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A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Masters in Fine Art.

Faculty of the Humanities
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2012

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature ............................................. Date .............................................
This work is dedicated to the loving memories of my late mother, Maria Joubert and beloved husband, Jonathan Berndt.
Apple Girl

Ingesting and Transforming *APPLE GIRL*
from Fairy Tale into Sculpture and Performance.

by

JILL JOUBERT
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Introduction

‘The tale is not beautiful if nothing is added to it’ Tuscan proverb (Calvino. 2000:xxi).

The submission for my Master of Fine Art degree, which is devoted to the interpretation and transformation of the Italian fairy tale, *Apple Girl*, into performed sculpture, consists of this document as well as a photographic story-book which illustrates the sculpture component. The sculptured tableaux on wheels,¹ conceived through the properties of carved wood and found-objects, also function as miniature puppet theatres. These are wheeled into the performance arena at relevant moments to be animated by myself, with jazz artist, Athalie Crawford, at times accompanying the performance. Thereafter, the audience is invited to view the constellation of tableaux as an art work, fixed as an arrangement of sculptures to which the performance has given a framework for presentation and interpretation.

*Apple Girl* captured my imagination when I first read this fairy tale in *Ten Italian Folktales* by Italo Calvino in 1995 and I knew that I wanted to transform this story into a puppet performance of some kind.² While elements in this story, like a queen who desires a child, a malignant stepmother and a fairy possessed of magical powers, are similar to many fairy tales, much of the central narrative that one expects from a fairy tale is absent, leaving imaginative scope for a visual and symbolic interpretation of the story. The title, *Apple Girl*, as well as the intriguing idea of a queen who births an apple instead of a baby, led me to associate this tale to the beleaguered Eve and Adam in Genesis. Following this trajectory, I propose through the ritualised performance of this fairy tale, the transformative rites of passage of the naïve young lovers, apple girl and the king, and postulate the possibility of a harmonious, yet precarious equality between a man and a woman

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¹ By tableaux I mean a group of sculptural figures and/or puppets with the potential of movement, arranged to represent a scene from a story or legend and in this case, scenes from *Apple Girl*.

² Calvino's *Apple Girl* can be read in Appendix A.
within a world beset by gender hierarchies. In addition to the above, I explore further ideas of transformation through the carefully scavenged materials I have used with which to construct my sculptures. The eclectic mix of materials are used in the service of an equally eclectic mix of iconographies which inform the sculptures, all of which represent the co-joined and stitched fragments drawn from my varied inheritances, Western, Catholic and African. Finally, I celebrate the fecund creativity of the post-menopausal woman as artist and unruly story-teller, whose wisdom is gleaned from having lived the fullness of life, presided over by the uncontrollable nature of fate and fortune.

To these ends, I have divided my re-telling of *Apple Girl* into seven scenes, each represented by a tableau on wheels inhabited by puppets which are animated in the performance in the following order:

The Altar

The Apple Tree in Eden

The Boudoir of the Queen

The King’s War Chariot

The Domain of the Healing Fairy

The Marriage Tower

The Blessing of Mami Wata/Fortune

Transformation (in the sense of a radical change or alteration), shares this meaning with metamorphosis (a complete change of physical form or substance or of character or appearance) which is also the defining

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3 Mami Wata, often depicted as a mermaid and/or controlling a large serpent, is a contemporary West African and African diaspora water spirit associated with fortune.
concept of the fairy tale genre, according to Marina Warner: ‘More so than the presence of fairies, the moral function, the imagined antiquity and oral anonymity of the ultimate source, the happy ending (though all these factors help towards a definition of this genre), metamorphosis defines the fairy tale’ (1995:XV-XVI).

Not only does the ritualised performance of *Apple Girl* enact the transformation of apple girl and the king, but this central concept is also expressed through the transformation of carefully selected detritus from which the tableaux and puppets are constructed. At the root of this choice is a numinous appreciation of the material world, the objects of which resonate with their many lives once lived. The pruned jacaranda logs, cast-off bits of furniture, bleached bones and found objects have been lovingly re-shaped and echo the nomadic paths and historical trajectories of fairy tales themselves.

According to scholar Jack Zipes, folklorists use the term ‘folktale’ when stories remain close to the oral source, and ‘fairy tale’ when the oral source has been mediated through print (the literary fairy tale), film, performance, illustration, etc. (2012:x). Marina Warner, however, retains the term ‘fairy tale’ because the word *fairy*, *fata* in Italian, *feé* in French, and *hada* in Spanish, all come from the Latin word *fata*, a variant of *fatum*, meaning that which is spoken. *Fatum* or fate, leads us in turn to The Three Fates, the classical goddesses of destiny of whom Warner claims: ‘These classical Fates metamorphose into the fairies of the stories where they continue their fateful and prophetic roles’ (1994:15). While some fairies are seductive enchantresses, most are the post-menopausal witches, wizened old women and stepmothers who play the fateful or prophetic roles in the tales, no doubt embodying some qualities of the original story-tellers themselves.

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4 The Fates first spin thread from a distaff, then between their fingers and finally on to a spindle, symbolic of the threefold nature of time: past present and future. There are many stories of spinning and weaving in both Grimm and Calvino of which Grimm’s *Little Briar Rose* (no. 50) who pricked her finger on a distaff/spindle, is the most well-known. Both Grimm’s *The Three Spinners* (no. 14) and Calvino’s *And Seven!* (no. 5) tell a similar humorous tale of a young woman who is rescued from a lifetime of spinning by three ugly crones. In Calvino’s story, the fairy nature of the three crones (read fates) is emphasised by their strange arrival as bundles of rags that fly in through the window, down the chimney and drop from the gutter. Named Columbina, Columbara and Columbun, the first has eyelashes so long they reach the ground from straining her eyes to see the thread, the second, thick lips from rubbing her fingers on them to wet the thread and the third, long teeth from biting the knot of the thread.

5 While the word ‘fairy’ does not appear in any of the Grimm’s stories in the Routledge collection, it appears in many of Calvino’s stories, of which *Apple Girl* is one. In this tale, the king’s servant, on seeing the apple covered in blood, runs to his aunt for help, described as ‘a fairy and possessed all the magic powders’ (2000:8)
(the inevitable fortune that happens to a person) and fortune (in the sense of there being a separate power responsible for human affairs) are woven into the iconography and performance of Apple Girl. Not only is the seventh tableau devoted to Mami Wata/Fortune, but Crawford and I, as post-menopausal women, perform the dual roles of the old women story-tellers and the unruly Fates/Fortune, as we manoeuvre, control and give voice to the tableaux and puppets. Furthermore, I shape-shift between performing as benign puppeteer and playing the destructive stepmother. Since I transform Apple Girl from folk to fairy tale in my sculptures and performance I retain the use of the term ‘fairy tale’ throughout this text, restoring to my usage all the gravitas accorded to The Fates and Lady Fortune.

The fairy tale world of Apple Girl makes it both permissible and plausible to establish an imaginary realm in which the visible, material world co-exists with an invisible spirit world made manifest in the iconography of the tableaux and puppets, many of which evoke cross-cultural creation deities. This idea reflects what Victoria Nelson describes as the cosmic construct of Europeans from the second to the sixteenth century: ‘the greater cosmos or macrocosm to be a living manifestation of God, and not a dead artefact. Humans lived in the smaller cosmos or microcosm, the physical world that was reflected and ruled by this divine cosmos (2001:32). The king and apple girl, as the main protagonists, inhabit the imagined microcosm of this fairy tale, and are the smallest of all the puppets, yet they are the most realistically conceived in terms of bodily proportion and joints. As the young lovers, they are acted upon, as it were, by four older women who inhabit a world hovering variously between the material world and the greater macrocosm: the queen, the stepmother, the healing fairy and Mami Wata/Fortune. Besides the step mother who is performed by myself, the rest are larger puppets whose schematic bodies remain fixed on their tableaux with movement limited only to the arms. The divine cosmos is represented by the three guardian figures in the triptych on the altar who preside over the performance in static silence and evoke ancient, pre-Christian female creation beings. The macrocosm is further suggested by the four giant autochthonous water-creatures who precariously support the puppet-world

509). Further stories in which fairies appear in their various guises are The Three Crones (no. 29) The Siren Wife (no. 132), Liombruno (no. 134), Pippina the Serpent (no. 150) and Prezzemolina. (no. 86).
on their backs: the sea-serpent supporting the apple tree in Eden, the king’s war chariot in the form of a spiny fish, the crocodile-fish entwined by a serpent raised on the marriage tower and the phallic fish straddled by Mami Wata/Fortune.

Finally, my work pays tribute to the forgotten grandmothers whose wisdom was voiced through the oral fairy tale and whose voices I hope will echo through the ritualised performance and constellation of sculptures inspired by *Apple Girl*. Calvino informs us in his notes in *Italian Folktales* (2000) that *Apple Girl* is a story from Florence, told by Raffaella Dreini to story-collector, Giovanni Siciliano, in 1876. Dreini is one of the many, predominantly women, storytellers of the nineteenth century who generously gave their tales to male story-collectors under whose names the stories have subsequently been published, the most well-known being the German brothers, Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859) Grimm. Grimm’s tales were preceded, however, by the Italian writer, Giambattista Basile (c.1575-1632), who wrote *The Pentameron*, (also known as *The Tale of Tales*), as a collection of 50 fairy tales. (Zipes. 2012:15-16). The committing of oral fairy stories told by predominantly illiterate old women to written texts by more educated men, led N.M.Penzer, writing of Basile and the fairy tale genre in 1932, to claim Basile as: ‘the Father of the fairy-story’ and sets him on a throne together ‘with Perrault, Andersen and the Brothers Grimm’ (1932:ix). Warner, writing in the aftermath of the feminist movement of the 1970s, returns the throne to the rightful mothers of the fairy tale in her book, *From the Beast to the Blond: on Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (1994). Warner gives a detailed account of the predominantly female story tellers of European history, amongst others, the Sibyl of Cumae, Saint Anne, patroness of story-telling, as well as Marie-Jeanne L’Heritier and Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy, the contemporaries to Perrault, who wrote literary fairy tales for courtly entertainment in seventeenth century France. Warner also writes of the many anonymous crones maligned by the patriarchy through names like ‘Old Wives Tales’, ‘Mother Goose’ and ‘Gossips’ who for centuries were the oral sources of the folktale. These tellers of tales, like Scheherazade, despite the changes made to their stories through the male literary voice, managed

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6 Scheherazade was the daughter of the chief vizier who married the king, Shahryar, in the frame tale of *The Arabian Nights*. Finding his first wife to be an adulteress, Shahryar believed all women to be corrupt so for three years married a virgin each night, only to order her beheaded the next day. Scheherazade cleverly told the king a tale each night ending on a cliff-hanger so that he kept her alive to complete the tale the following night. Eventually he fell in love with her
still to give a voice to women despite the centuries-old patriarchal dictum that a good woman is beautiful and graceful but silent and obedient to the will of her father and then her husband. The distinctive voice of Raffaella Dreini, despite Siciliano and Calvino’s transcriptions, seems to shine through in *Apple Girl*, speaking directly and without an imposed morality, evidently enjoying telling this unusual fairy tale through humorous dialogue and witty asides. It was by comparing Dreini’s voice to the male voices of the Brothers’ Grimm and Basile in their respective versions of the fairy tales, *Little Snow White* and *The Myrtle*, that I found the meaning of my particular interpretation of *Apple Girl*, which is elaborated upon in Chapter One.

**Chapter Outlines**

Chapter One is an account of my search through the fairy tale genre in an attempt to find the possible origins and meaning of *Apple Girl*. I acknowledge the work of The Brothers Grimm in my performance of the stepmother through their fairy tale, *Little Snow White* (1975), and I compare the actions of the stepmothers in both stories to the sins of vanity, feminine speech and curiosity attributed by the patriarchy to the transgressing Eve in Genesis. I briefly raise Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (2003) as the source of two songs performed by Crawford in *Apple Girl* and then compare Calvino’s companion pieces, *Apple Girl* and *Rosemary* (2000) to their original written source in Basile’s fairy tale, *The Myrtle* (1932). Through a close reading of these texts, I demonstrate how the gendered voice of the storyteller can dramatically alter the meaning of the same tale. It is through the distinctively feminine voice of Raffaella Dreini that I discover *Apple Girl* to be a transformative rite of passage story.

Chapter Two addresses the working processes and choice of materials I applied to the carving and assembling of the tableaux and puppets of *Apple Girl* that arose out of my initial experiments with simple puppet mechanisms using re-cycled materials and inspired by African puppetry and European folk toys. I argue that as *Apple Girl* performs in the dual contexts of puppetry as well as an exhibition of sculpture, it addresses yet evades the conventions of both.

In Chapter Three, I describe and discuss the iconographic choices which inform the elements that make up each of the seven tableaux in the order in which they appear in the performance. For each, I explain the eclectic mix of references from which I have freely borrowed, *inter alia*, cultures (Judeo-Christian, Southern and West African), historical periods (Palaeolithic, ancient Egyptian, Medieval) and artists (Picasso and Jackson Hlungwani). As a fairy tale is made up of many parts chosen and shaped by the storyteller, I demonstrate that I too have co-joined the references cited above and woven these through the fragments of detritus and found objects to re-create Dreini’s *Apple Girl* as both ritualised performance and as a constellation of sculpture.
In this chapter, I discuss through an exploration of the fairy tale genre, my search for my own meaning and interpretation of Apple Girl. I ingest as it were, the fullness of the trajectory that the exploration of this fairy tale has given me, the filtered borrowings of which I acknowledge through the performance of Apple Girl.

By most European standards, Calvino’s selection and collection of Italian Folktales, first published in Italian as Fiabe Italiane in 1956 and translated into English in 1980, is a very late addition to this genre. The Brothers’ Grimm had already published nine volumes of their stories by 1857 and their work has been translated into at least seventeen European languages (Campbell 1975:839). Furthermore Grimm’s fairy tales have been thoroughly interrogated by psychologist, Bruno Bettelheim (1985), scholars like Marina Warner (1994) and Jack Zipes (2012), or re-worked into marvellously surreal tales by Angela Carter (1995) or Revolting Rhymes (Roald Dahl 1984), or disseminated as animated films by the Walt Disney Company. Compared to Grimm, Calvino’s Apple Girl is devoid of such extensive scrutiny, leaving scope for my own investigation and interpretation.

Unlike the Brothers Grimm who sourced their material directly from older women in the nineteenth century, Calvino selected his tales from journals and unpublished manuscripts in museums and libraries which had already been collected by, amongst others, the doctor Guiseppe Pitré (1841-1916) and lawyer Gherardo Nerucci (1828-1906) (2000:xx). Unlike the Routledge (1975) collection of Grimm’s Fairy Tales which gives no reference

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1 The first English edition of Calvino’s Italian Folktales was published in the USA by Harcourt Brace Javanovich, Inc. I have used the Penguin Classics edition (2000), translated by George Martin, as my main source of reference to Calvino’s fairy tales.

2 The influence of Grimm’s tales is such that, according to Campbell ‘Tales borrowed from the Grimm collection have since been recorded among the natives of Africa, Mexico and The South Seas’ (1975:839).
to the names of the original story-tellers in the folkloristic commentary by Joseph Campbell, Calvino usefully names in his notes, the narrator and collector of each story as well as its origin, be it in classical myth or some other literary source like *The Arabian Nights* or Perrault. In addition, Calvino makes reference where possible, to similar stories from other regions of Italy or Europe and particularly to Grimm. While Calvino tells us that *Apple Girl* is a story from Florence, told by Raffaella Dreini to story-collector for Pitré, Giovanni Siciliano in 1876, Calvino makes no claim to have altered this story in any way, nor does he reference Grimm as a source. I am therefore working on the assumption that the version of *Apple Girl* in Calvino’s anthology is as close as possible to the original oral tale told by Dreini and transcribed by Siciliano (Calvino. 2000:733).

I do, however, acknowledge Grimm in my work, as both Grimm’s well-known *Little Snow-White* (no. 53) and *Apple Girl* share the motif of a stepmother who wounds the innocent heroine through the agency of a seductively beautiful red apple, therefore linking both stories to Eve and the serpent in Eden. Grimm’s beautiful but vain stepmother and her enchanted mirror is synonymous with the wicked stepmother of the fairy tale. As a personification of outright female evil, she reflects the sins attributed to women by the patriarchal fathers of which the Biblical Eve is the precursor. Melchior-Bonnet claims that lust and vanity are ‘metaphorical daughters of Eve’ and that in images ‘from the thirteenth century onward, Eve is depicted brandishing a mirror’ (2001:200). Melchior-Bonnet elaborates: ‘To these faults are added cunning, inconstancy, and envy, for the coquette who made herself up used veritable cosmetic magic so as to ensure her power’ (2001:203). As I change into the role of the king’s stepmother during the performance of *Apple Girl*, Crawford sings an adaptation of Sylvia Plath’s poem, *Mirror*, while I briefly acknowledge Snow-White’s stepmother by scrutinising my ageing face, combing my hair and applying lipstick in front of a mirror. Warner adds to the sins of Eve by writing that: ‘Eve, the pattern of all women to come, sinned through speech by tempting Adam to eat with her words. So speech must be denied her daughters. The prejudice against women’s talk has scriptural legitimacy’ (1995:30). Snow-White’s stepmother, motivated by insatiable jealousy, cunningly persuades her stepdaughter to eat a poisoned red apple, described by Grimm as follows: ‘Outside it looked
pretty, white with a red cheek, so that everyone who saw it longed for it; but whoever ate a piece of it must surely die’ (1975:255). This could just as easily be a folktale description of the apple with which Satan, (read stepmother) disguised as the serpent, tempted the innocent Eve (read Snow-White). Bettelheim, in his analysis of *Little Snow-White*, states that: ‘In many myths as well as fairy tales, the apple stands for love and sex, in both its benevolent and dangerous aspect’ (1985: 212). He claims that the colour white represents innocence and red (be it blood or the apple), sexual desire and the apple specifically, as with Eve’s apple, ‘mature sexual desires’ (1985:213). I referenced Grimm’s *Little Snow-White* by using white porcelain clay as the material out of which I fashioned the first puppet version of apple girl concealed inside the bright, red, beaded apple. Although her cold, white, naked body is shaped like a woman, she has neither eyes nor mouth and her long green hair is intended to suggest her ‘unripe’ status. Apple girl, while protected by the apple before she is wounded by the king’s stepmother, epitomises both the Aristotelian and Christian traditions which ‘held the virtues of silence, obedience and discretion as especially, even essentially feminine’ (Warner.1995: 29).³

Unlike the jealousy of Snow-White’s stepmother, the king’s stepmother in *Apple Girl* is prompted by curiosity, another of Eve’s many supposed feminine vices. While the king is away at war, her overwhelming desire to find out what it is that keeps him so secluded, motivates her to gain access to his room. Besides Eve, curiosity links the stepmother by association to other transgressing women in myth and fairy tale like Pandora, Psyche and the maidens in the Bluebeard stories, all of whom disobey the commands of gods or men, give way to their curiosity and eat forbidden fruit, or open forbidden jars and doors, with varying consequences.⁴ This idea is

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³ Warner quotes Aristotle who wrote in the *Politics*, “Silence is a woman’s glory but this is not equally the glory of men” (1995:29).

⁴ In Greek mythology, Pandora (meaning all gifts), like Eve, is created at the command of the male god, Zeus, in order to punish man for Prometheus’ theft of fire. Showered by gifts from the Olympian gods, the beautiful and seductive Pandora opens the forbidden jar given to her and unleashes all ills upon the earth (Norris.1998: 112-119). The long and eventful quest-story of Cupid and Psyche is the source of many fairy tales. The third daughter of a king and queen, Psyche is so beautiful that she alienates suitors as well as Venus herself. Psyche is left in her bridal clothes on a mountain top but finds her way to a palace where she is mysteriously cared for. Each night Venus’s son, Cupid, comes secretly to her bed but commands her never to look at his face. Her woe begins when her jealous sisters ignite her curiosity and she looks at Cupid by candle-light where upon a drop of wax falls on his shoulder. He wakes up wounded and flees, chastising Psyche for her lack of faith. After many hardships, they are re-united and Psyche is made immortal and lives happily ever after with the gods on Mount Olympus (Norris. 1998: 126-134). The Bluebeard-type story in Grimm is *Fücher’s Bird* (no. 46) and in Calvino, *Silver Nose*. (no. 9.)
played out when I as the stepmother during the performance of Apple Girl, open the secret cupboard under the altar in which I find concealed The Procession, a group of 11 puppet-sculptures on wheels. After scrutinising and manipulating these one by one, I chaotically release them into the performance arena where they remain an unexplained enigma, open to interpretation by the audience. The stepmother eventually discovers the red apple on the altar which she impetuously stabs so that ‘out of every wound flowed a rivulet of blood’ (Calvino. 2000:309). While jealousy and sexual desire for her stepson could be read into her action, the stepmother in Apple Girl clearly has no idea that the apple conceals a girl. Unlike Grimm’s murderous and remorseless stepmother in Little Snow-White, Dreini’s stepmother responds to apple girl’s blood with fear, causing her to flee, ‘never to be heard of again (Calvino. 2000:310).’

A feminist interpretation of the Genesis story is that Eve (and her sisters) despite their curiosity and disobedience, recognised the need to take risks, ‘challenge boundaries, to make the imaginative leap, however difficult, unpredictable and even dangerous, into a new phase of existence’ (Norris. 1998: 404). It is through her being wounded by the transgressing stepmother in the guise of fate, that apple girl can finally emerge from her comfortable apple prison in a transformed state and take her place as an adult in her world.

Both Calvino and Zipes trace the earliest written records of fairy tales to Italy, beginning with the influence on this genre by Boccaccio’s The Decameron (c.1350). The Decameron consists of a hundred stories told over ten days by seven noble women and three noble men, who seek refuge in the countryside of Tuscany to escape The Black Death ravaging Florence in 1348. Zipes describes Boccaccio’s stories as being made up of a series of novella or canto which are generally about love and sexual relationships between men and women each

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5 The objects hidden in the cupboard is my own addition to Apple Girl and does not occur in Calvino’s transcription of this fairy tale.

6 At the end of the performance, Crawford gathers the 11 puppet/sculptures on wheels and arranges them in the form of a procession whose constellation mimics that of the larger tableaux.

7 In addition to the immature narcissism of Snow-White’s stepmother, Bettelheim claims that the root cause of the queen’s jealousy is Oedipal. He writes: ‘We are told nothing about her relation to her father, although it is reasonable to assume that it is competition for him which sets (step)mother against daughter’(1985:202-203).
more beautiful than the next, but however far-fetched, they are not fairy tales as they are set in plausible reality.\(^8\) I pay tribute to *The Decameron* in my performance, however, because *Apple Girl* is also a story from Florence and the historical trajectory appeals to my imagination. I have adapted the songs sung at the end of the first and second days of story-telling by two of the noble women, Emilia and Pampinea respectively, to be sung by Crawford during my performance of *Apple Girl* (1995: 69 and 187). Emilia’s song is wonderfully narcissistic and suits the mood of apple girl as she comes out of her apple to bathe and return to its safety once again, oblivious to the world around her. An edited version of Pampinea’s love song is sung at the end of the performance in which apple girl recognises her equal in the king as they sit together, precariously balanced on top of the marriage tower. McWilliam analyses Boccaccio’s tales ‘under the traditional thematic headings of Love, Intelligence and Fortune’ and these three themes can equally be applied to the genre of the fairy tale (2003: xxviii). Love, by implication in this context, is between men and women who fall madly in love at first sight and fortune, as linked to The Fates, are both central themes in my interpretation of *Apple Girl*, as explained in the introduction and elaborated upon in chapter three.

The story most similar to *Apple Girl* is *Rosemary* (no. 161) in Calvino’s anthology. Calvino observes in his introduction that: ‘There is a genuine feeling for beauty in the communion or metamorphoses of women and fruit, of woman and plant in the two beautiful companion pieces of the *Ragazza mela* (“Apple Girl”) from Florence (no. 85) and the *Rosmarina* (“Rosemary”) from Palermo (no. 161)’ (2000:xxix). Calvino sites Basile’s second story in *The Pentameron, The Mulberry* as the same story,\(^9\) and I assume this is the earliest written source of both *Apple Girl* and *Rosemary*. While the Russian folklorist, Vladimir Propp (1923), attempted to categorise the thousands of nineteenth century folktales according to their narrative structure, a close analysis of the three stories above alerted me to the manner in which the gendered voice of the storyteller gives a very

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8 Zipes explains *novella* or *canto* as ‘a short tale that adhered to principles of unity of time and action and clear narrative plot. The focus was on surprising events of everyday life and the tales, (influenced by oral wonder tales, fairy tales, *faibleaux*, chivalric romances, epic poetry and fables) were intended for the amusement and instruction of the readers’ (2012: 13-14).

9 In the 1932 edition of Basile’s stories I referenced, *The Mulberry* is called *The Myrtle*. 

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different resonance to each of these tales. That *Apple Girl* is free of an imposed patriarchal morality becomes evident when we compare this story to the writing of Basile in *The Pentameron*. In the latter’s frame tale, the king chooses old women from the lowest classes to tell stories, described by Basile as follows:

He selected but ten, the best in the city who seemed to him the most quick-witted and gossiping. These were limping Zeza, twisted Cecca, goitered Mereca, big-nosed Tolla, hunchbacked Popa, slobbering Antonella, wry-faced Civilla, bleary-eyed Paola, scabby Ciommetella and filthy Jacova. (1932:9)

The king’s instruction to them is: “Each of you, tell one of those tales that old women tell to amuse children” (1932:9). Basile is able to use this injunction to re-tell in his own flamboyant style the fairy tales supposedly told by these old women whom he savagely ridicules in his text. The ‘twisted’ Cecca begins *The Myrtle* with a little speech by way of introduction as to how the story should be received by the audience:

If man only considered how much loss, ruin and destruction are caused by the wicked women of the world, he would be as wary to fly at the foot-steps of a whore as at the sight of a serpent. He would not sacrifice his honour for the dregs of a brothel, his life for a hospital of diseases, nor his entire income for a strumpet not worth three tornesi who only makes one swallow aggregated pills of rage and disgust: as you shall now hear from what happened to a prince who fell into the hands of this evil brood. (1932:25)

While Basile may have his tongue in his cheek, he was most likely addressing an audience for whom this attitude towards women was an acceptable joke. There is nothing of this vicious misogynistic attack in either *Apple Girl* or *Rosemary*. The three stories all begin with the familiar longing that is the beginning of many fairy tales, expressed in the opening lines of *Apple Girl*: ‘There was once a king and a queen who were very sad because they had no

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10 *Tornesi* refers not only to money but in this context, is a pun for the word *pubreca* (vagina) in the Neopolitan dialect Basile used.
children’ (2000:308). The desperation to have a child is given emotive utterance where animals or plants in nature are perceived to be copiously fertile. While the queen in *Rosemary* as well as Basile’s countrywomen, both encounter a rosemary and myrtle plant and consequently give birth to a rosemary and myrtle bush respectively, there is no apple tree as such mentioned in *Apple Girl*. We are only told that the queen kept asking: “Why can’t I bear children the same as the apple tree bears apples?” Then ‘instead of bearing a son’, the queen births an apple. One can almost hear the voice of Dreini justifying this bizarre occurrence with the quip, ‘but an apple redder and more beautiful than any you ever saw’ (Calvino 2000:308). By implication, we guess that the gender of the apple is female. While the nurturing of an infant into girlhood is indicated by the queen in *Rosemary* who waters her plant with milk four times a day, no indication of this development to sexual maturity is suggested in *Apple Girl* and furthermore, the size of the apple and of apple girl concealed inside, is not specified. This lack of detail, apparently inconsequential to Dreini, leaves the *Apple Girl* tale open to visual interpretation.

The king in *Apple Girl*, upon falling in love and persuading the reluctant queen to give him her apple-daughter, takes the apple to his room where he watches voyeuristically as apple girl emerges to bathe without eating or talking. Her inability to function and communicate in the world separates apple girl from Rosemary who, upon emerging from the foliage, would dance, converse and hold hands with the king in his garden. While

11 The despair of childlessness links many folktales to the matriarchs of the Bible, Sarah and Rachel, through Gods’ intercession, gave birth in their old age to their famous sons, Isaac and Joseph respectively (Norris. 1998: 47-49).

12 In Calvino’s *The Serpent King* (no. 144), the queen, upon seeing a serpent with its brood of babies, exclaims, “I would be satisfied with a serpent child!” and she bears a serpent son. In Grimm’s story, *Hans the Hedgehog* (no. 108), a boy is born with human legs and a hedgehog’s body after his peasant father had exclaimed in desperation, “I will have a child, even if it be a hedgehog.”

13 Being born of an apple does not automatically presuppose a daughter. Calvino’s *Pome and Peel* (no. 33) has a similar beginning to *Apple Girl*. A wizard gives an apple to a king, saying that upon eating it, the queen will give birth to a son. While the queen eats the inside of the apple, and births a son as white as the apple pulp, her maidservant, who ate the apple peel, births a son ‘as ruddy as an apple skin’ (2000:95).

14 Some stories imaginatively and humorously explore the idea of a miniature child of which Grimm’s *Thumbling* (no. 37), *Thumbling’s Travels* (no. 45) and Calvino’s *Pete and the Ox* (no. 91) are examples. *Apple Girl* clearly does not fall into this category.
a sexual union, by the stretch of the imagination, could be applied to both these stories, it is made explicit in *The Myrtle*. The maiden, who happens to be a fairy hidden inside the myrtle the prince has placed in his room, to his great surprise and obvious pleasure, steals into the prince’s bed at night. In all three stories, these secret liaisons are interrupted by fortune as the kings have to leave home suddenly to attend to the masculine domain of war or the hunt. Basile, who according to Zipes, ‘was fascinated by the wheel of fortune and how Lady Fortuna, often in the form of a mysterious *fata* (fairy, linked to fate), intervened in people’s lives’ (2012:17) writes eloquently of the dark side of fortune in his story:

> But since fortune, spoilt-sport and marriage-breaker is always an obstacle in the footsteps of Love and is always the black dog that fouls the pleasures of those in love, it chanced that the Prince was summoned to the hunt of a wild-boar who had been devastating the country. (1932:28)

While fortune/fate is personified by the stepmother in *Apple Girl* and the king’s jealous sisters in *Rosemary*, the havoc wrecked in *The Myrtle* is caused by ‘seven wanton women the Prince had kept for his own pleasure’, whom Basile later calls ‘filthy harpies’, who proceed to rip his fairy to pieces in jealous rage, hence the loss, ruin and destruction caused by the wicked women of the world, as Cecca tells us at the beginning of the story (1932:28). In the end, the Myrtle fairy heals herself and marries the prince while he instructs that the filthy harpies be ‘buried alive in a sewer’ (1932:32). There is no judgment other than Basile’s condonement placed on the actions of the prince, whose gender and social status allows him to take his pleasure of women and dispose of them as he sees fit.

Through my comparison of the tales of Calvino, Grimm, Boccaccio and Basile, I realised the significance of the nuance the storyteller gives to a tale through the particular choices he/she makes of symbols, metaphor, characters and language in relation to their audience. Calvino emphasises this:
A folktale must be recreated each time. At the core of the narrative is the storyteller, a prominent figure in every village or hamlet, who has his or her own style and appeal. And it is through this individual that the timeless folktale is linked with the world of its listeners and with history. (2000: xxii)

While I variously acknowledge the above ‘fathers’ of the fairy tale in my interpretation and performance of Apple Girl, it was mostly Dreini herself whose singular voice gave me the real clues as to how I should re-tell her story through sculpture, puppetry and performance. The first was Dreini’s choice of an apple rather than a plant in which the maiden is concealed, which led me to link this story to Adam and Eve in Genesis. Secondly, Dreini’s graphic description of apple girl after she has been healed by the powders of the fairy aunt, led me to speculate that perhaps the king was wounded in battle as well: ‘The apple burst open, and out stepped the maiden in bandages and plaster casts’ (2000:309). In my performance, the king returns from war also wounded and covered in bandages. Finally, it is Dreini’s heroine who surprisingly proposes marriage to the king and not the other way round as we have come to expect from the fairy tale genre: “I am eighteen and was under a spell. If you like, I will be your bride” (2000:309). Apple girl is no longer the passive, inert, mute and blind white doll beloved of the patriarchy, but has emerged from her ordeal, alive with energy (the apple bursts open) and able to speak her mind with joy and confidence.

Both apple girl and the king, through their wounding, have undergone a transformation (or an altered state of consciousness) to a higher state of being, which is the ultimate aim of ritual, therefore making Apple Girl a rite of passage story. James Roose-Evans in Passages of the Soul (1988) explains that rites of passage involve three stages which mirror the stages that apple girl and, to a certain extent, the king, pass through in my performance. He describes the first stage of ritual as that of separation which involves washing and purification of some kind. During the central stage, the liminal state (limen in Latin meaning threshold), the initiate is often hidden, stripped naked and exposed to danger or the elements. ‘Often he is wounded’ and

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15 Roose-Evans acknowledges anthropologist, Arnold van Gennep’s classic study, Rites of Passage (1908), as his reference to the three stages of rites of passage to which I refer in this text (1988:6).
so the initiate crosses from one threshold to another, ‘once he has crossed he can never return’. Finally, the concluding stage is one of incorporation, enabling the individual to re-enter society on a new basis (Roose-Evans.1988:6-7).

During the performance, apple girl as the white porcelain doll, is taken out of the apple and immersed to swim in a bowl of water, after which she is dried in a white towel and returned to her apple in the drawer of the boudoir of the queen. She is separated from her mother when the queen reluctantly gives her to the king and the apple is placed on the altar. Although apple girl reveals herself naked to the voyeuristic king, combs her hair and returns to the apple, neither the king who broods under his dark cloak on his high chair nor the mute apple girl know how to relate to one another. Norris claims that Adam too, ‘was sexually a novice’ and that Adam and Eve, Cupid and Psyche and by implication, Apple Girl, are all ‘narratives of adolescent love’ (1998:129). It is only after apple girl and the king are wounded that they are able to cross the threshold beyond their own egos, and become compassionate enough to relate to each other as equals. Before the king returns, however, the wounded apple in the performance is taken to the domain of the healing fairy where she is ritually healed by being placed over smoking mpephu (*helichrysum odoratissimum*)¹⁶ and salt poured over her as well as the empty throne of the king, thus including him in absentia in the healing ritual of the fairy. The transformed apple girl is finally revealed to the audience as a wooden puppet, matching the king is both style and scale. She sits waiting for the king on top of the apple which she has now outgrown, with bandages around her arms and legs. She now has eyes, a mouth and black hair, with one remaining streak of green as a symbol of her potential for life, growth and fertility.¹⁷ When the bandaged king returns from battle, they are able to embrace each other for the first time. Jung claims that: ‘The fairytale makes it clear that it is possible for a man to attain totality, to become whole, only with the cooperation of the spirit of darkness, indeed that

¹⁶ Van Wyk et al. (2009:168)

¹⁷ St Hildegard of Bingen, writing in the thirteenth century saw green, *viriditas*, a recurring colour in her visions, as representing ‘the principle of all life, growth and fertility flowing from the life-creating power of god’ and also significantly, representing Eve as the first mother (Newman.1989:102).
the latter is actually a *causa instrumentalis* of redemption and individuation’ (2008:154).¹⁸

The final act of transformation is performed by removing the bandages from both the king and apple girl, dressing them in similarlystyled white garments and seating them side by side on the marriage tower where they face the world together as equals, neither one dominating the other, unlike the figures of Adam and Eve on the tableau of *The Apple Tree in Eden*, eternally trapped and swinging in opposite directions. Dreini, in her humorous and graceful telling of *Apple Girl*, goes directly and without narrative elaboration to the core of all fairy tales as explained by Calvino:

> These folk stories are the catalogue of the potential destinies of men and women, especially for that stage in life when destiny is formed, i.e. youth, beginning with birth, which itself often foreshadows the future: and then the departure from home, and, finally, through the trials of growing up, the attainment of maturity and the proof of one’s humanity. (2000:xviii)

Calvino endorses that the value of any story ‘consists in what is woven and rewoven into it’ (2000:xxi). I take the many liberties Calvino permits in my interpretation of *Apple Girl*. I acknowledge through this process the inspiration of Raffaella Dreini and the many old crones whose voices can still be heard despite the editing pens of men.

¹⁸ I extend Jung’s ‘man’ to mean woman as well.
The King’s Stepmother

Performed by Jill Joubert.
Fig.2

Athalie Crawford

Singer & arranger of songs.
Details of eyes, stitching & carving
Chapter Two

Constructing *Apple Girl* as Performed Sculpture

Based on the premise that I work as a solo puppet manipulator, I discuss in this chapter the construction and simple mechanisms of movement of the tableaux and puppets for *Apple Girl*, using as material, an eclectic range of found objects. I also postulate that the tableaux are able to perform in both the fields of puppetry and sculpture, while not subscribing whole-heartedly to either.

Transforming the fairy tale, *Apple Girl* into the mediums of both sculpture and puppet performance invites particular challenges, the most practical of which is the construction of puppets which employ basic mechanisms of movement so that they can be meaningfully manipulated by one person. In his essay *Puppetry and Authorship*, Basil Jones argues for recognition of the authorial role the puppet plays in a theatre production. His words: ‘The production of meaning waits for the puppet to be created and then it arises out of the puppet’ (2009:267), is appropriate to the process I applied in the making of *Apple Girl*. Besides interrogating the fairy tale itself as discussed in the previous chapter, the richer nuances of meaning embedded in the tableaux and puppets arose out of the organic process of their construction, initially explored through the experiment which became *The Procession*.

*The Procession*, which is my addition to *Apple Girl*, is a group of 11 small puppet/sculptural figurines and/or found objects mounted on wheels concealed in the cupboard under the altar, the secret of which is revealed during the performance by the curious stepmother. Initially not intended to be anything but experiments in
the most basic mechanisms of movement, the figurines are based on simple European folk toys as in the figure which flips over a pole and *planchette*, or jigging puppets, manipulated by a wire through their middle (Fraser. 1971:34 and Bohmer.1969: 59).¹⁹ *(ref. Fig.3)* In addition, I also borrowed the mechanisms employed by some African puppeteers: the simple pull-the-string-and-the-arms-shoot-out method of movement of the *sogoden* puppets (the child of the animal) which appear from the back of costumed animals of Bamana puppet masquerades as well as the lattice-work construction based on the *galukoji*, a Central Bapende divination puppet (Arnoldi. 1995:68 and Strother: 2000:109). *(ref. Fig.4)* I further explored the movement of springs that automatically bounce with a weight at the end, like a head, an arm, a skirt or a penis. As I did not want these little puppets to lose their potential for performance when they were not being activated, I constructed platforms onto which they could be placed so that they would remain permanently upright, oscillating between puppetry and sculpture. In order to encourage the random movement of parts on springs, or sounds from brass pipes knocking against each other, for example, I made wheels for the platforms so that they could be pushed and pulled. As the idea of a rather maverick procession on wheels began to emerge with more clarity, I added three found objects to the collection: a small but uselessly blunt saw, a silver trophy awarded to my mother in 1956 for tennis, and a toy pianola whose tinny mechanism plays the *Internationale*. *The Procession* is illustrated in *Figs.6-17*.

As puppeteers the world over have typically used whatever materials they can find in their own environment with which to construct their puppets, I likewise carved and re-shaped old pieces of lathed wood of uncertain origin, rotting parquet flooring and old curtain rails which I combined with found objects like bleached animal bones, a rusty metal hoe, brass trinkets and so on. The small articulated sculptures/puppets which emerged from this juxtaposition became an embodiment of metamorphosis and collectively suggested the existence of a

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¹⁹ This mechanism was also used to great effect by Alfredo Makhabela, a Mozambican puppeteer, whom I saw busking with four jigging puppets dancing from the neck of his guitar in the streets of Tzaneen in the 1980s.
world beyond the quotidian. For example, two wooden spoons stitched together became an anthropomorphic head with horns (ref. Fig.14), the heavy iron weights of a scale became the cumbersome wheels bearing an angelic being with wings made from scapula and whose head is a rusty hoe. (ref. Fig.7) The ready-made saw and pianola were able to masquerade as sculpture when mounted on wheeled, militaristic platforms. (ref. Figs.15 & 13) When viewed together as a group, The Procession could be variously described as uncanny, irrational, enigmatic, imaginary, dream-like, edgy, spirit-world, all of the above being the qualities I was looking for to evoke the symbolic fairy-tale world of Apple Girl.20

The Procession subsequently became the template, as it were, for the seven tableaux and related figures/puppets that perform the story of Apple Girl. The tableaux all move on a variety of wheels giving to each a different quality of sound and rhythm that is exploited as part of the soundscape in the performance. For example, the queen’s bed-side table clatters and jerks while the tricycle of the healing fairy moves with silently fluidity. (ref. Figs.40 & 48) Besides the practical use of wheels which facilitate the articulation and movement of the tableaux as they perform, wheels also suggest the inevitability of relentless and uncontrollable change as in the proverbial Wheel of Fortune. The basic construction material of the tableaux is carved out of found wood, with added materials like vulture feathers, bleached animal bones, cowrie shells, bicycle parts, beads, mirrors and cloth. Although the fragmented bits of detritus could be perceived to be random, selected only for their aesthetic value, I have also carefully chosen each element for its embedded memories or the significance of the place from which it has been sourced, thus lending a numinous quality to the layered meanings of the sculptures. For example the vulture feathers were collected from a pig farm near Polokwane in Limpopo Province and the giant white shell bearing the healing salt on the tableau of the healing fairy, at a Catholic Retreat at Hartebeespoort Dam in Gauteng.21 The curtains surrounding the bedside-table of the queen were

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20 Arnason, in his discussion of twentieth century Western art, describes the presence of the irrational or fantastic as a ‘major trend in modern art’, with artists like Klee, Kandinsky and movements like naïve painting, primitivism, dadaism and surrealism being exponents of these qualities. He sites, among the forebears of this trend: ‘Christian art from the fourth to the sixteenth centuries is a concentrated examination of the fantastic in its supernatural aspects’ (1977:2880).

21 The carcases of pigs which die of accidental causes are fed to vultures and maribou stalks at a designated ‘vulture restaurant’ on the farm in a bid to preserve these endangered birds.
once worn as a skirt belonging to my daughter.

Each tableau carries upon it, permanently displayed like sculpture, one or more figures or puppets capable of varying degrees of movement, which in their stylised forms evoke spirit beings rather than real-life people. Both the queen and healing fairy for example, instead of life-like legs, are supported respectively by a stick and a metal spring on heavy wooden bases. Their unjointed arms are manipulated by a string to move either sideways or up and down. These hybrid figures echo those in The Procession and are variously constructed from carved wood, porcelain, animal bones, springs, beads, shells, cloth, hemp and nylon hair. (ref. Figs.29-52) As with The Procession, the articulated figures/puppets that inhabit the tableaux evolved organically. I either began by making loose drawings from images I found in books that more-or-less expressed the idea of the characters as I imagined them as with the queen and the three figures in the triptych on the altar (ref. Figs.40 & 31), or I started working directly with found objects and materials. The healing fairy, the king and both apple girls are examples of the latter. (ref. Figs.48, 45, 46 & 49) As I was fashioning each tableau and figure, I looked at related images from inter alia, folk puppetry, West African, Palaeolithic and Minoan art and read about their meaning and purpose, which indirectly influenced the outcome of the figures and gave meaning to the formal choices I made. Hence Jones’s statement that: ‘The production of meaning waits for the puppet to be created and then it arises out of the puppet’ (2009:267) is appropriate to the organic process and found materials from which the puppets evolved. Their nuanced meanings grew as they were crafted to occupy a particular place on their respective tableaux from which they perform in limited gestures, emphasising their curiously other-worldly, hybrid, abstracted, and timeless quality. The sources and meaning of the iconography of the puppets and tableaux is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

As the performance of Apple Girl with moving tableaux and articulated figures is closest to the genre of puppetry, I feel that my performance style can best be explained by comparing Apple Girl to the work of the Handspring Puppet Company who have since 1981 set a standard and a canon for world-class puppetry in South Africa.22 Performing on a proscenium stage, Handspring is known for using complex and sophisticated

22 Handspring, through their systematic challenge to the stubbornly held conventions that puppetry is limited to the English tradition of marionettes and the
Bunraku-styled puppets that represent and move like plausible human or animal characters, each needing two to three manipulators to bring them to life. This highly complex process demands, *inter alia*, finely engineered puppets, a team of physically strong and dedicated puppeteers, a director alongside other theatre specialists and long-term financial commitment. Furthermore, their work is about real-life situations about which their performances make some form of social, political or moral commentary and with few exceptions, the style of the puppets and manipulation is based on realism. (*ref. Fig.5*)

*Apple Girl*, as a transformed fairy tale, is neither based on realism, nor does it attempt an overt social or political commentary. The stylised, hybrid puppets are small by comparison to those of Handspring and their mechanisms of manipulation utterly simplified. The ritualised performance is intimate, and being closer to the performance-style of an oral fairy tale than a theatre spectacle, there is no recorded sound.

Jane Taylor, writing of their work in *Hanspring Puppet Company* (2009), admits that the common-sense answer to the question: ‘What is a puppet? ... a doll, figurine or object that, through skilful performance strategies, is made to seem alive’ does not adequately capture what she calls, the ‘enigma of the puppet’

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23 Bunraku is a form of Japanese puppetry refined and made popular by the puppet-theatre manager, Uemura Bunrakuken IV in c.1730’s, the sophisticated puppets of which require up to three manipulators each. Unusual in the convention of puppetry which historically has been deemed a folk art form, Bunraku manipulators acquired the status of artists (Blumenthal. 2005: 23).

24 The two Handspring productions in which puppets were not mimetic were *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1988) and *Tall Horse* (2004), both of which were based on varied African traditions, particularly the Bamana puppet tradition of Mali. Furthermore, even in a predominantly realistic Handspring production, puppetry can be employed with surprising metaphoric power. An example is *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1996) based on the absurdist play of Alfred Jarry for which Kohler constructed a crocodile puppet as an evidence shredder, with an army duffle-bag as its body. This bag also served as Ma-Ubu’s handbag, suggesting the limp-hanging crocodile as her ‘familiar’, thus symbolically adding to the malignancy of her character (Kohler. 2009:85).
In order to make meaning with these ‘strange processes’ as she calls puppetry, Taylor claims of Handspring that: ‘the commitment to the negotiation of belief between puppeteer, puppet and audience is total’ (2009:19). Jones places full responsibility on the manipulator to sustain this belief at all times because for Jones, ‘the primary work of the puppet is the performance of life’, which for an actor, is a given (2009:254). Jones goes on to state that the life of the puppet is provisional, dependant on the manipulator, otherwise ‘a puppet is by its very nature dead’ and he claims that, but for the vigilance of the puppeteer, ‘every second on stage is a second in which the puppet could die’ (2009:254). Within the convention of a puppet performance by Handspring, once a puppet has completed its actions, it is removed from the view of audience to ‘die’ as the life-force of the manipulator is withdrawn from it. When the performance is over, the puppets are put away and, as in live-actor performance, the audience leaves the theatre. Contrary to this convention, the puppets and tableaux of *Apple Girl* are not removed from the view of the audience to ‘die’ once they have been animated but instead remain in view fixed to their tableaux, performing frozen in space as static sculptures, once they have completed their part in the narrative. My premise is that as these figures represent symbolic, non-human beings which inhabit the imaginary and timeless world of the fairy tale, they cannot ‘die’ as they were not created with the intention of mimicking the world of plausible reality.

At the end of the performance of *Apple Girl*, the audience is invited to walk through and view the constellation of tableaux at their leisure, after having witnessed the performance. This idea has been borrowed from the visual theatre piece by Mandla Mbothwe and Mwenya Kabwe, *27 Windows, 4 Doors & 2 Taps*, performed at Out The Box Festival of Puppetry and Visual Theatre in Cape Town in 2010. At the close of the piece, the last remaining actor carefully arranged on pedestals the objects like a bowl of water and a Bible which had been ritually used in the performance. The audience moved through this exhibition of objects which had grown in metaphoric significance in the imagination, as a result of their participation in the performance. Likewise, while the performance of the narrative of *Apple Girl* is controlled by Crawford and myself in the presence of a

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25 William Kentridge names this enigmatic quality of the puppet, *agency*, which translates into the will of the viewer to construct the clues the puppet gives, in order to sustain belief in the puppet being alive. ‘Then it starts to be manipulated in a particular way, and we give it a sense of agency, we will it to have agency, we are convinced, even as we know it does not have agency’ (2009:179).
seated audience, control shifts to the audience at the end of the performance, when they are invited to engage with the seven tableaux as an exhibition. This notion is differently expressed by Kirshenblatt-Gimblet in her essay, *Performance Studies* in which she speaks of museums as performance:

> A grand instance of object performance, the museum stands in an inverse relationship to the theatre. In theatre, spectators are stationary and the spectacle moves. In the museum, spectators move and the spectacle is still (until recently). Exhibition is how museums stage knowledge. They do this by the way they arrange objects, broadly conceived, in space and how they install the visitor. The experience, however visual it may be, is corporeal. (2004:50)

Kirshenblatt-Gimblet implies that a static object is able to be performative in a particular context, in this case, the museum. Instead of labels which conventionally explain museum objects or art works in a gallery context, the audience will gain insight into the constellation of tableaux after having viewed the performance of *Apple Girl*.

The performance of *Apple Girl* amplifies, as it were, and elaborates on the visual and tactile associated with sculpture into the temporal experience of theatre in which movement, sound and lighting in the presence of a seated audience all play a part in unfolding the narrative and the progressive assembly of the sculptures into the final presentation. Once the strange processes of their animation come to an end and Crawford and I leave the stage, the tableaux will shape-shift back into static sculpture. The premise, however, is that they won’t die as puppets often do after a performance, but remain upright and alive, resonant with the energy and meaning ascribed to them by the audience. The transformation of *Apple Girl* from Calvino’s fairy tale to sculptured tableaux, puppetry and performance evades a clear definition in the conventional sense of the separate mediums of puppet theatre, sculpture, motionless art tableaux and performance art, yet borrows liberally from them all towards the interpretation and enactment of this tale.
The Procession

Fig. 6
Fig. 7

**Dark Angel with Chimes**
wood, bone, mixed media & found objects
430 x 330mm

Fig. 8

**Egyptian Mami Wata**
wood, mixed media, springs & found objects.
280 x 210mm
Fig. 9

**Virgin**
wood, mixed media, springs & found objects.
300 x 160mm

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Fig. 10

**Trophy**
wood, mixed media & found objects.
300 x 240mm
Fig. 11

**Acrobat**
wood.
450 x 210mm

Fig. 12

**Wrestlers**
wood, mixed media, springs & found objects.
500 x 310mm
Fig. 13

*The Internationale*
wood & found objects.
220 x 150mm

Fig. 14

*Therianthrope*
wood, beads, springs & found objects.
580 x 210mm
**Fig. 15**

*Saw*

wood & found objects.

250 x 200mm

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**Fig. 16**

*Sacrificial Ox*

wood, beads, bone & found objects.

420 x 250mm
Fig. 17

**Dancing Trickster**

wood, tortoise shell, springs & found objects.

dimensions variable
The tableaux and puppets of *Apple Girl* are manipulated in silence by myself as the main puppeteer, except when Crawford sings songs that punctuate moments in the performance, generally linked to the arrival of a new tableau. The songs either give insight into a character’s thoughts, as for example, the stepmother looking at herself in the mirror, or apple girl as she bathes or sits on the marriage tower, or the songs indicate the nature of a tableau like the Nguni song which heralds the arrival of the healing fairy, indicating that she is an African rather than Western healer. The only sounds other than Crawford’s and my footsteps, are the noises the tableaux and puppets make as they are pushed or manipulated. The sculptures and puppets therefore need to be visually compelling in order to hold the attention and curiosity of the audience throughout the slow, ritualised performance. This chapter addresses the rich and eclectic sources of the iconography of the tableaux co-joined with the ways in which they are manipulated, in order to give material shape and multiple meanings to my interpretation of *Apple Girl*. The discussion of each piece follows the order in which the seven tableaux appear during the performance.
The Altar

The altar, in the form of a large wooden box or chest is the centre-piece of the performance of Apple Girl and is the only tableau present in the performance arena as the audience arrives. The altar serves both a symbolic and practical purpose as much of the action during the performance takes place on, or around it. It functions as the house of the king and it is also on the altar that the apple is stabbed and healing salt poured onto the king’s empty chair. In addition, it becomes a convenient seat for me as manipulator as I dress or undress the king and apple girl during the performance. On a symbolic level, the altar represents through its iconography the divine macrocosm I discussed in the introduction. Bolted onto the back of the altar is a triptych suggesting a medieval altarpiece, in which three guardian figures made of wood and bone are placed in open boxes lined with dark brown velvet and the signs and symbols carved in relief on the altar evoke ancient and mysterious pagan creation deities. Concealed behind the altar is a props-box and within it, like a reliquary behind closed doors, is the enigmatic procession described in the previous chapter.

A carved relief adapted from one of the many Egyptian creation myths of Nut, Shu and Geb, forms a semi-circle above the central, seated figure in the triptych. Shu, symbol of light, space, air or atmosphere, stands between Geb, god of the earth, separating him from Nut, goddess of the sky, with whom Geb has been copulating. While the outstretched wing and bird’s head on the body of Shu does not appear in Egyptian images, I have added these because birds in their various forms have been sacred to many ancient civilizations, *inter alia*, Palaeolithic, African, Middle Eastern, Greek and Christian, the remnants of which still inhabit some fairy tales. In general:

26 By pagan I mean ancient religious beliefs outside of the world’s major religions, particularly Christianity.

27 The dove, as a specific example of bird-symbolism, was sacred to the great goddesses of earlier times: Inanna-Ishtar of the Babylonians and the Greek goddess, Aphrodite. It re-appears as the Christian symbol of the Holy Spirit in the Annunciation, the Baptism of Christ and at Pentecost. Birds in their various manifestations from geese to ducks and doves appear as helpers in many folk tales including in South African Xhosa folktales, *iintsomi* (Scheuh, Harold. 1975. *The Xhosa Ntsomi*. Oxford, England. Clarendon Press). For example, Grimm’s Cinderella is helped by ‘a little white bird, the symbol of her mother’s spirit’ which alights on the hazel-tree planted on her mother’s grave. Pigeons and doves help Cinderella pick lentils out of the ashes thrown there by her stepmother and eventually doves peck out the eyes of her stepsisters at the end of the story (1975: 121-128).
Flight has always represented freedom from the physical restrictions of earth-bound life, and the ascent of the soul to the gods, either through mystical experience or through death. Birds share something of the same symbolic meaning, but because they come from the skies they can also assume the role of messengers from higher powers, whether for good or ill. (Fontana. 1993:86)

The goddess Nut was the ancient Egyptian cosmic mother of the sun, moon and stars, who also at times takes the form of the cow goddess, Hathor (Baring & Cashford. 1993: 256). Nut was often depicted on the lids of sarcophagi, ‘so that the deceased may lie truly enfolded in the loving embrace of the heavenly mother, taken back into her body like the sun at evening, to be reborn into the dawn of eternity’ (Baring & Cashford. 1993:259). The outstretched arm of Geb points to a triangle enclosing a circle. This is *kola*, a Chokwe symbol, meaning a mythical home of origin or the place of first time (Matthe. 2005:18). Further Chokwe symbols are carved in relief on the panel separating the doors of the cupboard which speak in a symbolic language about ideas of the journeys of life and the interconnection between the material and spirit worlds. *Kola* is at the base, followed by *Mutato*, the four cardinal points, or the way or path (Matthe. 2005: 12). The arrows, pointing both up and down, are *Kufua na Kuse Muka*, symbolising rebirth and death and the constant movement of spirits between this world and the next (Matthe. 2005:17). The fourth symbol is a disc with the circle in the centre, representing *Tangwa*, the sun (Matthe. 2005:12). The head and hand of Geb, unlike Egyptian renderings, ends in the hoof and horns of a buck, reminiscent of the transformed therianthropes in San rock painting.

The theme of the therianthrope, which suggests to me an ancestral inter-connectedness between humans and animals, is repeated in the figure in the centre of the triptych. This numinous figure is intended to be sexually ambiguous, representing the enviable state of balance in which gender is no longer relevant: the breasts and horns could be either male or female and the cowrie shell suggests a navel or a vagina. The tortoise bones used as legs link this figure to the two halves of the underside of the tortoise-shell which crowns the top of the two side boxes of the triptych. The central figure is symmetrical and seated, symbolising its elevated status,

28 The tortoise or turtle, in Native American teachings, is the oldest symbol for planet earth and a personification of the earth goddess’s energy and protection (Sams & Cartow. 1988:77).
reminiscent of West African ancestral figures. Farris Thompson elaborates upon what it means to be seated as follows:

‘The enthroned position in African art communicates a complex aura of cultural permanence and fineness of character. Calm emerges in the easing of standing; the privilege of enthronement provides a frame for concentration upon important matters... The seated dignitary, in other words, must present a fitting image to the world. (2002:37)

The quietly composed central guardian figure is in contrast to the physically small and youthful king, whom I place in the centre of the altar at the start of the performance, precariously perched on his three-legged high chair. Initially shrouded in his dark velvet cloak with a mink fur collar, the king has not yet earned the right to be rested or permanent: he has not yet grown into his chair. The performance ritually enacts both the king and apple girl’s rite of passage to sexual maturity, a journey all humans have to undertake as part of life, with varying degrees of success.

To the right of the central ancestral figure is a bird-like creature with suggested wings in the form of three pig scapula on either side of an open belly in which eggs may once have been incubated. The sow was an obvious symbol of fertility throughout the ancient world, and as a sacrificial animal: ‘The sow, as the Goddess of death persists as an intercessor between the living and the dead, used to re-enact the mystery of dying to be reborn’ (Johnson. 1988:262). The pig, however, was also viewed by medieval Christians as a sign of greed, sensuality and the sins of the flesh, thus linking this figure indirectly to Adam and Eve in the second tableau (Fontana. 1993: 93). The bird-figure has a huge curving beak pointing downwards to its open belly, similar in posture to the Senufo (Ivory Coast) sculptures of Kono, the ancestral bird-woman. (ref. Fig.18) According to Johnson: ‘The idea of the bird that gave birth to the cosmos, the earth and humankind is common
to many tribal religions’ (1981:33). Furthermore, the pelican, also a large-beaked bird which became a popular symbol in Christian bestiaries of the thirteenth century, is depicted as a devoted mother piercing her breast to feed her young with her own blood, symbolising the redemption, sacrifice and atonement of Christ (Forty. 2003:114).

On the left of the central therianthrope is a female fertility figure based on the many European Palaeolithic figures of the Great Goddess, of which the Venus of Willendorf is perhaps the most well-known. However, this figure’s arms are not resting on her pendulous breasts but are raised in a gesture of epiphany. They are also carved as a half-moon, linking her to Nut in the relief above, as well as suggesting the continuing female menstrual cycle based on the phases of the moon. A seal skull is attached to her waist, representing her pregnancy. The seal, like the bird, inhabits two dimensions, in this case, the land and water. Pinkola-Estes, in her analysis of the Inuit story, Sealskin, Soulskin, describes the seal as being a devoted mother, protecting and feeding her pup for two months from the stored fat in her body. She also describes the seal as a symbol of the wild soul, or women’s deep, innate intuition or instinct (1993:262). The three figures in the triptych, which suggest the fecundity and devotion of ancient female deities, are the only figures which are manipulated by myself out of view of the audience at the start of the performance. From then on they remain present but static, emphasising their status as revered guardian spirits as they oversee without judgment the activities that take place on the altar throughout the performance.

Attached to the altar is a tower on top of which is a box occupied by a watch-dog in the form of a wooden dog’s head on a long trellis-like, flexible neck, based on the design of the galukoji, the Bapende divination puppet. During the performance, the dog serves to warn the king of the impending war and summons the healing

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29 The decorated altar-rail in the chapel of the Catholic boarding school I attended, bore a relief image of the pelican piercing its breast to feed its young.

30 Epiphany from the Greek, means ‘the showing forth of the sacred’ and appears repeatedly in goddess images from the Palaeolithic era to the Bronze age (Baring & Cashford. 1993:124-125).
fairy to come to the rescue of apple girl. The dog’s blunt teeth and flashing mirror eyes are impotent before the stepmother, who easily seduces him before knocking him unconscious, leaving the altar unguarded for her to scrutinize. On the back of the dog-box is a circular mirror into which the stepmother stares, combs her hair and applies her lipstick, while Crawford sings the following lines from Sylvia Plath’s poem, *Mirror* (1970:403.10-18):

```
Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candle or the moon.
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.
I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.
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The symbolism of the mirror has already been discussed in Chapter One in relation to *Little Snow-White* as well as the many sins of Eve, to which Plath gives a human poignancy in her poem as she speaks of the waning beauty of the ageing woman. Furthermore, she describes the mirror as a lake, alluding to the symbolism of the mirror in an African context which I discuss later with reference to the domain of the healing fairy.

Attached to the back of the cupboard out of view of the audience, are two trays in which various props are placed. The first contains the transformed apple girl puppet with bandages on her arms and legs from the four wounds inflicted on by the stepmother, covered by a white cloth upon which is placed the comb and the stepmother’s knife. The other tray contains the king and apple girl’s white, beaded tulle wedding clothes and the stepmother’s lipstick.
The Apple Tree in Eden

The only reference to an apple tree in Calvino’s *Apple Girl* is when the queen asks: ‘Why can’t I bear children the same as the apple tree bears apples?’ (2000:308). The association of the tree in *Apple Girl* to The Tree of Knowledge in Genesis, is visually embodied in this tableau with Adam and Eve as flip-over puppets suspended between the ancient apple tree and an angelic spirit, all of which are supported on the back of a large carved sea-serpent whose a mouth is a round toothless orifice.

The opening lines of Genesis (1:1-2): ‘Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, and God’s spirit hovered over the water’, suggests that water is the source of all life, endorsed by many creation myths the world over. For example, *Mari* means both womb and sea in Samarian (Johnson. 1990:239). The body of the sea-serpent as the base of the tableau echoes the fifth day of Genesis, when God created birds in the sky and fish in the sea, among them ‘God created great sea-serpents’ (1:20-23). A further reference is that the sea-serpent bears on its back the protagonists of Genesis just as the monotheistic religion of the Hebrews was borne on the back of the ancient goddess-worshiping religions of Palaeolithic times. The serpent was once a potent symbol of death and resurrection associated with many goddess deities that, by implication, the male God demotes in the story of Genesis.

In keeping with the theme of water, the body of the angelic spirit is fashioned from a piece of driftwood with jawbones as wings and a vertebra as a skirt, all of which were washed down from a flood and gathered at the mouth of the river flowing into the sea at Hole-in-the-Wall in the Eastern Cape. The head is the skeletal thorax of a bird, linking the angelic spirit by association with birds and flight and, as a dynamic spirit-being, is a visual representation of Jung’s description of spirit: ‘In keeping with its original wind-nature, spirit is always an active, winged, swift-moving being as well as that which vivifies, stimulates, incites, fires and inspires’ (Jung. 2008:105).

31 I found the driftwood and bones at the site where my children and I scattered the ashes of my late husband, Jonathan. It seemed appropriate to me to transform these objects into the form of an angelic spirit.
The apple tree on the tableau is an inverted *wilde dagga* shrub (*leonotis leonurus*), suggesting in its natural form, an ancient, yet fecund female deity whose inverted roots become her wild branches of hair, bearing bright red apples in the form of plastic Christmas baubles. The *wilde dagga* is a medicinal plant indigenous to the coastal regions of Southern Africa whose leaves and roots were ironically once used as a remedy to treat snake bites, amongst other things (van Wyk et al. 2009:188).

While the fig leaf, which hides the nakedness of Adam and Eve, is specifically named in Genesis (3:7), the exact nature of the fruit of The Tree of Knowledge is not. We are told in Genesis (3:6), however, that: ‘The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye, and that it was desirable for the knowledge that it could give.’ The association of the apple to that desirable fruit gained currency in the Middle Ages which artists from Hugo van der Goes (1470-75) onwards depicted as the forbidden fruit in paintings of The Fall. While golden apples in myth and fairy tales are prizes to be won, the red apple in *Little Snow-White* and *Apple Girl* is a potentially sexually dangerous and poisonous lure.\(^{32}\)

When the tableau is wheeled into the performance, the following lines adapted from the first creation story of Genesis (1:1-31) are sung by Crawford in the spirit of Gregorian chants:

> God created man in the image of himself,
> 
> In the image of God he created him,
> 
> Male and female, he created them. (1:27)
> 
> God said, ‘See, I give you all the seed-bearing plants that are upon the whole earth, and all the trees with seed-bearing fruit; this shall be your food.’ (1:29)

While I have selected the first version of the Genesis creation story because it speaks of equality in the creation of Adam and Eve, I have not neglected the second in which God creates Eve from Adam’s rib to be

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\(^{32}\) A golden apple was presented to Aphrodite by Paris in a divine beauty contest that inadvertently led to the Trojan War (Fontana: 1993:107). Hera was given a golden apple tree entwined by Ladon, the 100-headed snake, as a wedding gift by Gaia, the earth mother (Bellingham et al. 1992:87-88). In Grimm’s fairy tale, *Iron Hans*, the princess throws three golden apples to her suitors, which are caught by the prince with the golden hair, disguised as a gardener (1975: no. 136). In Calvino’s story, *The Princesses Wed to the First Passers-By*, a beautiful baby boy is born from a bone, holding a golden apple, which he places on the tip of the king’s crown (2000: no.133).
his ‘helpmate’ (2:1-25). The puppets of Adam and Eve suspended between the apple tree and the angelic spirit face opposite directions, indicating the gender struggles in Western consciousness with which Adam and Eve are synonymous, as discussed in Chapter One. While Adam and Eve on the tableau represent the constant vacillation of gender hierarchies between biological dominance and subservience, sin and guilt, lust and procreation, celibacy and spirituality, I propose through the journey of apple girl and the king that a holistic sexual maturity and gender equality is possible, even in marriage.33

33 The Gnostic idea is that Adam, being created first, was a lower being representing the mind, the responses of thinking and feeling while Eve ‘was the higher consciousness of evolved spirituality’ closer to God’s counterpart, Sophia or Wisdom (Norris. 1998:202).
**The Boudoir of the Queen**

The tableau of the queen is an adapted bed-side table surrounded by deep red curtains, keeping private the paintings of fertility symbols (spiral snakes, cosmic eggs and a labyrinth with a vulva) attached to the little cupboard like a silent prayer.\(^{34}\) As the tableau is pushed into the performance arena using as handles two halves of a rolling pin which further suggest a domestic space, the delicate wheels at the bottom of the spindly legs rattle noisily as if pre-empting the queen’s emotive yearning for a child.

The queen, who stands on a cloth painted with a mandala pattern representing the four elements: earth water fire and air, is a wooden puppet from the waist up, whose head and arms move. Her shiny flared skirt is draped over three round discs of cane joined by string, which range from small to large, allowing for fluid, circular movement. All of the above-mentioned parts are held together by a supporting rod on a heavy platform of wood so that the queen does not fall over as her tableau is noisily wheeled into the performance. The queen, with hair carved to resemble fiery snakes, youthful bare-breasts, small waist and flared skirt, evokes the snake-goddess of Crete, home to the fabled joyful and fecund Minoan civilization that flourished there between c.4000 to 1450 B.C.E. (Johnson. 1990:142-243). *(ref. Fig.19)* When static, the queen’s arms are outstretched in the gesture of grace synonymous with the Virgin Mary. As the boudoir of the queen is wheeled into the performance, Crawford sings the queen’s lament, with words taken directly from Calvino, punctuated by the puppet raising her arms in varied gestures of supplication, epiphany and despair.

*Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!*

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\(^{34}\) The painted images both inside and outside of the small cupboard were freely drawn from the following three books in The Thames and Hudson, Art and Imagination series: *Tantra: The Indian Cult of Ecstasy* (1973), *Creation Myths: Man’s Introduction to the World* (1977), and *Goddess: Mother of Living Nature* (1990).
Oh! Oh! Oh!

Oh Why can’t I bear children the same as the apple tree bears apples?

Oh Why can’t I bear children the same as the apple tree bears apples?

Oh! Oh! Oh!

During the performance, I draw back the front curtains of the boudoir-like miniature theatre and pull out a flat drawer beneath the queen to show the apple which she has successfully birthed. The apple, carved in wood covered entirely with red glass beads, rests on a mandala-painted cloth, the patterns of which are based on the shapes of dissected apple-cores. I open the apple constructed as two hollowed-out halves lined in red cloth, to reveal apple girl to the audience. She is a small, jointed porcelain-doll with bright green hair, both alien and startling against the complimentary red of the apple. Her long hair is unbound as befitting an unmarried maiden in the Middle Ages, with the bright green signifying both her ‘unripe’ status and the potential for growth and fertility. On the significance of hair, Johnson states that: ‘Ancient symbols often carry multiple meanings. Hair stands for energy and fertility. On the head, it signifies higher spiritual forces; below the waist, fertilizing forces’ (1990:150). While apple girl does not have pubic hair as such, attention is drawn to her pubic area by a pattern of little holes on both the porcelain and wooden puppet, reminiscent of the holes made in dolls’ heads and some African masks to be filled with hair.

I take apple girl from her apple and submerge her in water in a deep glass fish-bowl placed on the floor in front of the queen’s boudoir. As she swims about like a mermaid, apple girl is linked to the primordial water creatures that support three of the tableaux as well as to Mami Wata/Fortune, described in detail later in this chapter. Throughout the ritual bathing, Crawford sings apple girl’s first song, adapted from Emilia’s song at the conclusion of the first day in Boccaccio’s The Decameron, the narcissism of which reflects apple girl’s naïvite and youthful self-involvement (1995:69.1-17and 24):36

35 For St. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) ‘green was more than a colour; the fresh green that recurs so often in her visions represents the principle of all life, growth and fertility flowing from the life-creating power of God’ (Newman. 1987: 100-102). St. Hildegard describes a manuscript painting, Eve over-shadowed by the devil, and shows Eve as a green wing-like leaf filled with stars that represent her children, emerging from Adam’s side.

36 I have substituted the word, ‘glass’ in Emelia’s song, for ‘home’, implying that apple girl feels safe and content inside her restricting apple.
In mine own beauty take I such delight
That to no other love could I
My fond affections plight.
Since in my looking-glass each hour I spy
Beauty enough to satisfy the mind,
Why seek out past delights, or new ones try
When all content within my [home] I find?
What other sight so pleasing to mine eyes
Is there that I might see
Which further I could prize?
My sweet reflection never fades away;
My consolation ever is
To see it every day.
Ah, who has loved like this?

Although I have emphasised the rite of passage of apple girl and the king throughout this text, the queen also experiences her own painful rite of passage. After receiving the daughter for whom she has desperately longed, she is reluctantly compelled to relinquish apple girl to the young lover-king and metaphorically turn her back on their lives with a final, plaintive Oh! Oh! Oh!, before I wheel her away in her now empty boudoir.
The King’s War Chariot

The king is summoned to war by the noise of the king’s war chariot hurtling along to which the watch-dog on the altar reacts with a frenzied rattling of its lattice-work neck. I march the king’s three-wheeled war chariot purposefully into the performance arena. The chariot is made from two semi-circular table flaps joined at one end with the other two ends splayed and braced by the king’s seat in the centre. The incongruous metamorphosis of vehicle, furniture and fish is suggested by the zig zag shapes cut along the top of the wood to indicate pointed fins and the two brass door-knobs which form the eyes. A rear-view motor-car mirror is strategically placed so that the king can watch his back and a war banner with two red flags, reminiscent of the Roman Empire, frames him from behind. The co-joining of the above elements is both irreverent and humorous, gently mocking the machismo of the militaristic domain. When he goes to war, I remove the king’s dark velvet cloak and dress his youthful body in a leather skirt suggestive of a Roman soldier, but his torso remains exposed to reveal his vulnerability.
The Domain of the Healing Fairy

The healing fairy is summoned by the watch-dog once the stepmother has run off, leaving in her wake the chaos of the scattered procession all over the floor and the bleeding apple on the altar. Crawford begins singing *Um Home*, an Nguni song in praise of the ancestors which pre-empts the arrival of the healing fairy, suggesting to the audience that the fairy is an *amagqirha* (traditional healer).

*Seng-dzi-nga-nem-ho-me*
*He-la-ba-be-ba-tshing-le-le-ngo-ni*
*Ni-ji-ya-hom-ya-ze-ya-nyun*
*Dze-la-lem-pe-le-le te-le ji-ya ho-mm-e-la ba-be*
*Ji-ya-ho-mm-ho-mm Ho-oho-oho ho-ohm Jiya-yiya-i-o-oh ohm*
*Hayi-ya-ohm-hm-ho-hm ho-oho-oho-ho-ohm*
*Jiya-yiya-i-o-oh-hm-ji-ya-ho-hm ho ohm*
*Ba-thsi-le-le nga ni*
*Ni e-la ba-be seng dzi-nga-nem-ho*
*Me ji-ya ba-be-a-ku-sho mi-ne ku*
*Sho stha-nda-ne san-ga-ye-ka-nemho a-ji-ya*
*Ho-m-ja-ya-he-a ji-ya-ho-hm*
*Ho-oho-oho ho-o-hom jiya-yiya-yiya o-ho-mm Jiya-yiya-o-hm ho-mm*

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37 Crawford (personal communication, November 2012), remembers learning this song as a child off an old record by Miriam Makeba. She was subsequently given a copy of the words and musical score from an old American song book, the source and title of which she has forgotten. I have transcribed the words as Crawford sings them phonetically from this score, which claims alongside the title, *Um Home: Song of Praise*, that the song is ‘a Xhosa dance song of a patriotic nature.’ Crawford, who speaks Xhosa, claims that while elements of this language may be present, this song is not entirely Xhosa, so therefore does not know the meaning of the song other than it being a praise song to the ancestors. She and I have subsequently agreed to call this song by the broad ethnic term, Nguni. Although the page of the songbook claims the words to mean the following, it may not be accurate, considering the misinformation about their claim that this is Xhosa:

*I praise my fathers who came from Ngoni*
*I am speaking for all my loved ones*
*Let him alone to perform this dance.*
The platform bearing the domain of the healing fairy is balanced on bicycle wheels like a strange tricycle, the bird-like neck of which supports an animal head in the form of a bicycle saddle with white-beaded handlebars as horns, a parody of Picasso’s 1943 found-object sculpture, *Bulls Head* (Arnason.1977:396). Three large vulture feathers, which project from the end of each handle bar, dominate the tableau when viewed from the front. Vultures were once symbols of transformation. Johnson states: ‘This bird, a form of the Death Goddess, does not kill; it awaits death and transforms it. By eating the dead it performs an important function; it takes back into itself the perishable flesh, which it transmutes for rebirth’ (1990:95). Johnson further elaborates that the Egyptian hieroglyph for vulture signifies both words, ‘compassionate’ and ‘mother’ and being a large-beaked bird, the vulture is therefore linked to the bird-figure in the triptych on the altar. The healing fairy herself, although she may appear threatening like the vulture, represents the compassionate mother in the form of an ancient, wise crone. The healing fairy is a puppet, the carved wooden torso of which is attached to a spring secured in a heavy base, giving her fluid mobility when manipulated by means of a wire attached to her head. Her arms are made from the rib-bones of a seal and her head is a bone the form of which suggests the skull of a snake, thus linking her to the serpents in Genesis as well as African and pre-Christian mythologies. Her skirt is made of strings of white beads to which snail shells are attached, similar to the white beaded curtain with snail shells which hang from the bicycle handlebars of the tableau, both of which give a rattling sound when moved or shaken. White beads, symbolic of purity and spirit, are associated with the *amagqirha* of the Xhosa tradition (Nolithemba Madlamini, personal communication, September 2012). Appropriate to the domain of the ancient fairy as a clairvoyant healer, the spiral on the snail shells represents the unfolding of creation as well as ‘the path leading from outer consciousness to the inner soul’ (Forty.2003:98). In addition, ‘the shell is universally feminine, standing for birth, good fortune and resurrection’ (Fontana:1993:988).

The healing fairy is enclosed in a rondavel, the inside of which is constructed with dark cloth into which four

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38 Two snakes entwined around a staff form the caduceus is the symbol of Western homeopathic medicine which is based on the idea that nature can cure itself. The caduceus is also a symbol of peace, taken from the myth of Hermes, the messenger of the Greek gods, who used his staff to separate two serpents locked in combat (Fontana. 1997:82)
tall mirrors have been inserted. The outside wall is made from bleached marrow bones with a fragment of mirror in each centre, fixed with papier mache made from discarded drafts of academic essays, stained with rooibos tea (*Aspalathus linearis*). Unlike the stepmother’s mirror associated with Eve and vanity, the mirrors in the context of the healing fairy represent the mirror as a site for occult power. ‘In antiquity, mirrors were among the instruments of soothsayers and sorcerers, along with shields, bowls of water and polished objects - all reflected and made visible hidden portents’ (Melchior-Bonnet. 2001:189). In an African context, *minkisi* (or *Nkondi*) were pre-Christian wooden figures studded with nails from the Kongo region, in whose bellies the *nganga* (diviner) stored powerful medicines, covered by a mirror or an equivalent shiny object. Both attracting and repelling, this centre was a reminder of *Kalunga* – the horizontal line of a cross in a circle in a Kongo cosmogram, signifying the place where the living and the dead meet (McClusky. 2002:157-160). In the context of *minkisi*:

> Mirrors, in their shimmering qualities, are reminders of *kalunga*, the shining water that forms a thin barrier between the living and the dead. That barrier is crossed by souls and the sun each day. To move into the world below is to enter a time of regeneration, when one’s soul can purge itself of the impurities acquired in life and emerge ready to be born into the next existence. (McClusky. 2002:160)

While the healing fairy faces outwards, anyone bending down to look at her will view her back as well as themselves in uneasy multiple reflections in the four mirrors, suggesting perhaps both our multiplicity and our inability to seldom see ourselves with clarity.

At the entrance to the fairy’s rondavel is an indented carved circle fenced by small dowels upon which the apple will rest for the healing ritual and under which *mphepho*, a ritual incense used by Xhosa *amagqirha*, will burn in a round stainless steel container. A giant white snail shell filled with salt rests in a carved indentation

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39 Rooibos tea is known for its health-giving qualities as a beverage and it is also used as an ingredient in cosmetics (van Wyk et al. 2009:50).
on the neck of her vehicle. The idea of pouring salt as a white healing powder over the apple and the king’s throne, came directly from the description of the healing fairy in *Apple Girl* as one who ‘possessed all the magic powders’ and who blended a powder ‘suitable for apples under spells and another for bewitched maidens,’ that the servant in the tale sprinkled over the wounds of the apple (Calvino. 2000:309). Salt ‘is essential to sustain life’ and it is also a preserving agent in that it kills bacteria, as well as enhancing the flavour of food (Fernandez-Armesto: 2001:170). It is this latter quality that is explored as a symbol of sustained love in those fairy tales in which the youngest daughter tells her father she loves him like salt, which he misinterprets as an insult and turns her out of his home.\(^{40}\)

The number three occurs with inevitable regularity in fairy tales: there are generally three brothers or three sisters, three old men or wise crones, three tasks, three dresses and so on.\(^ {41}\) The number three underlies all aspects of creation: mind, body and spirit; birth, life and death; past, present and future. The trinity occurs in many religions, symbolizing unity in diversity’ (Fontana. 1997:64), and of course it is the three classical Fates who symbolise the three-fold passage of time. The number three is significantly related to the healing fairy as well. In the performance of *Apple Girl*, the watch-dog calls the healing fairy three times, her vehicle has three wheels and there are three feathers on each handle-bar. In the centre above the saddle-head are three bicycle reflectors: a circular red one flanked by two oblong, yellow ones, which act as a warning like the mirrors, both attracting and repelling at the same time.

\(^{40}\) Shakespeare’s *King Lear* is based on this idea as is Calvino’s *Dear as Salt* (no. 54) and *The Old Woman’s Hide* (no. 70) and Grimm’s *The Goose-Girl at the Well* (no. 179).

\(^{41}\) In the contents alone of *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*, there are 19 stories whose titles reference the number three and 14 in Calvino’s *Italian Folktales*. 
The Marriage Tower

Once apple girl and the king have re-united after her healing and his return from war, their bandages are removed and both are similarly dressed in white beaded tulle wedding garments, all of which takes place on the altar. They are removed from the view of the audience to be placed high on top of the marriage tower, which is then wheeled into the performance arena accompanied by Crawford singing apple girl’s wedding song.

The marriage tower is supported by a flat base suggestive of a skateboard or surfboard on wheels. Two towers made of round wooden fence-posts encircled by carved spirals reminiscent of serpents rise up from each end of the base, separated and stabilised by nine rungs of a ladder made of broomsticks. This structure in turn supports a large, carved wooden crocodile-fish with a snake coiling around its body. Large water-creatures, the forms of which grew organically from the shapes of the jacaranda logs from which they were carved, form the base of three of the seven tableaux in Apple Girl. These carvings share a similarity to fish carved by artists, Jackson Hlungwani and Lucky Makamu, as well as fish carvings for the tourist trade in some regions of the Limpopo Province. (ref. Fig.20) The fish motif also occurs with regularity on ceramics as well as embroidered and appliqued cloths found in craft shops in that region.\(^\text{[42]}\) The parallel lines of the fins carved close to the body of phallic fish straddled by Mami Wata/Fortune, for example, is borrowed directly from a small carved fish purchased from a craft shop outside Makhado (previously known as Louis Trichardt).\(^\text{[43]}\) (ref. Fig.21) While fish carved by contemporary artists like Makamu

\(^{42}\) Besides seeing this myself, Nel corroborates this and also states that fish ‘are amongst the most frequently occurring images in the body of Hlungwani’s work: there are no fewer than 22 fish carvings, many of them monumental, in his 1989 retrospective BMW exhibition in Johannesburg’ (2007:162).

\(^{43}\) Nel states that fins shaped like these are also found on many of Hlungwani’s carved fish (2007:162).
and Hlungwani have associations with Christianity, particularly the crocodile and python, are associated with pre-Christian Venda creation myths. The myths site Lake Fundudzi (and other pools in the Venda region) as the place where ‘the python of the pool vomited forth all human and animal creation from the pool’ (Nettleton. 1989: 5). The crocodile inhabits the centre of the pool, like the chief in the centre of the village, while the python inhabits its perimeter (Nettleton. 1989: 4). Nettleton describes the iconography of the crocodile and python carved into the ngoma, a large hemispherical drum used in the courts of chiefs as follows:

> While crocodiles are associated with chiefs, the python is associated with the great doctors (nganga) whose powers were second only to those of the chief and who played a vital role in procuring the necessary ingredients used in the chief’s installation and in the protection of their capitals. (1989: 4)

While I do not expect the audience of Apple Girl to make the above connections to the crocodile-fish encircled by the snake on the marriage tower, it is enough that the carvings evoke a mythical place with ambiguous meaning: they could both be protecting apple girl and the king, or they could be a dangerous threat for them to overcome together as they embark on the precarious journey of marriage.

The crocodile supports on its back two figures reminiscent of ancient androgynous bird-like forms, the softly rounded wings of which could be breasts or scrotums. These in turn support between them a large bovine scapula, upon which the transformed apple girl and the king sit side by side, dressed similarly at the end of the production. The bird-like forms resemble Palaeolithic divinities uncovered in the Balkans by archaeologist, Marija Gimbutas, when she describes:

*Fig.21*

44 Art-collector Douglas Walker has in his possession at his home in Polokwane, a life-size carving of Christ on the cross by Makamu, in which the arms of Christ have been substituted by a fish. Nettleton cites an interview in 1991 between Marcelle Manley and Hlungwani in which Hlungwani associated males with lion and fish with women because they are peaceful and, in particular, the fish with Mary, Christ’s mother. “[She] heads the shoal of fish who must resurrect harmony and playfulness from the strife and chaos created by the lions.” By lions, Hlungwani meant men (2012:17).
The ‘bisexualism’ of the water-bird divinity is apparent in the emphasis on the long neck of the bird symbolically linked with the phallus or the snake from Upper Palaeolithic times onwards throughout the millennia. This ‘bisexualism’ may derive from the fusion of two aspects of the divinity, that of a bird and that of a snake, and not from female and male principals. (1982:135). (ref. Fig.22)

This idea of androgyny, previously discussed in relation to the central figure on the triptych on the altar, is important to the meaning of the marriage tower as it suggests the possibility of attaining a harmonious union of the contentious opposites of male and female. The anticipated ending to fairy tales with a heterosexual love story as its theme is a happy marriage and Apple Girl is no exception. The wedding was celebrated, to the great joy of both palaces’ (Calvino. 200:310). My choice to end the performance of Apple Girl in a marriage could be construed as insensitive to the position of women in a patriarchal world. However, within the symbolic context of the performance and iconography of Apple Girl, I view the marriage of apple girl and the king as a demonstration of faith that the opposing polarities of male and female have the potential to be balanced. This idea is not new and was speculated upon even within the strongly patriarchal and hierarchical medieval world by the twelfth century abbess, St. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). Writing about Genesis in her work, On the activity of God, she viewed the first parents, Adam and Eve, as the mirror image of each other, equally co-dependent and reflecting each other’s glory.

Male and female were joined together, therefore, in such a way that each one works through the other. The male would not be called “male” without the female, or the female named “female” without the male. For woman is man’s work and man is the solace of woman’s eyes; and neither of them could exist without the other. (Newman. 1987:96)

Furthermore, there are many examples of Catholic images from the twelfth century onwards depicting the sacred marriage between Jesus and his mother Mary, usually titled ‘The Coronation of the Virgin’ in which
they are shown similarly dressed, seated as equals on a throne in heaven (Baring & Cashford. 1993:479-485 and 604-608). (ref. Fig.23) Baring and Cashford suggest that images like these give the psyche ‘an image of wholeness and relationship’ but in the sense that these are images of deities, they also serve to unite ‘the two dimensions of heaven and earth, spirit and nature’ esoteric ideas of which, beyond wholeness and relationship, I do not claim for apple girl and the king (1993: 479).

In an African context, there are images of three artworks labelled ‘primordial couples’ in the catalogue of the exhibition, *African Art in the Cycle of Life (1987)*: one is Dogon, the other Senufo and the third, Ibibio (1987: 32-34). We may never know exactly what they may have represented in their ethnic context outside of an American museum display case, but they nevertheless demonstrate an aura of calm dignity and respectful equality in the way in which they have been carved, standing or sitting equally side-by-side. Sieber and Walker write of the Dogon couple:

> Large seated male and female figures, exemplified by this piece, are thought to represent the Dogon primordial couple in human form. Or, in reference to non-human Nommo, such figures can be a metaphorical visual statement of Dogon ideology expressing interdependence and complementarity of male and female, as well as order and harmony in the universe. (1987:32) (ref. Fig.24)

I would hope that apple girl and the king, seated equally side by side on the marriage tower, reflect the possibility of attaining these qualities.

As the marriage tower is wheeled into the performance arena, Crawford sings apple girl’s wedding song,

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45 Nommo is the name given to the heavenly twins – or non-human forms - into which the eight original ancestors of the Dogon lineages were transformed by Amma (God) (Sieber&Walker 1987:32).
adapted from Pampinea’s song sung at the conclusion of the Second Day of Bocaccio’s *The Decameron* (1995:188. 3-5, 11-20):

> Come, Love, the cause of all my joy,
> Of all my hope and happiness,
> Come let us sing together:
> Love, the first day I felt thy fire
> Thou settest before mine eyes a youth
> Of such accomplishment
> Whose able strength and keen desire
> And bravery could none, in truth,
> Find any compliment.
> With thee I sing, Lord of love, of this,
> So much in him lies all my bliss.
> And in this my greatest pleasure is:
> That he loves me with equal fire,
> That he loves me with equal fire.
The Blessing of Mami Wata/Fortune

Mami Wata/Fortune is depicted as an aged mermaid straddling her gendered opposite, a phallic fish. This tableau is a companion piece to the marriage tower, and is wheeled into the performance at the end of apple girl’s wedding song. Through the image of the mermaid, I have linked Mami Wata, a contemporary West African water-spirit associated with fortune, to the idea of fortune in fairy tales – both of whom are fickle and may withdraw benevolence just as readily as they bestow it.

As in fairy tales as well as the eclectic borrowings that make up the iconography of the seven tableaux, the origins of Mami Wata are hybrid: part-African, part-European and part-Eastern. An 1880s chromolithograph of a beautiful Asian snake charmer with a bold frontal stare, abundant dark hair parted in the centre, coins stitched to her bodice and deftly controlling two large snakes, found fertile ground in West Africa.46 (ref. Fig.25) The snake, as in Venda myths, is also a widespread symbol of water and the rainbow in West Africa. With the snake charmer’s image set against a plain blue background and her body shown ending just below her waist in the chromolithograph, it was easy to imagine her underwater and possessing a fish-tail (Drewal. 2008: 32). Unlike the mermaids of the Western world often depicted holding mirrors, and therefore linked to the dangers of seductive women as they ‘symbolised idealised, elusive feminine beauty, but also vanity and fickleness’ (Fontana. 1997: 97), connotations to mermaids in West Africa were more positive. Among the Yoruba, Oshun, the goddess of sweet waters, was ‘venerated as a great queen whose political, economic, divinatory, maternal, and healing powers attest to her

46 The image on the chromolithograph that metamorphosed into the many and varied images and sculptures of Mami Wata, was a picture of Maladamatjaute, a snake charmer in Hagenbeck’s circus in Hamburg and wife of the German hunter, Breitwiser. Drewal supposes that her popular image was brought to West Africa by African sailors and European merchants stationed in Africa (2008:49-52).
centrality and authority in Yoruba religious thought and practices’ (Drewal. 2008:32). In addition, Olokun, the goddess of the sea, was associated with wealth and prosperity due to fifteenth century Portuguese sea-trade.\textsuperscript{47} The contemporary cult of Mami Wata was established in West Africa by 1901, where she became a powerful water-spirit assisting to negotiate changes brought about by colonialism and associated with, inter alia, good fortune and status through monetary wealth, concerns related to procreation and aiding both men and women to ‘negotiate their sexual desires and preferences.’ In addition, ‘in a patriarchal world, she provides a spiritual and professional avenue for women to become powerful priestesses’ (Drewal:2008:25).

Alongside her European mermaid counterpart, the mirror is an important attribute of Mami Wata, not because of vanity, but due to its association with water and divinity similar to the Kongo \textit{minkisi}. Drewal explains:

\begin{quote}
The surface of the mirror is likened to the surface of the water. It is thus a boundary between the cosmic realms of water and land, a symbol of the permeable threshold crossed by Mami Wata when she enters bodies of her mediums and they go into possession trance. (2008:65)
\end{quote}

Drewal describes the many and varied manifestations of Mami Wata in African and the African diaspora as an ‘ambiguous’ water-spirit made up of many parts and impossible to pin down or categorise. ‘The identities of these divinities, however, are as slippery and amorphous as water itself’ (2008:23). With this permission, I carved Mami Wata/Fortune in \textit{Apple Girl} as an aged mermaid with long hemp hair and sagging breasts, unlike the youthful, svelte mermaids with which we are familiar. Her head is arched back and her inwardly-gazing, slit eyes are covered with gold leaf which shines, drawing the viewer’s attention. I based Mami Wata/Fortune’s face on a Chokwe \textit{pwo} mask which also has gold painted over her closed, slit eyes. (\textit{ref. Fig.26}) The \textit{Pwo} mask, as an embodiment of ideal

\textsuperscript{47} Drewal attributes further qualities to Olokun: ‘Olokun serves as a metaphor for the search for wisdom that knows no end. Olokun is also the final abode of diviners and others when they leave this world’ (2008:46). Sharing her name, Olokun, in the neighbouring Kingdom of Benin, is attributed to the male god of the sea.
female beauty, was danced at male initiation ceremonies to honour the fertility of women as nourishers and mothers (Stepan. 2005:176). The body of Mami Wata/ Fortune is textured to resemble scales as if she is in the process of metamorphosing into a fish or snake. Her fish-tail is split as she rides a smoothly carved fish raised off a base on wheels by six tall poles arranged vertically, reminiscent of a fence made of broom-sticks. She thus represents the ancient origins of the mermaid symbol in both Africa and pre-Christian Europe as Johnson explains: 'The fish represents the Mother Goddess herself and often appears as her mount.' She adds, 'at times the actual process of transformation is recorded; on tablets from the Near East, the goddess is described and part fish, part maiden – the fabulous mermaid of more recent times' (1990:240). In addition, double-tailed mermaids are both European and African, depicted on fifteenth century Venetian coins and in medieval bestiaries as well as in art forms in Benin and the Yoruba of Nigeria (Drewal. 2008: 41-43). (ref. Fig.27 & 28)

The egg-shape indented in the belly of Mami Wata/Fortune was accidentally uncovered as I removed a knot in the wood during the carving process. This symbol of fecund creativity connects her to the ancient apple tree bearing bright red fruit, the bedside table of the queen concealing paintings of cosmic eggs and to the green and white apple girl herself, concealed in the beaded red apple. Finally, she is connected to Crawford and myself as the older women manipulators of the story. Crawford too has abundantly long hair, similar in colour to that of Mami Wata/Fortune.

The constellation of sculptured tableaux which form a circle around the altar is completed when the tableau of Wami Wata/Fortune is wheeled into the performance arena to face the marriage tower as its companion piece.
The altar remains strewn with the detritus left after the performance: the bandages, the empty and abandoned apple, its blood in the form of red ribbon and the healing salt. The performance ends when the articulated arms of Mami Wata/Fortune are raised three times to bless the bridal couple.
The Altar

wood, beads, wax string, bones, mirror, found objects, tortoise shell & cloth.

1500 x 1220mm
Fig. 30 DETAIL

The Nut, Shu & Geb relief
wood.
350 x 300mm
Fig. 31

The Triptych

wood, beads, wax string, bones, mirror, tortoise shell & cloth.

890 x 950mm
Fig. 32 & DETAIL

**Seated Therianthrope**

wood, waxed string, bones & cowrie shell.

dimensions variable
Fig. 33 & DETAIL

*Bird*

wood, beads, wax string & bones.

400 x 300mm
**Fig. 34 & DETAIL**

*Fertility Figure*

wood, waxed string & bones.

400 x 320mm
The Watch-Dog

wood, beads, wax string & mirror.

dimensions variable

Fig. 35
Fig. 35 DETAIL
Fig. 36

The Apple Tree in Eden

wood & bone.

1400 x 1630mm
Fig. 37 & DETAIL

The Angelic Spirit
wood & bone.
700 x 300mm
The Apple Tree

wood, beads & baubles.

600 x 300mm
Fig. 39 & DETAILS

*Adam & Eve*

wood & leather.

350 x 450mm
Fig. 40

The Boudoir of the Queen
wood, cloth, paintings & found objects.
1250 x 500mm
Fig. 41 DETAILS

Cloth Paintings

acrylic, watercolour & pencil on cloth.

dimensions variable
Fig. 42

*The Apple*

wood, cloth & beads.

200 x 1500mm
Fig. 43

**Apple Girl Revealed**

wood, cloth, beads, porcelain, leather & nylon.
Fig. 44 DETAILS

Apple Girl Bathing

porcelain, leather, nylon, water, towel & glass bowl.
Fig.44 DETAILS
Fig. 45

*The King*

wood, beads, leather, cloth & fur.

300 x 180mm
Fig. 46

Apple Girl
porcelain, leather & nylon.
210 x 60mm
The War Chariot

wood, wax string & found objects.

1200 x 1000mm
The King in his War Clothes

wood, beads, bandages & leather.
The Domain of the Healing Fairy

wood, marrow bones, papier maché, cloth, mirrors, beads, snail shells, vulture feathers, salt, mpephu & found objects.
Fig. 48 DETAILS
Fig. 49

**Transformed Apple Girl**

wood, bandages, beads, leather & nylon.

280 x 80mm
Fig. 50

Apple Girl & the King Embrace
The Marriage Tower

wood, bone, cowrie shells & found objects.

1610 x 1310mm
Apple Girl & the King on the Marriage Tower
wood, beads, leather, nylon & tulle.
Fig. 52

*Mami Wata/Fortune*

wood, raw hemp, gold leaf & found objects.

1710 x 1270mm
Italo Calvino wrote in his introduction to *Italian Folktales*: ‘A folktale must be recreated each time. At the core of the narrative is the storyteller’ (2000:xxii).

At the start of my research, I wanted to find the origin of the fairy tale of *Apple Girl*, believing that this would somehow lead me to the meaning of the story and an interpretation with which to frame my performance. I realised after extensive reading, however, that this is an impossible task as all fairy tales are stitched and patched from elements borrowed by their tellers from a vast inter-cultural network of themes and plots. What I do know, supported by Propp (2009), Baring & Cashford (1993), Warner (1995), Jung (2003) and others, is that fairy tales have ancient historical trajectories, with their wisdom and symbols reaching back into Biblical, mythological and prehistoric times. In this sense they are universal, owned by no-one and belonging to all; therefore permission is given to continually borrow from, re-create and add to, this reservoir of tales.

Paying close attention to the singular voice of Raffaella Dreini as the storyteller of *Apple Girl* and by comparing her tale to the moralising of Grimm in *Little Snow White* and the misogynistic attitude of Basile expressed in *The Myrtle*, demonstrated to me that the voice of the storyteller in his/her particular context, is central to the meaning of the tale. ‘At the core of the narrative is the storyteller’ (Calvino. 2000:xxii). In my imaginative re-creation of *Apple Girl*, I pay homage to Dreini and others who assumed the roles and voices of fate and fortune as they generously recounted their tales. Through the process of transforming *Apple Girl* into sculpture and performance, I too place myself amongst these unruly and fecund crones. Through the iconography of the sculptures, I bring to life the trajectory of my own inheritance and interests in European and African mythologies expressed in various forms of material culture and art. My re-shaping and transformation of recycled materials and found objects makes manifest the idea of embedded histories that link the past with the present and the spiritual with the material.
I do not expect the audience of my work to be familiar with every nuance or meaning of the range of visual references I use to evoke the divine macrocosm which oversees and shapes the ritualised journey of apple girl and the king as they progress from naïve young lovers into mature adulthood. It is enough that a numinous, poetic and at times humorous quality is evoked through the performance and sculpted constellation of tableaux and puppets, to which I invite the audience to respond with curiosity and pleasure.
There was once a king and queen who were very sad because they had no children. The queen kept asking, ‘Why can’t I bear children the same as the apple tree bears apples?’

Now it happened that instead of bearing a son, the queen gave birth to an apple, but an apple redder and more beautiful than any you ever saw. The king placed it on a gold tray on his balcony.

Across the street from the king lived a second king who happened to be standing at his window one day and saw, on his neighbour’s balcony, a beautiful maiden as fair and rosy as an apple bathing and combing her hair in the sun. Open-mouthed, he stood staring at her, never having seen so lovely a maiden. But the minute the girl realized she was being observed, she ran back to the tray and disappeared inside the apple. The king had fallen madly in love with her.

He racked his brains and ended up crossing the street and knocking on the door, which the queen answered. “Majesty,” he said to her, “I have a favour to ask of you.”

“By all means, Majesty,” replied the queen. “Any way neighbours can help one another out…”

“I would like to have that magnificent apple on your balcony.”

“Do you know what you are asking, Majesty? I’m the apple’s mother, mind you, and I had to wait a long time before I had her.”

But the king wouldn’t take no for an answer, so the other king and queen had to grant his wish, in order for them all to remain good neighbours. Thus he went home with the apple, which he took straight to his own room. He put out everything necessary for her toilette, and the maiden would emerge every morning to bathe and arrange her hair while he looked on. That was all she did. She neither ate nor talked; she only bathed and arranged her hair, then went back inside the apple.
The king lived with his stepmother, whose suspicions were aroused by her stepson’s constant seclusion in his room. “I’d give anything to know what my son is up to!”

War broke out, and the king had to go off and fight. It broke his heart to leave his apple. He called his most trusted servant to him and said, “I’m leaving the key to my room with you. See that nobody goes in. Put out water and a comb every day for the apple girl, and make sure she has everything she needs. And don’t forget, she tells me everything.” (That wasn’t so, the girl never said a word, but the king thought it wise to tell his servant the contrary.) “If a hair of her head is harmed during my absence, you’ll pay with your life.”

“Have no fear, Majesty, I will look after her to the very best of my ability.”

As soon as the king was gone, the stepmother queen went to all lengths to get into his room. She put opium into the wine of his servant and stole the key from him when he fell asleep. She unlocked the door and turned the room upside down in search of clues to her stepson’s behaviour; but the more she searched, the less she found. The only thing out of the ordinary in the room was that splendid apple in a golden fruit bowl. “It must be this apple that is always on his mind!” Queens, as you well know, always have a small dagger concealed in their sashes. She took out the dagger and began pricking the apple all over. Out of every wound flowed a rivulet of blood. The stepmother queen grew frightened, ran away, and replaced the key in the sleeping man’s pocket.

When the servant awakened, he had no idea what had happened to him. He ran to the king’s room and found blood all over the place. “Oh, my goodness, what will I do now?” he exclaimed and fled.

He went to an aunt of his who was a fairy and possessed all magic powders. The aunt took a powder suitable for apples under spells and another for bewitched maidens, and blended them.

The servant returned to the apple and sprinkled all the wounds with the mixture. The apple burst open, and out stepped the maiden in bandages and plaster casts.

The king came home, and for the first time, the maiden spoke. “Would you believe that your stepmother stabbed me all over with her dagger? But your servant has nursed me back to health. I am eighteen and was
under a spell. If you like, I will be your bride.”
“If I like! Indeed I do!”

The wedding was celebrated, to the joy of both palaces. The only person missing was the stepmother, who fled and was never heard of again.

Merrily through life they went,
But were only content
To give me one cent
I never spent.
Fig. 53

Apple Studies

colour pencil on paper.
References


Bibliography


The photographs of my work were taken by Candice Ježek, unless otherwise stated.

**Fig.3** Fraser. 1971. Pg.34.

**Fig.4** Dagan. 1990. 118d. Pg.96.

**Fig.5** Taylor (Ed.). 2009. *Faustas in Africa*. 1995. Puppets Faustas and The Witch with puppeteers (left to right) Dawid Minnaar, Adrian Kohler, Basil Jones and Antoinette Kellermann, and Leslie Fong as Mephisto (foreground). Pg.205.

**Fig.18** Johnson. 1990. 29. Crane spirit. Senufo tribe, Ivory Coast, contemporary. Pg.29.

**Fig.19** Johnson. 1990. 158. One of the two sister deities, or perhaps mother and daughter from The Palace of Knossos brandishes sacred adders. Crete, sixteenth century B.C.E. Pg.143.

**Fig.20** Nel. 2007. Figure 116. *Leaping Fish*. Jackson Hlungwani. c.1980s. Wood. 58x108 cm. Karel Nel. Pg.164.

**Fig.21** D. Murathi. Wood. 9cm. Makhado, Limpopo Province. Photograph: Jill Joubert.

**Fig.22** Johnson. 1988. Plate 7. Stone Age shaft with breasts. Site of Pavlov, Czechoslovakia, 25,000-20,000 B.C.E. Pg. 54.

**Fig.23** Baring & Cashford. 1993. Figure 35. *Coronation of the Virgin*, Agnolo Gaddi, tempera on wood, c.1370. Pg.605.

**Fig.24** Sieber & Walker. 1987. 1. Primordial Couple. Dogon Peoples, Upper Ogol or Lower Ogol Village, Mali, 20th century. Wood, iron. H. 23 ¾ in. (60.03 cm). Pg 32.

**Fig.25** Drewal. 2008. 6.1. John Onyok (active 1930s-1970s, Urua Akpan, Ukana, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria). Mami Wata figure, 1950s. Wood, paint, raffia. 40.6 cm. Pg.116.

**Fig.26** Stepan & Hahner. 2005. 98. Forehead Mask. *Pwo*. Chokwe, Democratic Republic of Congo. Wood, plant fibres, metal, animal
and vegetable materials, colour pigments, height 21 cm. Pg.176.

**Fig.27** Drewal. 2008. 21. A double-tailed mermaid dating to the fourteenth century appears over the entrance to Saint Michael’s Church in Lucca, Italy. Pg.41.

**Fig.28** Drewal. 2008. 25. Armband. Owo-Yoruba peoples, Owo, Nigeria. Sixteenth-seventeenth century, Ivory. 12 cm. Pg.45.
Fig. 54

Outside Studio

work in progress of crocodile/snake for the marriage tower.

Photograph taken by Jill Joubert
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