

sexualities are “restless” in nature, characterised by ambivalence, contestation and fluidity of meaning. Carolin notes many transnational exchanges and influences that were central to the sexual rights movement in the country and to ways that South Africans make meaning around same-sex sexualities; for example, exploring how the international gay rights movement influenced (and was influenced by) the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and how transnational conceptions of race and gender intersect with South African realities. The project is a meticulous study of representations of diverse identities in South Africa—Carolin’s focus on restlessness means that he is careful not to label these identities as ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’ or even ‘queer’ in his analysis, but instead emphasises the multiplicities of meaning in nonnormative desire. The book offers incisive and original insights on the texts discussed, and the theoretical framing of *restlessness* is a useful analytical tool to add to understandings of South African same-sex sexualities.

The opening image of Carolin’s book is particularly powerful in demonstrating this restlessness: he paints the picture of Johannesburg Pride in 2012, and the infamous clash between revellers (mostly white men) and protesters (mostly black women). This incident highlighted the restlessness of identities and the impossibility of flattening understandings of sexual rights and same-sex sexual cultures in South Africa; a vast confluence of histories, identities and transnational interconnections were at play in this moment. Carolin reads these intersections in the texts he explores, asking (among other questions): “How do historical routes of white privilege intersect with contemporary ones, and what does this mean for the ways in which images of gay men are produced and circulated? How does the historical transnational figure of the black female body mobilise new constituencies of affect, and how does her same-sex sexuality reproduce her vulnerability?” (vi).

The book discusses a vast array of texts, including novels by Gerald Kraak, Zukiswa Wanner, Michiel Heyns and Shamim Sarif, films by Oliver Hermanus and John Trengove, and cultural artefacts like magazines, stage plays, and the photography of Zanele Muholi. This range of texts is rich and diverse in modes, influences and points of view, allowing Carolin to broadly demonstrate his analytical lens of restless identities and transnational circuits. Carolin’s book is thus an archival work in as much as it is a work of textual analysis and literary criticism; the book details multiple stories of sexual rights in South Africa and archives diverse lived experiences of same-sex

Post-Apartheid Same-Sex Sexualities: Restless Identities in Literary and Visual Culture.

Andy Carolin.

London and New York: Routledge, 2021. 208 pp.
ISBN 9780367467159.

Andy Carolin’s monograph, *Post-Apartheid Same-Sex Sexualities: Restless Identities in Literary and Visual Culture*, explores a range of literary and visual texts that represent same-sex sexualities in South Africa. Carolin reads these texts in relation to themes of restlessness and transnational cultural flows. The book argues that identities, discourses and histories of same-sex

intimacies through visual and literary texts. As Carolin argues, when heteronormative historicising practices often erase same-sex sexualities, creative works like literature, photography and film can serve as archives, voicing and asserting narratives that are rarely captured in museums or other forms of history-making. While the book is compact, it still sensitively engages with the various texts, and situates them in relation to the histories, identities and layered meanings that they speak to.

The five chapters each explore different frameworks of same-sex sexualities that have shaped public discourses in South Africa. Chapter 1 traces the apartheid-era sexual rights movements, with the important figures of Simon Nkoli and Beverley Ditsie serving as examples of the contestations and transnational flows that shaped the movements during the apartheid and transition periods. In Chapter 2, Carolin discusses the ways that Africa and “authentic” African identities were conceived in relation to same-sex sexualities, exploring topics like Christianity, transnational flows between South Africa and other African countries like Uganda, and the discourse of homosexuality as “unAfrican.” The next three chapters each discuss particular restless identity formations: white gay men as signifiers of “respectability” and “how whiteness is the custodian of the normative in South African public discourse” (88); black female bodies as signifiers of vulnerability and victimhood, and how these bodies and identities are repositioned in images that “articulate a new sexual imaginary that conjoins agency, vulnerability, desire, and inclusive constructions of African identity” (122); and finally, representations of Indian identities that “emphasise historical and contemporary South-South relationalities” (159), including the influence of Islam on transnational conceptions of same-sex sexualities.

While the organisation of these five chapters is well thought out and enables a persuasive argument to emerge, the selection of the five themes is a limitation of the monograph, as the book becomes somewhat laser-focused on particular identities without fully engaging with *intra*-national cultural flows. One wonders about rich South African literary and visual cultures that are excluded, such as the Cape Coloured *moffie* culture, including vibrant barbershops and drag performances, the powerful use of poetry and short stories by queer writers, or the emerging modes of transnational visual cultures like vlogs, music videos and social media. The conceptual framework Carolin presents might open avenues to research on these under-explored topics on sexualities in South Africa.

Carolin’s monograph serves as a good introduction to representations of same-sex sexualities in South Africa for readers who are not familiar with the field, and it presents compelling comparative readings of a range of texts that are valuable for scholars in queer studies. The book’s scope is contained, and it favours detailed readings of the selected texts rather than aiming for a more comprehensive archive. While this might limit the breadth of discussion, Carolin’s skilful engagement with the selected themes and texts makes the book a stimulating, rewarding read.

Grant Andrews
grant.andrews@wits.ac.za
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg, South Africa
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5268-0800>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17159/2309-9070/tvl.v.58i1.9532>