandile now worked in a shop on Lobengula Street where she sold skin-lightening creams. [...] Zandile was a marvel in Makokoba, a pioneer advocate of a certain form of beauty; she was regarded with suspicion and

¹⁹ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 109. First cited in Jay Prosser, "Skin Memories," in *Thinking Through Skin*, ed. Sara Ahmed & Jackie Stacey (London: Routledge, 2001): 55.

²⁰ Vera, *Without a Name*, 26.

²¹ *Without a Name*, 27

²² Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 111.

admiration. She would bring some of the plastic bottles and tubes to Makokoba and sell them to the women in the different streets. The skin on her own face was a soft yellow like egg yolk, smooth with a transparent glow, but she would not afford to purchase enough of the creams to rub along her arms. No one noticed that omission; there were other consuming distractions. Zandile offered the feel and texture of desire.²³

The *Ambi Generation* are surrounded by the "wild and stultifying indifference"²⁴ of Harare, an environment that celebrates erasure. The narrator explains: "freedom was skin deep but joyous and tantalising." In the absence of genuine freedoms, of concrete opportunities and tangible advancements, "Freedom squeezed out of a tube was better than nothing, freedom was, after all, purchasable."²⁵

Spencer Lee Roger notes two determining factors in his study of "Induced Pigment Modifications." The first is fashion, the second "a desire or assumed necessity for obscuring the personal identity of the individual."²⁶ In the case of the *Ambi Generation*, fashion and redressing racial prejudice are combined. The result is a complex message of fact and fiction, the brutal realities of racial discrimination played off against the whims of fashion. The two constantly intersect, charging innocent gestures towards fashion with weightier issues. For instance, alongside the erasure of natural pigmentation is the addition of other colorants such as makeup:

Red mud was spread beneath dreaming eyes. The carnival was barefaced and unbelievable, full of mimicry and death. The women picked their colours from a burning sun, from the lips of white women, then offered their bodies as a ransom for their land, their departed men, their corrupted rituals of birth.²⁷

Red lipstick and orange nail varnish, copied from the imported magazines of Europe and America, become more than decorative surfaces when associated with promiscuity, mimicry, and loss of tradition. If fashion is "essential to the world of modernity, the world of spectacle and mass-communication" and "a kind of connective tissue of our cultural organism,"²⁸ then the fashion of skin bleaching evidences a diseased connective tissue of the "cultural organism."

²³ Vera, *Butterfly Burning*, 80.

²⁴ *Without a Name*, 16.

²⁵ *Without a Name*, 26.

²⁶ Spencer Lee Rogers, *The Colors of Mankind: The Range and Role of Human Pigmentation* (Springfield IL: Thomas, 1990): 33.

²⁷ Vera, *Without a Name*, 62.

²⁸ Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*, 12.

Ben Arogundade writes: "The culture of ethnicity-altering cosmetology carried within it the notion that people of color had to overcome their blackness in order to be successful."²⁹ *Without a Name* captures this ingrained sense of lack and inferiority, of "unreasoned ambition" by celebrating the dismembered fashion mannequins:

It was better to begin in sections, not with everything completed and whole. It led to such disasters, such unreasoned ambition. So the dresses hung limp on the women, offering tangible illusions, clothed realities. [...] The ritual was cruelly imitated.³⁰

The fashion mannequin, the simulacra of the European or American model; represents an impossible ideal of female beauty. But in the context of *Without a Name* the use of *Ambi* is at once an act of imprisonment in European ideals and a source of liberation from the current realities. As the narrator mentions later, "You had to wear your own freedom to be sure it had arrived."³¹ Along with their skin, "People walked into shops and bought revolutions";³² trendy bell-bottom trousers under the brand name REVOLUTION. Fashion, although presented as the motivation behind skin bleaching is loaded with weightier concerns.

Spencer's second cause for induced pigment change is "a desire or assumed necessity for obscuring the personal identity of the individual." In Vera's texts the assumed necessity for altering one's identity is linked to the colonial history of white rule in Rhodesia and the continued presence of power struggles determined by race. Homi Bhabha notes that the "discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference."³³ Here *-ambi* appears as a doubling, a "double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority."³⁴ Skin bleaching both upholds the desirability of whiteness and acts as an empowering gesture against oppression. Bhabha's sense of slippage is captured in the

²⁹ Ben Arogundade, *Black Beauty: A History and a Celebration* (New York: Thunder's Mouth, 2000): 156.

³⁰ Vera, *Without a Name*, 81.

³¹ Vera, *Without a Name*, 47.

³² Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge: London, 1994): 86.

³³ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 88.

³⁴ Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *October* 28 (1984): 126.

³⁴ Bhabha: "Of Mimicry and Man," 129.

“black-skinned ears”³⁵ of the *Ambi Generation* whose desire for opportunity, progress and the realization of ambition produces a slippage in which self-worth and personal identity are partially concealed.

In many ways, this treatment of skin as a cloth as opposed to the more common approach to treating clothing as a ‘second skin’ is enacting a carnivalesque reversal noted in the opening passage from *Without a Name*. The carnival as explained by David Danow is “a positive, life-affording potential, in other words, will be shown to co-exist in uneasy alliance with a corresponding affinity for its fugitive negative realization.”³⁶ Hence the carnival enactment can exist as a symbolic form of empowerment within the narrative as well as a dangerous and illegal medical trend within reality. *The Ambi Generation* is reminiscent of Wilson Harris’s concept of the “carnival visage of pigmentation.”³⁷ Andrew Bundy in his introduction to Harris’s *Selected Essays* explains that the term *carnival* is from the Latin *carnis* + *levare*, to lighten (alleviate) flesh.³⁸ Bundy extends this linguistic observation to explain Harris’s term means “to lighten the flesh or to de-pigment.”³⁹ Harris’s use of the lightening of pigmentation as a symbol of carnivalesque reversals is similar to Vera’s, it is both theatrical and disproportionate, as much as it is grounded and determined by the limitations of everyday life. Skin, in its altered and distorted state, does more than conceal the original colour, it illuminates a core that cannot be concealed, a place where racism has successfully penetrated and disrupted self-worth.

Surfaces and structures

Item three from *Color and Fiber* refers to “the quality of surfaces and structures that may or may not contain colorants.” Dye and bleach are absorbed into cloth at different rates. Changes in colour are dependant on the properties of the material: weight, fibre, density of weave as well as the nature of the dye or bleach: temperature, concentration and length of time the fabric is submerged in the dye bath. “In this one case the *Ambi Generation* at least received a permanent mark for the exchange, an elaborate transformation.”⁴⁰

³⁵ Vera, *Without a Name*, 26.

³⁶ David K. Danow, *The Spirit of Carnival: Magical Realism and the Grotesque* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1995): 2.

³⁷ Danow, *The Spirit of Carnival*, 74.

³⁸ Andrew Bundy, “Introduction” to *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris*, ed. Andrew Bundy (Routledge: London, 1999): 74.

³⁹ Bundy, *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris*, 74.

⁴⁰ Vera, *Without a Name*, 27.

Skin is not designed in a manner that easily adapts to alterations of its originally effective structure and substance. Like cloth, the structure of skin is irrevocably weakened through bleaching. *Ambi*, and products of a similar nature, produce a variety of results other than the desired lightening of skin. "Permanent damage to the skin including infected cysts, dark blotches and stubborn acne" has been reported.⁴¹ The BBC reports that "bleaching can cause skin cancer and the poorest people are most at risk, because the cheaper the product, the more dangerous it is."⁴² The increased risk of skin cancer is one of the more perverse results of the skin bleaching trend. The disease is otherwise nonexistent in heavily pigmented skin because pigmentation acts as a natural protection against the disease. Arogundade notes: "In 1980 excessive usage [of skin-lightening creams] led to an outbreak of poisoning by hydroquinone, the cream's bleaching ingredient that works by inhibiting the production of melanin (the natural substance that determines skin-tone and protects against ultra-violet rays and cancer)."⁴³

While creams containing more than two percent Hydroquinone have been outlawed, a black market still exists with products being manufactured in the UK, Taiwan, India and many other countries. The *Sunday Times* of Zimbabwe reports that "British companies sell their creams to agents in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Angola, Zaire, Botswana and Kenya. The agents employ syndicates to smuggle them into South Africa – hidden between goods on trucks, on the top of buses, in car boots and in suitcases."⁴⁴ Alongside the devastating outbreaks of otherwise unheard-of skin diseases, including cancer, in southern Africa there is a bizarre, carnival-like reversal in the presence of these diseases appearing on the skin of Africans decades after European missionaries and colonialists succumbed to cancers and diseases of the skin due to over-exposure to sunlight, so foreign to their homelands. The statistical evidence that a large portion of the chemicals are produced in Great Britain⁴⁵ mirrors in a carnival-like inversion the old colonial trade routes. Admittedly, one could also argue that colonial powers have, in fact, a long and established tradition of importing disease, and now genetically modified and unsustainable food

⁴¹ Dina Seeger & Babalwa Shota, "How They Took My Dignity": www.suntimes.co.za/1999/12/12/news/news17.htm [accessed 10 February 2002].

⁴² Joan Baxter, "The heavy cost of light skin": www.bbc.co.uk/1/low/world/africa/718359.stm [accessed 10 February 2002].

⁴³ Arogundade, *Black Beauty*, 104.

⁴⁴ Dina Seeger & Babalwa Shota, "Toxic UK Creams Scar SA Women," www.suntimes.co.za/1999/news/news01.htm [accessed 10 February 2002].

⁴⁵ Seeger & Shota, "Toxic UK Creams Scar SA Women."

products, trial medicines, and an array of a destructive rather than constructive trade stuffs into colonies and former colonies.

Color perception

The final element in *Color and Fiber's* definition of dye variables, the "mechanism of color perception contained in the viewer's eye and brain," is, hopefully, at this point established in the context of skin to be the presence or absence of racism. Mazvita and Phephelaphi's torn and skinned bodies described earlier represent a perforated and fragmented sense of self. Vera writes:

Was it a surprise then that they could not recognize one another? Ancestors dared not recognize them. [...] On the other side of the streets their skins burnt an ill and silenced song. The streets smelt of burning skin. *Nyore*. *Nyore*. It was like that in 1977.⁴⁶

Cloth, be it textile or skin, acts as a litmus paper for physical and physiological pain. Zandile in *Butterfly Burning* explains: "There was an acceptance of what was placed on the body and what belonged to it; the illusion was flexible. The act of reversal spontaneous."⁴⁷ Regrettably, reversal is not spontaneous, nor is it flexible. *Ambi* is correct when it advertises itself as "Skin Care That's More Than Skin Deep."⁴⁸ But, as Jenni Sorkin explains, if "stains are the sores of a fabric," then the trend of skin bleaching has brought little in the way of beauty to the ugliness of racism.⁴⁹

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⁴⁶ Vera, *Without a Name*, 27.

⁴⁷ Vera, *Butterfly Burning*, 81.

⁴⁸ www.texasbeautysupplies.com/amskincarpro.html

⁴⁹ Jenni Sorkin, "Stain: On Cloth, Stigma, and Shame," *Third Text* (Winter 2000–2001): 78.

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