The Bizarre Bazaar:

Investigating Gendered Performance through

Interactive Performance Art

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

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, cited, and referenced.

1. **Introducing my Aims: Neem Julle Plekke! (Take Your Position!)**

Lady Anne at the Microwave Oven by Antjie Krog

Oh, my Afrikaner sisters in Combis and station wagons
with stylish sunglasses and hair tinted against the grey
bodies that jog and gym and yoga in flowery leotards
fiercely clinging to pliancy and Pill
as we flit past one another on the highways
stop in dusty clouds next to sport fields
attentively gesticulate the rhythm outside music studios
pray one another to tears during Bible study
I am wondering what kind of breed are we?
in a merciless methodology of planning
I recognize the insanity of packing an ox-wagon
the passion with which children are pushed to excel
and persevere smells of concentration camp and croup
and as we sit on Sanderson linen and ooh and coo
and the men at the built-in bar drink desperately and talk
about tits
We know that we are the last
the last whose children are being tenderly blonded on
milk and honey
this is the end
behind us under us around us
structures that keep our kind in place are crushing themselves to bits.

Figure 1. *Flight*, Stellenbosch Campus. 2016.

When I first started exploring performance art, I was in my third year of studying Fine Arts at Stellenbosch University. The #FeesMustFall protests were in full swing. I was accepted into the Open Forum residency run by curator Greer Valley which tasked us to create art that spoke to the politically charged moment on campus[1]. This artistic juncture in my career came with the heightened awareness that my body, as a White

[1] I created a performance-installation piece called, *Flight* (2016), which was later reiterated as *Take Flight* (2019) at Infecting the City. The sculpture (figure 1) was put on the Rooiplein in front of the Jan Marais statue as an artistic intervention with the past. This sculpture visually challenged the ways in which we still commemorate past figures like Jan Marais. It addressed the problematics around safeguarding monuments in public spaces that violate and threaten the identities of so many people. More specifically, it aimed to comment on the ever-present hierarchical structure within the University of Stellenbosch and society insofar as it contributes to this violation by denying access and opportunities to those who are historically deprived. *Flight*, therefore, interrogated Jan Marais and that which his presence resembles by asking truthfully: “Isn’t it time to get down?”. The installation was removed by University Security 90 minutes after it was installed.

Afrikaans-speaking Woman, says something before I utter a word - as with all bodies in this “post”-colonial/apartheid country. During the campus protests, I watched other Afrikaner and White English-speaking Women lower their heads in shameful silence or disassociate with hushed anxiousness at being called into the racial-economic debates ablaze in the country. This silence sometimes seemed appropriate and it reminded me of the resounding silence from the Women I grew up with on political matters, debates on identity, and (the never-to-be-mentioned past of) apartheid.

In their article, ‘White Women and Antiracism in the (Post)Colony of South Africa’ (Coetzee, Du Toit, & Gouws, 2024), which explores how White Women can align themselves with and add to the fight against racism in present-day South Africa, Coetzee, Du Toit, and Gouws argue that White Women have claimed innocence from the making of racial systems while at the same time benefitting from and being invested in these systems because of the privilege they connote:

> Even as white women aim to fight patriarchal power and the accompanying threat of sexual violence, they may inadvertently fall into the trap of reinforcing racist power patterns. Taking this into account, it seems easy to conclude that white women’s solidarity and allyship with antiracist movements are doomed and should therefore at most take the form of humble silent support, something that is often enacted (although it arguably does not have to be) as a kind of passivity and detachment not very different from simply maintaining the status quo. However, less often explored, especially in the South African context, is the question of the specific potential that white women’s ambiguous positionality as internal other to white power holds for antiracist politics (Coetzee, Du Toit, & Gouws, 2024:610).

Challenging, highlighting, and breaking the silence I am used to and exploring the productive actions White Women can take considering their “specific racial/gendered subject positioning in relation to White Male power” (Coetzee, Du Toit, & Gouws, 2024:611) was the initial motivation for this practice-based MA in Theatre and Performance and has remained so throughout this study.

Even though South Africa has changed legally and politically since 1994 (the year I was born), very little has changed inside Afrikaner communities, and/or they change very slowly. This reluctance to change due to the perceived threat of ostracisation and loss of privilege will be discussed further in Chapter 2 of this paper. However, as illustrated by

the Antjie Krog poem at the beginning of this paper (which profoundly captures the foundation of my entire pursuit), the contemporary South African moment is pushing for the breakdown of the structures that keep normative nationalist Afrikaner identity and privilege in place. From what I have observed in my community of origin and the practice-based research stipulated in this paper, in response to this perceived "threat", Afrikaners isolate and withdraw themselves more and more from contributing to an integrated and diverse society. As my study developed, I came to see the specific performativity of heteronormative White Femininity as one of the core elements which keeps these communities the same and well-nurtured. This observation of stagnation motivated me to ask this initial research question: can the use of my White Female body in performance art activations assist in the exposure of the existing training and performance of White Femininity in the Afrikaner community?

Even though this paper started with race, I focus on gender as entangled with race in this particular study. This paper specifically investigates how nationalist forms of Afrikaner Femininity are still "trained" in Female-bodied individuals raised in Afrikaner enclaves[2]. I discuss the particular aspects of this identity training[3] in Chapter 3 by doing a theoretical exposition of Christi van der Westhuizen's study titled, *Identities at the Intersection of Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Class in a Liberalising, Democratising South Africa: The Reconstruction of "the Afrikaner Woman"* (2013), as well as the work by Feminist philosopher Azille Coetzee (2021,2022,2024). I discuss the current academic writing on the entanglement of race and gender and make a well-established point of feminist studies: that gender is at the core of the construction of race in South Africa's disturbing past of colonialism, slavery, and apartheid (Coetzee, 2021:129). I analyse the performative qualities of the *Volksmoeder* identity (direct translation: mother of the nation) as a historical cultural trope still used as the ideal in White Afrikaner Femininity training.

[2] A term Christi van der Westhuizen uses in her 2013 study, a key source of this paper which was later published as a book *Sitting Pretty: White Afrikaans Women in Postapartheid South Africa* (2017). Van der Westhuizen uses the word "enclaves" to describe the privatised White spaces Afrikaners have created "post"-apartheid which gives rise to a kind of semigration (Ballard in Coetzee, 2022:2) as these White communities support each other economically and police who may enter their spaces (Van der Westhuizen, 2017:20)

[3] I will make explicit how I perceive the difference between education and training in Chapter 2.

I want to underscore that even though I initially set out to study only how nationalist forms of Afrikaner Femininity are still “trained” in Female-bodied individuals raised in “post”-apartheid Afrikaner enclaves, I have since discovered, through the writings of Nuttall (2009) and Christi van der Westhuizen (2013), that this particular Western heteronormative performativity of Femininity continues to affect and influence all Woman-identifying bodies in South Africa. The application of the source *Entanglement* (Nutall, 2009) to my research is used to bridge my work to Woman-identifying individuals of all races in South Africa, as the modes of normalised White Feminine performativity discussed in this paper can be found in all societies with a Christian, colonial, patriarchal history/system in place. Nutall writes in her introduction that “post”-apartheid South Africa is often described through a “register of difference” and, although she acknowledges that this framing is important, she highlights how studying the subtle overlaps - the entanglements - that mark the past and present of the people of a “post”-colonial/apartheid country could offer fertile insights into racial configurations (Nuttall, 2009:2). In Chapters 2 and 3, I briefly illustrate ways that the colonial/apartheid construction of Black[4] Femininity and Masculinity was used to construct White Femininity as “more human”, therefore, justifying horrific racial separation and the abuse of Black individuals by the colonial/apartheid regimes. Due to the scope of this study, my performance and art-making practice draws mostly from my lived experience and in the theoretical aspect of this study I take an in-depth look at the most recent White Feminist writings to scope the cultural field I am creating work in. However, in deconstructing White Femininity, I aim to destabilise all race/gendered performances that are still normalised in “post”-apartheid South Africa.

Chapter 4 of this paper discusses my circular/recycled methodology of planning and creating[5] and how it links to Tim Ingold’s writing about materials that are in flow that “can only be followed” and “redirected in anticipation of what might emerge” (Ingold, 2012:8,10). I explore how performance practices such as repetition, synchronised

[4] I will look closer at racial categorisation in Chapter 2.

[5] The collages at the beginning of some of the sections in this paper is an example of how I continuously deconstruct, rework, and reassemble my work. I created them during the last phases of writing this paper and felt quite stuck. As I scanned through my note books of the last two years I saw many drawings I made during seminar sessions. Collaging these together with pieces of recycled materials helped the writing process to flow again.

movements, juxtaposition, playing games, multisensory experiences and audience participation are used in the practical outputs of my research. By using these performance techniques and drawing on the theories of Richard Schechner, I explore the potential of my installation-performance piece called *The Bizarre Bazaar* to identify, expose/point, and transform the race/gender stereotypes laid out above.

Chapter 5 includes an in-depth discussion of the first iteration of *The Bizarre Bazaar*, performed as the halfway mark of this master's study - its interpretations, practical takeaways, links to the theoretical work mentioned in this introduction, and thematic links to Reza de Wet's plays *Missing* (2000) and *Diepe Grond* (1990). In my study, the bazaar is synonymous with the community fair or market where people not only sell/buy goods to support a specific cause but also (dis)play roles for each other that enforce and (re)create their socio-political place within the community through participation in the event. These events are complex (dis)plays of the entanglements of race, class, gender, geography, consumption, politics, religion, and humanness. During my childhood, I had observed Women come together to perform and compete in the expression of stereotypical heteronormative Femininity at events like the church bizarre, wedding, christening, school market day, and kitchen tea. Richard Schechner echoes this observation, "[t]he shared basic assumption is that people in groups – whether of two, three or dozens – in some ways 'ritualise' their behaviours; 'present' themselves rather than just be" (Schechner, 1973:3).

Specifically, the performance of heteronormative White Femininity at the centre of this research is characteristic of a due-diligent Feminine personality who knows her place within the community (a macrocosm of the patriarchal nationalist nuclear family) (Coetzee, 2021:129). This place/role is defined by a performance that involves always being busy in the home, serving Men and children, keeping the peace, and performing fragility and sexual innocence (in public) (Coetzee, 2021:129). At the bazaar, this takes the form of a performance that is focused and driven in organising the event, creation of the food and products, friendly welcoming, gathering and encouraging participants, dressing to be an object of the Male gaze/desire and entertainment, while maintaining a respectful awareness of not becoming the centre of attention. I argue that this trained

identity has a sense of ambiguity and tension. Anne Bogart writes that “art exists in the tension between contrasting realities. You [the artist] try to find shapes to embody current ambiguities and uncertainties. While resisting certainty, you try to be as lucid and exact as possible from the state of imbalance and uncertainty. You act from a direct experience of the environment…” (Bogart, 2007:3). I, like many other Women, live with the bizarre expectation to perform contrasting and ambiguous prescriptions of what it means to be a Woman. Through my performance work I aim to point out this bizarreness and, as I argue in this paper, mobilise the potential for transformation that performance art offers to create a piece that is bizarre, uncanny, and strange that hopefully opens up new possible identity choices for myself and other Women-identifying individuals.

2. My Positionality & Rationale: Resisting the Training

I am a multimedia artist who currently identifies as a White Afrikaans-speaking cisgender queer middle-class Woman. I was raised to be the typical example of what Afrikaner communities call a “trouvrou” (a marriageable Woman). My family attended the Rawsonville Dutch Reformed Church (NG Church) almost every Sunday of my childhood. I became aware of the outdated and deeply problematic nature of my rural community’s values in high school and started resisting the training I received at home, at church, in school, and at community gatherings.

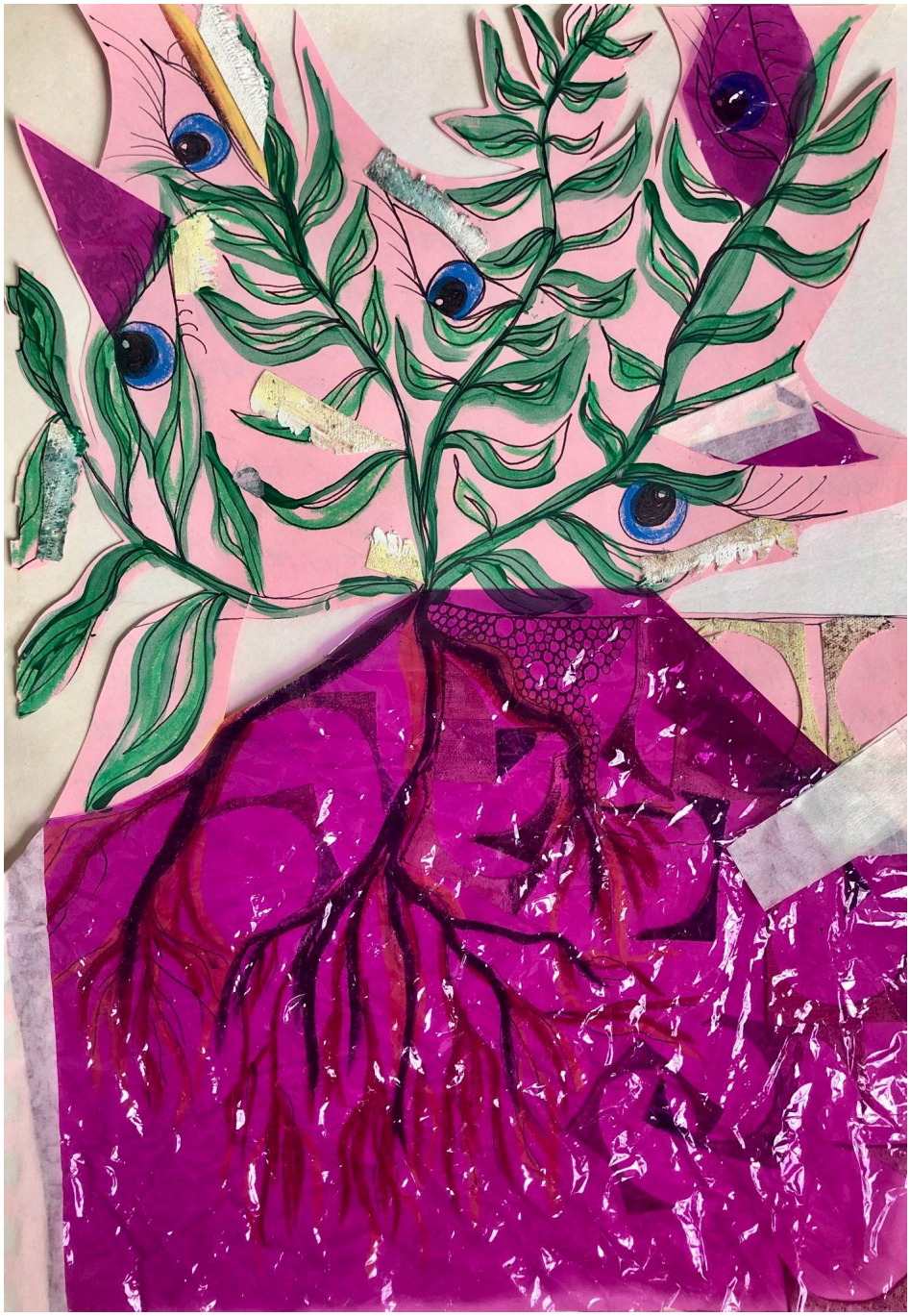
I use the word training throughout the paper intending to make clear the difference between education and the sense of the "drilling" with which Afrikaner Women are raised to perform their identities. This idea is echoed by Schechner when he argues that the extended period of human infancy and childhood serves as a crucial time for training and rehearsing for the effective performance of adult life (Schechner, 2013:23). To me, training involves a sense of repetitive action that does not allow for much variation in the way the trainee applies what they are drilled to perform. Whereas education leaves more room for personal interpretation or application. In this sense, being taught or educated implies some kind of critical power that is afforded to the educated, but not to the trained.

When you are trained to be a "good girl" in the Afrikaner community, you do not question. You do not resist. This is possibly because this kind of gendered or cultural training is so insidious the trainee is mostly unaware that they are being trained. Any older person can police you, whether they are someone you know personally or not. Therefore, this gendered training is not only done by your assigned "trainer " (your parents or direct family, for example) within a relationship that recognises an exchange of knowledge and the power dynamics involved in it. It is allowed by any "Tannie" or "Oom"[6] who are afforded the power to police your behaviour if you do not act out the appropriate "drilled" gendered performance. These trainers are also performing an identity they were trained to perform and are often completely unaware they are training or performing.

Furthermore, being raised in a family where English was only spoken by my parents "in emergencies", I have noticed how my mother tongue often confuses me in writing about gender and sex. For example, in Afrikaans, the word gender has not existed until recently anglicised as "gender". The word "Vrou" is used for Woman, wife, and as the root of "Vroulikheid" which means Womanhood *and* Femininity - here it becomes clear how conflated the gendered and sexed understanding of the words Woman and Female are. The fact that "wife" is also "Vrou" is a fantastically problematic illustration of how the gendered role/expectation is written into the language and actions of my forebears.

[6] "Tannie" and "Oom" are gendered age-hierarchical terms that directly translate to Aunt and Uncle but which are used in Afrikaans to refer to any older Woman or Man.

2.1. My First Intuition: Post-Post



Just because we now speak of “post”-apartheid or the “new” South Africa, it does not mean that history has necessarily turned a corner (W.J.T Mitchell in Moys, 2012:2-3). One point of departure for this project is the understanding that what is taking place in Afrikaner enclaves is not separate from the experiences of inclusivity, privilege, and

suppression of people outside of the Afrikaner enclaves. Which makes this an important artistic topic for me to research. Therefore, in this paper, I write “post”-apartheid with the post in inverted commas, to constantly bring awareness to the continuum of history and my argument that the performance of problematic Afrikaner identities has not been fully halted or changed after Apartheid was legally ended.

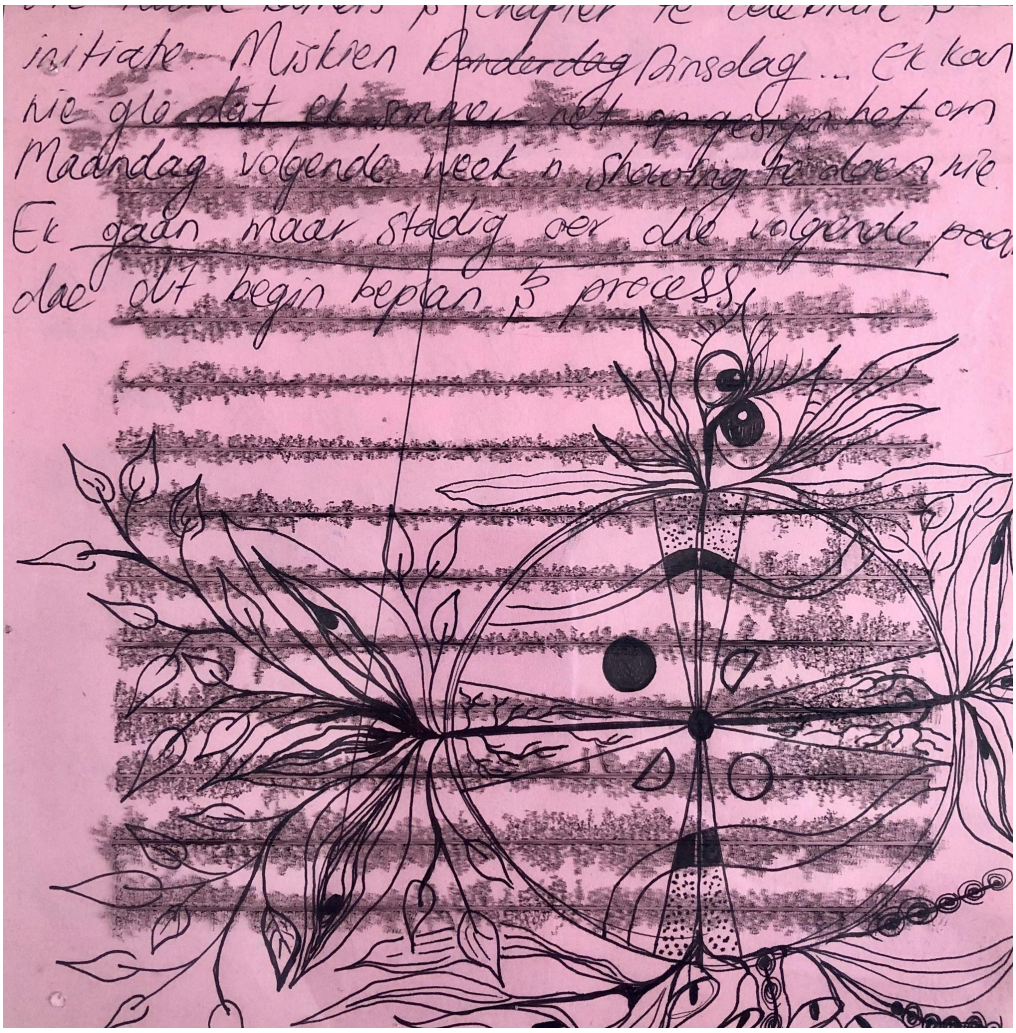
As Christi van der Westhuizen shows in her paper, *Still Pink and Pale: White Afrikaans Hetero-Femininity in Post Apartheid South Africa* (2018:33-35), that one way violent beliefs, systems, and behaviour are continued “post”-apartheid is by dislodging the history of problematic apartheid terms from their performative qualities. For example, the term “Afrikaner” has become a contested word in some “post”-apartheid White Afrikaans-speaking communities. Liberal White Afrikaans-speaking individuals will not necessarily refer to themselves as Afrikaners or selectively do so depending on the crowd, even if their behaviour perpetuates that of their Afrikaner ancestors. Additionally, some “alternative” Afrikaners hope to decouple the word from its violent past as they attempt to claim responsibility for the privilege they inherited from racial oppression and exploitation. Others claim the term to make a particular statement about their political positioning, openly aligning themselves with the values of the apartheid regime (think about the members of the problematic community of Orania[7]). To many, the word Afrikaner holds only cultural and ethnic meaning connected to enjoying specific foods like braais, koeksisters, and melktert, or a specific energy of togetherness as Afrikaners often identify as jolly people - in this way completely ignoring the racialised identity that deliberately separates themselves from other Afrikaans-speaking communities of colour by using the term Afrikaner. McClintock states, “[w]hen examining Afrikaner whiteness, it is important to remember that the Afrikaner *volk* (nation), as a racial-ethnic identity, came to exist relatively recently (at the beginning of the twentieth century) through a deliberate process of self-invention in the resistance to British imperialism by a group of people that, up to that point, did not have much in common” (McClintock in Coetzee, 2021:97). Many Afrikaners simply ignore the very real violence that is trained into their

[7] Orania is a small, self-governing town in the Northern Cape province of South Africa, established in 1991. It is known for its predominantly Afrikaner population and its focus on preserving Afrikaner culture, language, and heritage. The town operates on the principle of self-sufficiency and excludes non-Afrikaners, making it a controversial symbol of ethnic separatism in post-apartheid South Africa.

way of living and community relations.

The hesitancy/fatigue/fear to internally subvert these Afrikaner spaces could be due to the threat of ostracisation from our communities of origin, and the reluctance to lose the privilege that these communities signify. The privilege afforded to members of Afrikaner communities is used to keep the “new” South Africa outside and the “old” South Africa intact inside security walls. This seems to indicate that the disruption of these troublesome Afrikaner spaces can only really happen from the inside unless the power bought by generational privilege breaks down. I have grappled with the term “Afrikaner”, and what it describes regarding the inheritance of a problematic past that shapes the present way through my art-making practice. Bringing these necessary discussions to light is one motivation for the produced body of work.

2.2. My Second Intuition: Binary-Shminary



To expose this gendered training and performance I have to talk about the White empirical structure within which it came to exist. This structure is by its nature purposefully binary and heteronormative (as illustrated above by the Afrikaans language's failure to semantically recognise the discrepancy between role and gender). As an attempt to underscore the awareness of speaking about and within a binary structure, I write Feminine, Masculine, Woman, Man, and other gendered terms with capital letters. This study aligns itself with Judith Butler's insight that gender is performative, complicated and fluid (2006). In this way, gender norms are not innate, but rather continuously enacted through the body.

Within this study's limited scope, I am focused on how notions of White Femininity have

influenced Woman-identifying bodies. However, I argue alongside Coetzee, that destabilising nationalist hetero/patriarchal Afrikaner identity is an important queer project (Coetzee, 2021:103). The strict binary-gender system within which Afrikaner Femininity was inscribed was, among other horrific acts of discrimination, achieved by actively suppressing Afrikaner homosexuality. As Coetzee writes after Klausen:

> …homosexuality as deviation from the sex code and the rigid gender script through which whiteness was performed (see Klausen, 2015:59) was construed as a threat to the Afrikaner people (along with communism, black political opposition, satanism and liberalism), reflecting its acute racial anxiety… resistance to the apartheid regime and its violence was branded and dismissed as a product of sexual 'deviance'. Therefore, homosexual sex was—similar to premarital sex, extramarital sex and cross-racial sex—not simply deemed immoral but also seen as undermining the white race (Klausen, 2015:59), and draconian legislation was put in place to prohibit and deter it."(Coetzee, 2021:103)

Reflecting on racial binary thinking, it is crucial to recognize how these categories are constructed differently depending on the context, much like the gender binary. The concept of "White" in England differs significantly from its meaning in South Africa, and even within South Africa, there's a distinction between the understanding of "White" among English South Africans and Afrikaners. Similarly, "Black" carries different connotations in the American context compared to South Africa, and within South Africa, the term has varying meanings across different ethnic groups. These variations reveal that the terms "White" and "Black" do not inherently define race, but rather reflect social constructs that are fluid and context-dependent.

Besides separating people into smaller groups to successfully suppress them, the apartheid government also created generalised discriminatory judgement about how all marginalised groups were the "same" in that they were all "inferior" to Whiteness. The apartheid government grouped people as "Black" (people of African descent), "Coloured" (people of Khoi- and other Indigenous ancestry, mixed-race people and some others), "Indian" (people of Indian ancestry), and "White" (people of European ancestry). The Black Consciousness political movement championed the application of

the term “Black” to incorporate everyone who is not White as a way to combat the alienating apartheid racial categorisation (Coetzee, du Toit & Gouws, 2024:609). After 1994, these racial categories remained in place in official government records and policies.

John Hartigan, in his critique of race discussions, argues that these conversations often rely on rigid, allegorical figures like "Whites" and "Blacks," which obscure the complex realities of racial identities. Hartigan concedes, though, that as racial dramas unfold nationally it is sometimes warranted that “broad readings” take place, “but as such spectacles “come to represent the meaning of race relations, they obscure the many complex encounters, exchanges and avoidances that constitute the persistent significance of race” (Hartigan in Nuttall, 2009:10). This critique is particularly relevant in South Africa, where race has historically been treated as a fixed category. However, as Hartigan suggests, by loosening the hold of these absolute figures and examining the instances where racial significance spills beyond these confines, we can begin to rethink the institutionalisation of racial differences.

The performative elements of Whiteness become clear in Ahmed’s dissection of it in *The Phenomenology of Whiteness.* Ahmed argues that Whiteness functions as a “(bad) habit” and that it is an orientation (Ahmed, 2007:149). She explains that orientation is about “the intimacy of bodies and their dwelling places… about how we begin from here”, which involves unfolding (Ahmed, 2007:151). The “here” she speaks about (the orientation) entails the surroundings a person is born into, the habitual knowledge that is passed down, and how these inheritances sit in time and space (Ahmed, 2007:151-152). All of this sets people up to engage with the world in a certain way - to do certain things because their orientation makes those things within reach (Ahmed, 2007:152).

Ahmed argues that Whiteness is sustained by being viewed as a beneficial attribute, almost like a property inherent in individuals, cultures, and places. She states it's no coincidence that race is often explained through familial metaphors, where “races” are perceived as having “shared ancestry.” She further makes the case that while sharing is typically seen as participating in or having something in common, it also implies division

or the ownership of specific parts (Ahmed, 2007:154). This inheritance in terms of habit and orientation sets the stage for a certain performance that needs to be continually trained and performed in opposition to the (also continuously created) “other”. Here it starts to show how the worlds constantly described as different (Black and White) are inextricably entangled.

Nuttall’s concept of entanglement is also linked to desegregation, suggesting that while racial segregation aimed to maintain strict boundaries, entanglements occurred nonetheless. These entanglements force us to reconsider how we understand race, class, and power, moving beyond segregated theories that rely on binary oppositions like oppression versus resistance. Post-1994, as South Africa transitioned away from legislated racial differences, there was an opening for critical theory to rethink the absoluteness of difference as a category, challenging the assumption that a lens of difference is essential to any post-colonial analysis (Nuttall, 2009:31).

Nuttall lists six ways in the introduction of her book, *Entanglement* (2009) how the concept of entanglement has been used to engage with the “post”-apartheid present of South Africa. One of these ways, which is an interesting provocation to my own engagement with race in this paper, was Achille Mbembe's conception of "the time of entanglement". He asserts that time is an interlocking of presents, pasts, and futures, where each era retains traces of others. This perspective repudiates the idea of racial categories as fixed and stable, instead highlighting the unpredictable and interconnected nature of identity formation. In focusing on entanglement, Mbembe shows that we must reject linear models that maintain ignorance and extremism they give rise to, urging us to see how different temporalities and identities interweave (Mbembe in Nuttall, 2009:4).

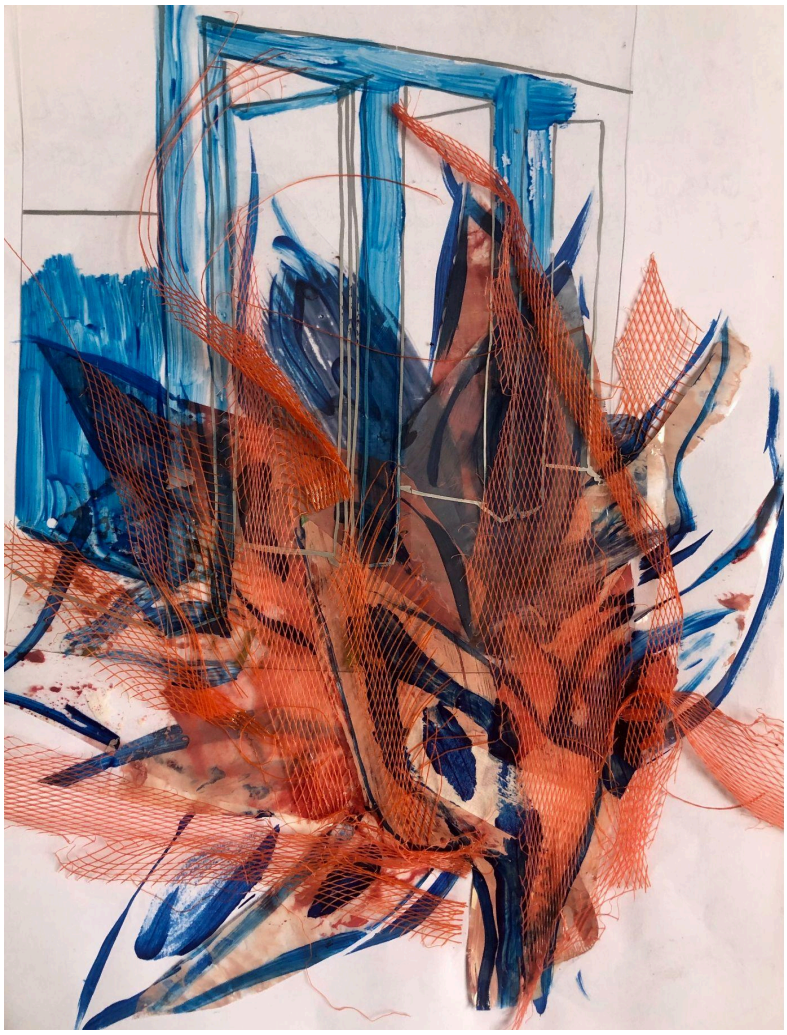
In her chapter on Whiteness, Nuttall reveals Whiteness through the analysis of literary texts as “a locus of power and privilege which gives rise, firstly, to an economy of looking and watching, and secondly, often simultaneously, to one of secrets and lies.” (Nuttall, 2009:59). According to Nuttall, scholars like Distiller and Steyn (2004) emphasise the need for a new vocabulary of race that challenges the artificiality of "Whiteness" and "Blackness" and interrogates the policing of their boundaries. Nuttall

also mentions tht this approach echoes Mbembe's entanglement theory, which calls for an analysis of the intersections and unexpected convergences of identities, spaces, and histories that were once considered separate (Nuttall, 2009:10-11).

This is a massive undertaking for which there is not enough scope in this study. By considering all the various perspectives on race and racial terms briefly mentioned above, we see that the racial binary is a constructed and contested space, shaped by historical, social, and political contexts. The challenge lies in acknowledging the fluidity and complexity of these identities while resisting the urge to oversimplify them into fixed categories. Ahmed cautions that attempts to critique these constructs can unintentionally reinforce them. This aligns with my reflection on White Afrikaner Femininity, acknowledging that my positionality as a White Afrikaans-speaking woman might obscure my critique. Yet, Ahmed encourages us to embrace the potential failure of such projects as productive, allowing us to engage more deeply with the complexities of identity.

By using the binary terms with capital letters as a textual device I aim to highlight this complexity and point out how limiting this simplified binary language is. I am attempting to make the historical and performative entanglements of the construction of heteronormative White Femininity in South Africa with the construction of a racialised apartheid regime clear while linking its influences to the present. I am interested in the “secrets and lies” of how divisively the binary gender construct was used to enforce colonialism/apartheid systems. More specifically, this study is interested in how constructions of gender were/are used to create the racial and ethnic identity of Afrikaner Whiteness and how that has implications for all Woman-identifying individuals. Nuttall draws on Martha Hodes’s (1999) work to highlight that the legacy of racial categorisation is also a legacy of sexuality, as both are rooted in taboos surrounding the crossing of racial boundaries (Nuttall, 2009:76). Were these “secrets and lies” of gender construction extensively evaluated in the immediate aftermath of apartheid or is it only a recent project of South African Feminism and, therefore, requires a lot more work? Exposing this tension between race, sexuality, and gender is what motivates my study.

2.3. My Third Intuition: Polisie-Polisie! Sy Speel Met Vuur!" (Police-Police! She Is Playing With Fire)



The construction of identity is always a public political, but also a private, act. If this process of identity-making resulted in a commitment to a cause or to a new nation, it was also about breaking from the collective conformity of whiteness itself. Why is this? …one of the mediating moments in the complex set of identity transformations in white autobiographies is necessarily the birth of the individual self. At the same time, what is desired is the birth of the new collective, in which one could belong – while still being oneself… (Nuttall, 2009: 68-69).

I experienced the contemporary political discussions in “alternative”[8] Afrikaner groups focused on the patriarchal structure of the Afrikaner culture with an emphasis on how Men controlled, structured, and policed Afrikaner Women, as well as those marked as “other” to Afrikaners during apartheid and before. It is a well-known fact that the Afrikaner regime alongside the Dutch Reformed Church mobilised patriarchal notions of Christianity to create an ideal model of the nuclear family (meant to be a model of the *volk* at large) (Coetzee, 2021:104). In this model, the husband is the protector and leader of the family (and *volk*) and the wife reproduces and nurtures it, served by exploited Black labourers in a capitalistic economy (Coetzee, 2021:103).

When I started openly resisting my Afrikaner-gendered training in high school (like not shaving my body hair, using crude language, talking openly about politics at the dinner table, and wearing revealing clothing), it was the Women in my community who vocally tried to police the way I performed my identity and present my body. This policing was always done on behalf of the Men and for the comfort and protection of the Men, but in my experience, the policing of my body rarely came directly from the Men in my family or community as they simply would not talk about *vrouesake* (Women’s things). This was the third intuition I had that something disturbing and violent was taking place in Afrikaner enclaves, masked as universal truths about Womanhood.

Van der Westhuizen argues that White Afrikaner Women are still the educators and trainers of the children that form the future Afrikaner community (what used to be called the *volk*) (2018:33-35). She points out that many of the values that formed the Afrikaner *volk* before and during apartheid are still being trained, now just privately and still in the domestic domain which is the realm of the wife/mother in the service of the husband and children (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:186-193). It is, therefore, very important in discussions of patriarchal systems to acknowledge the role Women play in policing the values of that system. This is why this artistic project is further motivated by my

[8] When I started vocally resisting the Feminine Afrikaner training of my childhood I was labelled “rebellious”, “difficult”, and an “alternative Afrikaner” by my community of origin. When I went to Stellenbosch University and then moved to Cape Town in 2019, I met many individuals that also resisted the nationalist training of their childhood homes and called themselves “alternative Afrikaners”. It bothers me that the “alternative” Afrikaner community is only an alternative to the conservative hegemonic culture. Internally, being an alternative Afrikaner still means that I am being read in relation to the conservative, dominant group.

frustration with the apolitical nature of White Afrikaans popular culture (which mirrors the private and social silence I mentioned in the introduction) - specifically, the media aimed at Women.

Household magazines such as *Huisgenoot* and *Sarie*[9] (which I grew up with) have commodified Feminist ideals, but neglect to acknowledge the political complexities and disparities involved with representing more diverse Women-identifying bodies. Van der Westhuizen directly links this apolitical nature of White Afrikaans Women's magazines to the initial construction of the Afrikaner *volk* (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:66-101). Although writers like Marijke Du Toit (1996), Marnell Kirsten (2014), Christi Van der Westhuizen (2017), Azille Coetzee (2025) and more are making important contributions to the theoretical and philosophical Feminist debate as it pertains to Afrikaner Femininity, truly controversial Afrikaner Women in the cultural sector - content creators, playwrights, poets, academics etc.- are either being "swept under the rug", assimilated by the Afrikaner community, or easy to avoid when you live in Afrikaner enclaves (Coetzee, 2021:94). I am wondering where the contemporary Ingrid Jonkers or the 28-year-old Antjie Krogs are and why are their voices not being elevated more by the "alternative" Afrikaners so new possibilities of "alternative" identities become normalised?

We can look towards the Afrikaner music pop industry as an example of a very powerful cultural industry that reflects the views, ideals, and boundaries of what is acceptable to its Afrikaner following. Schalk van der Merwe writes in his study, *The Dynamics of the Interaction Between Music and Society in Recorded Popular Afrikaans Music, 1900-2015,* about the centrality of Afrikaans pop music to Afrikaners and that the spaces created for this music, such as music festivals, have become increasingly political "post"-apartheid (Van der Merwe, 2015:227). He argues that there are certain roles Afrikaner artists are "allowed" to play in this enclosed industry, and if they deviate from these stereotypes, they are excluded and, therefore, do not have access to the sales and audiences the industry offers (Van der Merwe, 2015: 238).

[9] The influence of Sarie magazine is quite vast: "Sarie Women's magazine has the second highest circulation of Women's magazines in South Africa despite its small target market: White, Afrikaans, heterosexual Women – comparatively limited in a population of 52 million of which White people constitute only 4.5 million," (Van der Westhuizen, 2016: 6)

He outlines the roles Masculine artists are afforded in the pop music industry, noting that there are seven stereotypes that are acceptable to Afrikaner supporters and industry-makers: *boer, metroman, sportsman, retroman, student, worker, and rebel* (Van der Merwe, 2015:236). The *Fokofpolisiekar*[10] leadsinger, Francois van Coke, is a good example of how a member of a controversial music group was reappropriated as an acceptable "rebel" by the Afrikaner audience. The band caused a lot of controversies, especially in 2006 with the "Fok God" (Fuck God) incident[11]. However, Van Coke's 2015 collaborative song with Rock singer, Karen Zoid, *Toe Vind Ek Jou* (Then I Found You) seems a clear example of a "rebel" acquiescing to the pressures of the industry. This song is a love ballad and very different from the primary styles of both these initially controversial artists. The words in this song that strike me, are as follows:

[10] I also read about Zander Tyler's persona Jack Parow as a reappropriated "rebel" artist in Sonja Smit's chapter *De-Reifying Representations of White Male Identity in "post"-apartheid Popular Performance Practices: Jack Parow* in the book *On Whiteness* (2012). Unfortunately, the scope of this paper did not allow for the inclusion of a Jack Parow case study as well.

[11] The bassist of the rock band, Wynand Myburg, wrote "Fok God" on a fan's wallet. This caused a big public discussion and upset which led to venue cancellations and a bomb threat at one of their performances (Van der Merwe, 2015:245-246).

(Translated version)
Beyond the voices that laugh
Friends who greet
See you later
Everyone finds his way
I know I should too my dear
…
You're my refuge
Never want to make you cry
You're my song
You're my tune
We have a dog
We have a little home
I have given enough
I shouted enough
I learned a long time ago
But still I tried
Flee like a traitor
from what holds me
There were monsters in the dark
Then I found you

My interpretation of these lyrics is that these two artists admit to being tired of screaming (a reference to their Rock resistance music perhaps) and being *volksvreemd* (alien to the nation - being outcasts or ostracised). They have since found love, have homes, and dogs - have settled down and have (from this refuge of family life) decided to leave their “traitor” lives behind (traitors to the normative Afrikaner identity) and “sell out” in order to support their family. The recent public persona of both these artists is still portrayed by Afrikaner media as “rough around the edges”, which gives them a particular edge, however, they are often shown in magazines like *Sarie* and *Die*

Huisgenoot within their family lives - reinforcing normative Afrikaner tropes. The privilege, access, and capital Afrikaner communities offer are often at the centre of why “alternative” or “rebellious” Afrikaner artists are not more confrontational in their resistance.

Taking into account this assimilation, suppression, and how Afrikaner communities police themselves, I asked a colleague during the first research week of this course: “How do I create content that sufficiently disrupts these enclaved spaces without being ostracised or assimilated?” He answered: “You play the fool”. This answer catalysed the process of creating two small performance instances during the first year of this study in which I explored this theme through playing games, singing songs, and playing with dolls as a method of training behaviour. But the questions remain the same and will probably only be answered when I try to take this work outside of the academic space: how do I reach the audience I would like to disrupt if they have fortified their isolation with privatised security and electric fencing? And/or how do I resist being reabsorbed into the normative cultural matrix or not just preaching to the alternative choir?

3. Theoretical Framework: The Entanglements of the *Volksmoeder*, *Ordentlikheid*, & "Structures that Keep Our Kind in Place"

> A focus on entanglement in part speaks to the need for a utopian horizon, while always being profoundly mindful of what is actually going on. Such a horizon carries particular weight in societies which confront the precariousness of life, crime, poverty, AIDS and violence on a daily basis; it suggests the importance, too, of holding 'heretical conversations' in order to question and even, at times, dislodge or supersede the tropes and analytical foci which quickly harden into conventions of how we read the 'now'... (Nuttall, 2009:11-12)

This section contains a theoretical exposition of Christi van der Westhuizen and Azille Coetzee's research on Afrikaner Female subjectivity as it pertains to the *volksmoeder* (mother of the nation) identity ideal and how it was constructed through the nodal point *ordentlikheid* (similar to the Victorian English concept of respectability) before and during apartheid as well as how it is reconstructed or interpellated "post"-apartheid. I illustrate how Van der Westhuizen finds the performance of this identity "still alive and well" (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:198), how Coetzee links the reverberations of the reconstruction of this identity performance to Sara Ahmed's idea of "strange encounters" with people of colour, and how the positionality of the White Woman as the internal "other" could be mobilised to resist colonial/apartheid values still upheld in "post"-apartheid (Coetzee, 2022:1-13; Coetzee, du Toit & Gouws, 2024:609-631).

Van der Westhuizen starts her dissertation with the question: "Have Afrikaner Women stepped into the new subject positions Nelson Mandela spoke of in his first opening of parliament in 1994 - have they claimed the new identities a democratic "post"-apartheid South Africa has prepared for them?" (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:2). Van der Westhuizen notes that although most Women in her focus group discussions confirmed their perpetual performance of the ideal form of Afrikaner nationalist Femininity, many did not understand its links to the nationalist construction of the *volksmoeder* in the late 19th century, before, and during apartheid. This seems exceptionally dangerous and validates this study's pursuits to highlight the active role this ghostly figure plays in "post"-apartheid Afrikaner communities. Van der Westhuizen's findings are particularly important to take into account considering Coetzee's interpretation of this "historical and

contemporary patriarchal subjugation of the white Afrikaner woman as a site of the production and maintenance of colonial racial categories and hierarchies" (Coetzee, 2021:93)

In her article, *'*'[I]f I am Alone I feel like a Target Sometimes': The Making and Unmaking of the Vulnerable White Woman in Strange Encounters with the Black Man in the South African (Post)Colony*',* Coetzee does a Feminist philosophical reading of the account of Helena Marais, a 20-year old White Afrikaner Woman from Worcester (the town I went to school in, and did my first dance and art class in as it is the larger town close to my hometown, Rawsonville), to illustrate how race and gender are "inextricably intertwined". In this case study, Coetzee shows how Helena's "gendered/sexualised fear" of Black men makes her both important to and implicated in the "reinscription of colonial/apartheid racial logic and spatialisation" years after the official cessation of apartheid (Coetzee, 2022:2). Through Helena, Coetzee gives a real-life illustration of Van der Westhuizen's argument and reinforces mine: that the performance of heteronormative nationalist tropes of Afrikaner Femininity are being perpetuated in pervasive ways in contemporary South Africa that bars our collective progress as a nation (Coetzee, 2022:2).

The ensuing subsections follow Van der Westhuizen's tracing of the beginning of the *volksmoeder* discourse, break down the characteristics of the *volksmoeder* performance and woven in between, is Coeztee's analysis of Helena's story about her life in Worcester as an attempt to connect this account to the bigger social narrative of South Africa. I resonate with Coetzee's statement that because we are both White Afrikaans-speaking Women reading Helena, it is inescapable that on some level we are also reading ourselves (Coetzee, 2022:2). Using this case study of Helena, is then a way for me to locate Van der Westhuizen's historical delineations of the colonial/apartheid performativity of Femininity to the present moment, in my lived experience growing up near Worcester.

3.1. From Callus Boer Hands to a Lady's Gloves: The Birth of the *Volksmoeder* and the Construction of Afrikaner Femininity

In tracing the construction of the *volksmoeder* ideal, Van der Westhuizen starts by illustrating the vital role Boer Women (the forebears of Afrikaner Women) played in the building of the Afrikaner *volk* starting from the South African Wars[12] in the late 19th century - even without any formal rights (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:245-249). During the First South African War, the Boer Women were managing farms, acting as heads of their families, activists for independence from the British, and urging the Boer Men to keep fighting. Up to this point in history, the *volk* was thought of as Masculine (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:245). The role of the Women managing farms and taking on more "Masculine" roles destabilised this gendered view of the *volk* and also caused an identity crisis when Men eventually returned home after the wars.

During the First South African War, the internal and familial pressure from the Boer Women on the Men to keep resisting the British did not work for long enough to ensure

[12] It is important to note here that even though the First South African War (20 December 1880 – 23 March 1881) and Second South African War (11 Oct 1899 – 31 May 1902) are often referred to as the Boer Wars in Afrikaner circles, it involved and affected many more people than just the British and the Boers. In this study, I will refer to these wars as the First and Second South African War.

triumph over them, which led to these strong, self-reliant Women's roles being re-described by Boer leadership - they were reconstructed as damsels in distress towards the Second South African War (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:245). There was a shift from Men's fraternity in relation to Women to patriarchal authority over them and here the *volksmoeder* discourse was born (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:245). The pressure from the British made these self-reliant Women cooperate with a movement to disempower them to motivate their Men counterparts. This paradox of White Women being in a position of power and then relinquishing it or choosing to use it in service of the Masculine cause is seen throughout Afrikaner history[13]. In the aftermath of claiming independence from the British, the idea of a nationalistic Afrikaner *volk* was born and, "[w]omen became a marker or symbolic carrier of the culture" (Burger, Vosloo, & Coetzee. 2020).

The *volksmoeder* concept was mobilised by the Masculine constituents of the *volk* to incorporate a political charge that was previously not part of the characterisations of the pioneer, Voortrekker, and Boer Women. This reframing of gender roles placed the conquered *volk* as Feminised and permanently linked the concept "Woman/Vrou" to motherhood, nurturing, and caregiving - concealing the actual multiplicity of Femininities for decades to come (Eisenstein in van der Westhuizen, 2013:246). Van der Westhuizen shows that strength, courage, incorruptibility, freedom-loving, selflessness, religiousness, honour, and resourcefulness were all characteristics associated with these early Boer Women. Some of these characteristics were kept intact in the construction of the *volksmoeder* ideal, but the independent and strong nature of these fighting Women were replaced by performative tropes such as pretty, prudish, and domestic all umbrellaed under the nodal point of *ordentlikheid*; a politicised and gendered respectability (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:245-253).

Even though Afrikaner Women were under the rule of their counterpart, Afrikaner Men, it is very important to understand that this "inferior" position did not mean that they were

[13] This can be seen in the relationship Helena illustrates between her and her male (rugby player) friends with whom she "feels safe" to enter more diverse (what she deems dangerous) streets in Worcester. Instead of questioning the fear she feels as a privileged White Woman in spaces more Black people occupy, she plays the damsel that needs to be kept "safe" (Coetzee, 2022: 7). A role I am all too familiar with myself as this is how I was trained to play in public spaces as well.

blameless in the fortification of the *volksmoeder* identity and the construction of the *volk.* In the 1920s, Afrikaner Women started fighting for the vote. They were met with opposition from the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK), which reinforced the notion that Women should support Men and focus on their maternal duties (Gaitskell and Unterhalter in van der Westhuizen, 2013:246-247). Women's organisations like the ACVV (Afrikaans Christian Women's Association) and NVPs (National Women's Parties) resisted this argument against White Women's vote but maintained the *volksmoeder* Afrikaner nationalist discourse (Vincent in van der Westhuizen, 2013:246). This contradictory mobilisation reached a head when Afrikaner Nationalist Women successfully won the vote by arguing that they were "concerned for the well-being of family and state" and used the idiom of the household and motherhood to state that "the nation must also be cleaned and nurtured" (Vincent in van der Westhuizen, 2013:246; Burger, Vosloo, & Coetzee. 2020). However, the permitting of Women to vote in 1930 was in service of Hertzog's racial motives to expand the vote of the Afrikaner *volk* and White Women were not allowed to step into public political positions unless it had a connection with the domestic realm or *vrouesake* (Women's business).

During this historical period, the concept of Whiteness assumed paramount importance in the Afrikaner community, particularly in response to British colonial dominance and the perceived threat of losing their privileged status (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:254). The Afrikaners, marginalised by the British during the wars, sought to reaffirm their racial identity as unequivocally White, culminating in the implementation of apartheid policies. Central to this agenda was the alignment of Whiteness with affluence, leading to the association of wealth with White identity and adopting British Victorian ideals of Femininity (Burger, Vosloo, & Coetzee, 2020; Van der Westhuizen, 2013:254). The philanthropic endeavour of "uplifting" poor Whites was coupled with a process of cultural assimilation, wherein poor Whites were coerced into adopting the norms and values associated with a middle-class White Afrikaner identity (Vincent in van der Westhuizen, 2013:246). This phenomenon underscores the intricate relationship between Afrikaner identity, socioeconomic status, and consumer culture, evident in contemporary magazines and popular media (Burger, Vosloo, & Coetzee. 2020; Van der Westhuizen, 2016:8). Important to this study is that the adoption of this Victorian domestic ideology

by the early Afrikaners fortified the patriarchal dictatorship of the nuclear family as the elemental component of bourgeois society (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:246). As Sonnekus highlights in Van der Westhuizen's study, this Victorian domestic ideology was very different from the reality of the Boer Women's lives who were used to working hard and getting their hands dirty (Sonnekus, 2020:34).

Female Afrikaner nationalist advocates started employing the *ordentlikheid* and *volksmoeder* discourse to train Afrikaner performativity in working-class Whites (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:247). The pivotal role Afrikaner Women played in this process of racial consolidation, is made clear in the *Carnegie Report on the Poor White Problem* (1932) by Maria Elizabeth Rothmann (Coetzee, 2022:3). This report highlights that the "mending" of Whiteness in the context of poverty and subsequent racial "degeneracy" is expressly tied to the submissive role of White Women, who are expected to be sexually passive and pure, within "orderly" heteropatriarchal families. The mother has to instil and nurture the values of White civilisation in the next generation. In the South African colony, as well as in other contexts, "civilised" Whiteness was demonstrated through a "well-ordered" household with clearly defined gender roles, where Men took on the role of active political figures, while Women, as wives and mothers, were responsible for upholding and purifying the symbolic boundaries of the White *volk* (Coetzee, 2022:3). As a result, the image of White Afrikaner Femininity in colonial and apartheid South Africa was embodied by these roles (described by *ordentlikheid*) as the figure of the *volksmoeder* (mother of the nation), which carried enduring associations with sexual restraint, moral purification, and middle-class domesticity (Van der Westhuizen, 2003:250). Following this ideal, Women could neither work nor dominate, except to act out dominance over Black servants, and could only work by means of running a household and raising the children of the *volk* (Hobsbawm and Walker in van der Westhuizen, 2003:246). This project of "aspirational Whitening" through the nodes *ordentlikheid* and the *volksmoeder* mirrored binary colonial technologies in constructing the Other, such as defining a gendered (and sexual) logic, as made clear by the excerpt below (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:250):

> Referring to colonial situations generally, Ann Stoler argues famously that it is a misconception to think that there was a clear line to be drawn between white and Black, coloniser and colonised (2002: 42-43). Rather, racial boundaries were always tenuous: skin colour was too ambiguous, while wealth was too mercurial and education or religion were not clear enough (although all of those were important markers) (Stoler, 2002: 42-43). Ultimately then it was the sexual, domestic and conjugal arrangements of both European colonials and their subjects, which were regarded to reveal the 'truth' about someone's race (Stoler, 2002: 42-43). Whiteness in the colony was characterised by a strict heterosexual, monogamous and hierarchical gender binary; consisting of an active, rational masculinity set up against the foil of a passive and vulnerable femininity (see for example Lugones, 2007 and 2010, among many others) (Coetzee, 2022:3).

The regulation of White Afrikaner Women's sexuality emerged as a crucial aspect of apartheid ideology, serving to maintain symbolic boundaries and preserve ethnic purity (Burger, Vosloo, & Coetzee. 2020). In his 1995 study on White working-class Women and the establishment of apartheid, Jon Hyslop demonstrates how the emerging autonomy of Afrikaner Female workers in the Rand challenged patriarchal structures within White society. Hyslop also highlights how the Nationalist government's panic over "mixed marriages" was crucial in reinstating gender hierarchies. In the urban slums, Afrikaans-speaking impoverished Whites often did not exhibit the inherent social or sexual repulsion toward racial mixing advocated by governmental racial doctrines. Hyslop reveals that these individuals did not automatically identify as "Afrikaners," thereby necessitating the ongoing cultivation of loyalty to Afrikaner nationalism (Nuttall, 2009:26) Legislation prohibiting interracial marriages was swiftly enacted when apartheid was instated, reflecting the imperative to safeguard the reproductive capacity of White Women in service of racial continuity and nation-building within the Afrikaner community[14] (Burger, Vosloo, & Coetzee. 2020).

The gendered discourse and repercussions for Black Men and Women were of course completely different in the colony and apartheid. The fragility and sexual purity of White Women were culturally emphasised and inscribed to create the "other" of the *volk*, who

[14] One of the modern displays of how these ideologies of consumption, class, gender, sexuality, and race have been recycled "post"-apartheid is the White wedding. The White wedding becomes the event for the "post"-apartheid Afrikaner community to display their upper-middle class position while reinforcing hegemonic ideologies that keep outdated performativities of race divisions in place.

were perceived as licentious, fluid, and wild. In her book *Rape: A South African Nightmare* (2015), Gqola argues that the portrayal of Black African sexuality as 'primitive' and 'feral' during colonialism and apartheid led to the normalisation of the rape of Black Women, laying the groundwork for the pervasive rape culture and the ongoing crisis of sexual violence in modern South Africa (Gqola in Coetzee, 2022:4). While Black Women were depicted as unrape-able, the constructed vulnerability of White Women made them hyper-rapable, a notion that was strategically exploited in the colonial/apartheid context (Coetzee, 2022:4). This notion is asserted through the "affective formation" of race, as Ahmed calls it in her book *Strange Encounters* (2000), as it is White Women's fear of Black Men that keep them separate and, therefore, maintains the "purity" of Whiteness. As well as Black Men's fear of White Men's rage (justified by the "hyper-vulnerability" of White Women) that keeps the occupation of racial rule in place (Coetzee, 2022:5).

> Ahmed explains how the production of communities through the recognition of strangers follows a specifically gendered logic. Looking at Neighbourhood Watch discourses, Ahmed points out how 'self-policing communities' rely on 'the construction of the figure of the vulnerable member/body alongside the heroic citizen [which] provides the moral justification for the injunction to watch' (Ahmed, 2000: 30). 'The figuring of the good citizen is built on the image of the strong citizen: in this sense, the good citizen is figurable primarily as white, masculine and middle-class, the heroic subject who can protect the vulnerable bodies of 'weaker others' (Coetzee, 2022:6).

Therefore, Coetzee states that "the ongoing project of decolonisation in South Africa requires careful scrutiny of gender norms and systems of gender oppression as a primary site where colonial hierarchies and boundaries are renewed" (Coetzee, 2021:94). At the core of Coetzee's contribution is the argument that the Afrikaner identity is constructed as "White" through the strict imposition of a hierarchical, binary, and compulsory heterosexual gender system. This system remains pertinent in present-day South Africa, where White heteropatriarchy largely persists within Afrikaner communities. The implication is that the ongoing subservience of Afrikaner Women within this heteropatriarchal framework represents a pivotal element that sustains colonial racial identity and inequality (Coetzee, 2021:95).

Drawing on Coetzee and Van der Westhuizen's theory, my performance work is focused on firstly, pointing out and highlighting how these hetero-Feminine Afrikaner Women have been trained to perform, and secondly, transgressing these rules by presenting other Women-identifying performers and myself in *The Bizarre Bazaar* in uncanny ways. Playing with these performative attributes of heteronormative White Femininity in my performance practice by juxtaposing, extending, slowing down or speeding up, exaggerating, and opposing recognisable movements offers a fruitful opportunity for transgression and, therefore, transformation through "potentially shifting racialised social and spatial boundaries" (Coetzee, 2021:95).

3.2. She Is Still in the Game: The *Volksmoeder* Resurrected

…modes of privacy and singularity may account for why so many whites say they had nothing to do with apartheid, and why some can shield themselves so effectively from post-apartheid South African society… All these texts bear witness to a key paradox of whiteness: that those who have been afforded privilege and power, including those who want to forego the latter, have found themselves inhabiting a realm of secret life which is at times manifest, but often latent, in their self-representations. Part of this secret life is encoded in acts of watching and looking, part through feelings of intimacy with the perpetrator, and part via self-inflicted social isolation… (Nuttall, 2009:70;73;74).

Van der Westhuizen finds that little has changed regarding the normative performance of hegemonic gender roles in Afrikaner communities “post”-apartheid, except that the performance of this nationalist constructed Femininity has migrated into privatised spaces and that the motivation and rationalisation of this kind of Femininity have shifted to individualism and consumerism (Van der Westhuizen, 2016:8). She shows that the *volksmoeder* motif present in “post”-apartheid has been discursively dislodged from its historical origins, causing what Coetzee calls a kind of cultural amnesia (Van der Westhuizen, 2016:34-35; Burger, Vosloo, & Coetzee. 2020). Moreover, Van der Westhuizen finds there is only a small group of Women (whose position she calls the Ek-thical position) that reject Afrikaner hegemonic Femininity (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:102).

In considering ways of looking, the secret life of Whiteness, and an ethnic intimacy recreated in contemporary South Africa in Afrikaner enclaves, it is important to note how surveillance methods in suburbs shape a social and sexual imagination, prompting questions about the kind of body being protected and what this protection entails. This creates an urban culture centred on security and a certain protective psychosis, where the Female body is increasingly seen as property in a new way. This shift occurs in a 'post-racist' society, not because racism is entirely gone, but because White people in South Africa have, in significant and irreversible ways, relinquished public space and political power. As a result, property and private spaces become the only areas where bodies can still be segregated (Nuttall, 2009:141-142).

Van der Westhuizen writes about how Women in the Afrikaner *volk* were trained to be little Girls, how their sexuality is infantile, and argues that there is still very little acknowledgement of their sexual power and autonomy in major Afrikaner magazines today reinforcing the need for sexual protection (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:134, 139-140). At the same time, the *volksmoeder* discourse of Women being “natural nurturers”, trains young Girls to take immense emotional and practical responsibility from a very young age. This training takes place by playing games such as ‘house-house’, practising how to be future Mothers, but also by Girls being given more domestic responsibility (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:129,145). This caretaking/domestic

service that Afrikaner Women are trained to provide the Afrikaner nuclear family is standing in direct opposition to the immature sexuality expected from them. From around puberty, Women are expected to be in complete ignorance of their sexual development, desires, and needs - to stay like children - except for straddling the “common knowledge” that something (which we do not dare speak about) in their nature tempts Men to act on their uninhibited and natural desires (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:138). Here, again, Women are kept responsible for their “allure” even though they are never explicitly taught about sex.

Furthermore, Masculinity is afforded the release of control when it comes to their “natural” sexual urges, and additionally their ‘limitless violence’ is indulged (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:130). The emotional and caretaker responsibility Women are expected to assume from a very young age plays into the “petty dictatorship” (Fanon in Van der Westhuizen, 2013:131) Boys are traditionally allowed - as the Female counterpart is trained throughout Her life to keep the peace. Whereas, the sexual freedom Boys are afforded plays into the sexual prudishness Girls need to perform. This illustrates only one nuanced layer of the sexed-gendered interplay between Male and Female roles is within the Afrikaner *volk* that is still trained today.

I argue that very little changes from the playground to the enclave. But what keeps the game afoot? Why do Afrikaners keep playing the games/roles they were trained to play as children? After apartheid, there was the repetition of statements like, “[w]e were just following orders” as made clear by Antjie Krog’s accounts of the Truth and Reconciliation hearings in her book *Country of My Skull* (1998). This denial of individual thought and agency in service of the group/nation is at the centre of why Afrikaners unquestioningly perpetuate the same *volksmoeder* discourse performances, created long before apartheid. We play the game, because the group plays the game. In the group there is the promise of security, belonging, and privilege, so we continue playing the game. This seems foolish, backward, and bizarrely problematic to me.

Circling back to the fool, I wonder whether there was any validity in the fool’s role in the king's court to analyse political events and translate them lightheartedly to the *volk*, or are they pushing the agenda of those in power? The Afrikaner saying "Afrikaners is

plesierig" (Afrikaners are jolly) reflects a tradition of using humour to avoid serious or controversial topics and even foster nostalgia for apartheid. Being at the receiving end of “don’t spoil the fun” and “the past is in the past” has been a repeating experience when attempting to seriously address problematic behaviour in Afrikaner spaces. This experience reflects the historical trope of the *volksmoeder* as one to "keep the peace".[15]

In this study, I couldn’t simply play the fool in a silly way to point out the bizarre inheritance we perform without reflection in the present. A ghost is “haunting this play” (Moys, 2022:18). In this creative research process, the ghost of the *volksmoeder* functions in the shadows of securitised Afrikaner enclaves, affecting the larger South Africa. However, the character of the fool conjured up interesting performative elements to play with in my first minor performance project. It brought to mind play as a method, in the words of Moys “to question, critique, and interrogate games as social not just ludic structures” (Moys, 2022:22).

[15] South African satirist Pieter-Dirk Uys has long used the character of Evita Bezuidenhout, a glamorous, conservative Afrikaner socialite and self-declared former ambassadress to the fictional homeland of Bapetikosweti, as a performative tool to expose and subvert Afrikaner nationalism, racial hypocrisy, and gender norms. By embodying Evita and other Female personas, Uys both engages with and inverts the volksmoeder stereotype, using humour, parody, and drag to critique the absurdities and violences of apartheid-era and contemporary Afrikaner identity. Evita’s exaggerated Femininity and social role as hostess and ‘mother of the nation’ becomes a lens through which Uys reveals the contradictions, complicities, and performative absurdities of whiteness, gender, and state power in South Africa.

4. “A Merciless Methodology of Planning”: Identify, Point, Use, and then Transform

> The words are explained to the audience by the condition of the body. This is not an emotional condition, rather it is an expression of the amount of energy that you are trying to access for yourself. Energy is the result of setting up oppositions in the body (Bogart, 2007: 21).

I view performance as a catalyst for transformative experiences (Schechner, 1983:12). In my practice, this transformational potentiality has been explored as it impacts me - the artist who gets to perform “through” something - and not necessarily for the viewers participating in or viewing my performances. My first significant performance instance, which illustrates this personal transformation, occurred during the conceptualisation and enactment of a piece inspired by familial pressure urging me to marry, titled *Lilth & Lesbet Trou* (20121)(figure 2). A more recent experience of the transformative potential performance holds, was the process and execution of my master’s solo performance, *Fan Brush: A Studio Walk-About* in April 2024. Central to this performance exploration were fundamental questions concerning my creative evolution and the underlying motivations driving my artistic endeavours. Creating the solo performance, I encountered a belief that I held deep in my subconscious: I had internalised past teachers’ views that painting and performance art should be kept separate - this created an agonising internal tension and division in me. Through introspection and embracing painting as a performative medium, a transformative shift occurred, which catalysed a reclamation of my artistic autonomy.

Figure 2. *Lilith & Lesbet Trou: That White Wedding* (second iteration) (2021), Stellenbosch, That Eclectic.

Bogart writes that “aggravation and anger can be harnessed into useful energy in service of expression…” (Bogart, 2007:20). She uses the idea of alchemy to explain the transformative potential of channelling difficult emotions into creative expression and that by “setting up oppositions in the body one accesses a great amount of energy to say something” (Bogart, 2007:21). The opposition of frustration and need to express freely and authentically versus the fear that my work will be unclear if I am a painter and performer, offered fruitful performance moments. Performing through those tensions left me changed afterwards - as if a charge had been released.

Reflecting on these transformative experiences, I am left contemplating how this transformational potential of performance can be utilised in *The Bizarre Bazaar*. As Bogart states, intense feelings are not just channelled into the creative process to create energy but to ultimately *say* something through the transformation. She states “... the most important ingredient in articulation is a specificity of action, word, and sound,” (Bogart, 2007:21). How to get to this clear and articulate performative action while opening up the gender restrictions imposed on Women has been the focus of my

creative endeavours during this study.

Additionally, during the production phase of creating *Fan Brush: A Studio Walk-About,* I reflected on the development of my visual language which affords me the ability to build installations and costumes successfully. I realised that, aligned with the practice as research methodology of this course, I have been applying the same “circular method of exploration” I use in visual art, to my performance art practice (figure 3):

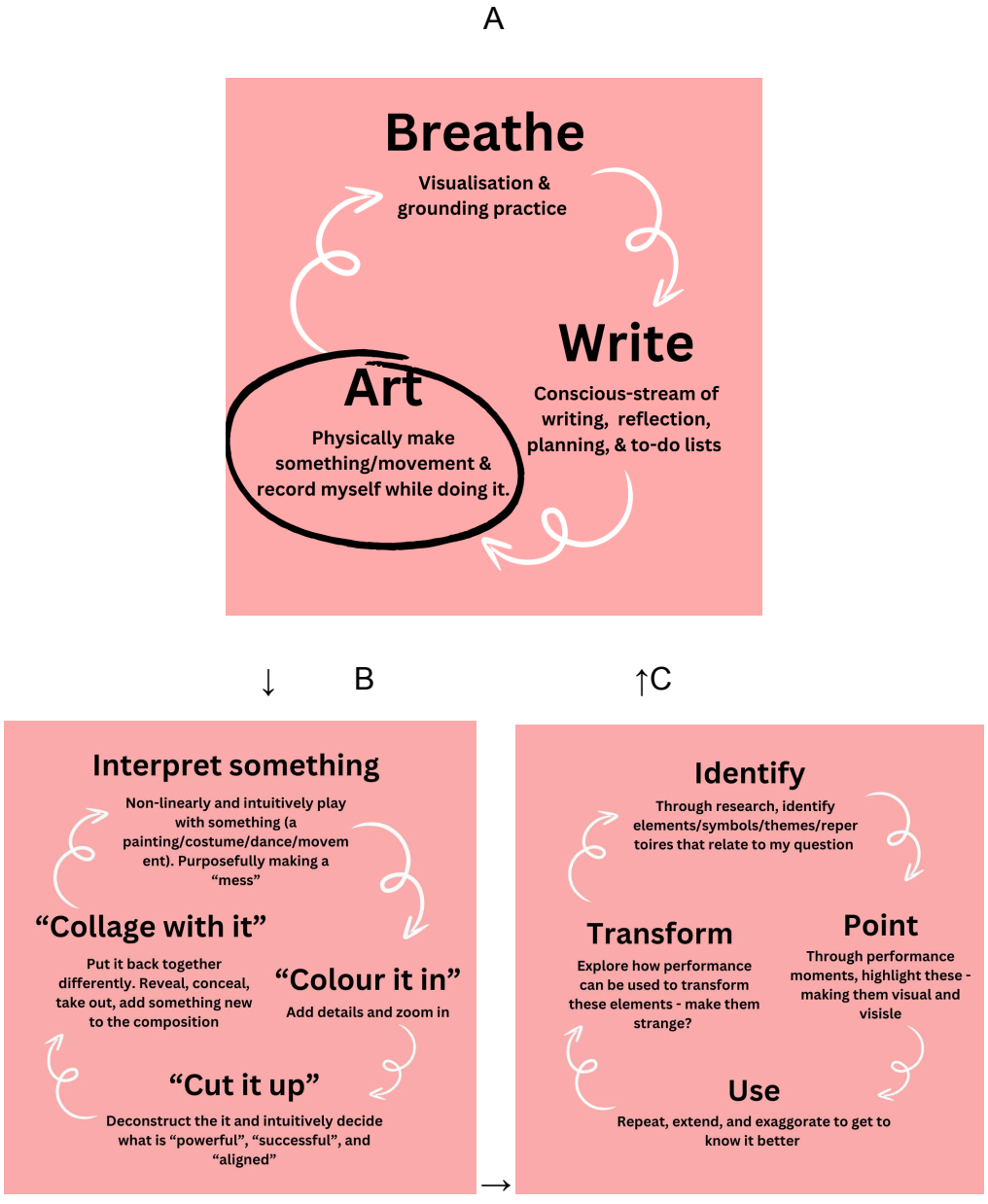


Figure 3. ***The different phases of my circular methodology*****.**

While working on this study, I start my day with a conscious stream of writing and breathing exercises (A). I look at theoretical sources after that and then go to my studio at around 14:00. If I am not continuing to work on something existing, I often create a mess first. After which I add details and “colour” it in. Then I cut up the mess, mix it up, and reconstruct it. There is, therefore, a kind of methodology of deconstructing, reconstructing, and juxtaposing that function in a circular motion in my practice as illustrated above (B). After the *Fan Brush* performance, I have decided to develop this methodology further for my performance art process illustrated in C. Furthermore, my practical methodology involves a methodology of planning. The exploration phase in my studio can be seen as more abstract and non-directional. When the “final” picture of the artwork becomes clearer, I start to make to-do lists, draw maps, and plan. I will unpack how this planning links to the theme of heteronormative gender construction and how I allow it to “curve” in my practical process later in this chapter.

Anne Bogart’s book influences my practice, *And Then, You Act: Making Art in an Unpredictable World* (2007). This text reflects on taking concepts into action and forms a vital bridge for me between visual art (traditionally more stationary) and performance art (concerned with action, motion, and the body). Steps in my methodology, like the “pointing” aspect when creating a performance work, are inspired by Bogart’s idea that if it is difficult to find the words to articulate what you want to convey - point to it (Bogart, 2007:21).

Initially, I avoided working with aspects of White Femininity that might upset my community of origin, which led to feedback that my question was unclear in the first performance I created for this study. Bogart emphasises the importance of making our work “clearly heard and seen” (Bogart, 2007:12-13). Presenting performance art about Afrikanerdom at UCT taught me a lot, I am aware that my positionality will influence how I approach this work after my masters degree, and that I will be received very differently by an Afrikaner audience. Bogart also suggests that if discussing a theme doesn’t destabilise you, “you probably do not have a good enough reason to speak” (Bogart, 2007:21). This philosophy speaks to the tension I feel between the risk of being ostracised by my community of origin for focusing on the destabilisation of Whiteness,

gender, and Afrikanerdom, and my desire to challenge these problematic systems. Bogart's insight gives me the courage to stay with this question.

I have been using *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (2005) for the creation of my final production, particularly the practices given in Chapter 12 on how to articulately create original work around a question, anchor, and structure (Bogart & Landau, 2005:154).

- The Question: Can this interactive performance art intervention successfully highlight the complexities involved in the training and performance of normative Femininity and, therefore, open up opportunities for personal/collective transformation?

As my question moved the production away from solely focusing on my body (as stated in the introduction) and involving the bodies of the spect-actors[16] and other performers in my ensemble, the event that anchors the entire work became clear.

- The anchor (event): The bazaar

The event clarified the structure as there are the performative experiences of consumption, play, looking and being looked at, networking, comparing, and competing built into the event.

- The structure: An interactive performance-installation with some choreographed performance moments which direct the temporal, spatial, and compositional flow of the piece and the spect-actors' engagement.

The rest of this chapter explores important elements of my methodology and how it is influenced by key texts. In section 4.1, I look at the creation of costumes in the textile, sewing, and embroidery work I do and how that links to Nuttall and Ingold's theories of entanglement. In section 4.2, I reflect on how objects within the performance-installation *The Bizarre Bazaar* become active participants in the creation of meaning, how spect-actors are invited to engage, and how labour-intensive acts within the

[16] A term borrowed from Augusto Boal, the Brazilian theatre practitioner known for his *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974). Boal introduced "spect-actors" to describe audience members who are active participants in the performance, blending the roles of spectator and actor (Schechner, 2020:20).

performance challenge traditional expectations of Feminine labour and gendered roles. In section 4.3, I muse on how my creative practice, shaped by the resourcefulness of my Afrikaner settler ancestors, emphasises the reuse of materials as a challenge to modern Afrikaner Femininity. I discuss how I have adapted this inherited methodology into a more fluid, circular process.

4.1. The Entanglements of Embroideries and Textiles

For De Kock the seam is the place where difference and sameness are hitched together – where they are brought to self-awareness, denied, or displaced into third terms: ‘a place of simultaneous convergence and divergence, the seam is the paradox qualifying any attempt to imagine organicism or unity’ (Nuttall, 2009: 5).

Nuttall states in her text *Entanglement* (2009) that “entanglement is a condition of being twisted together or entwined, involved with; it speaks of an intimacy gained, even if it was resisted, or ignored or uninvited. It is a term which may gesture towards a relationship or set of social relationships that is complicated, ensnaring, in a tangle, but which also implies a human foldedness” (Nuttull, 2009:1). In contemplating the intersectionality of identity, the discourse within Nuttall’s text attempts to dissect and interweave multifaceted strands. These strands are approached with an inclination toward viewing identity performance from a perspective imbued with queerness, Femininity, and/or Feminism. In addition to utilising Nuttall’s text as a thematic and conceptual compass to elucidate the nuances of identity performativity, I have approached this source through a lens of materiality and performance art. In the Nuttall quote above, there is an element of performance written in through words like “intimacy”, “gesture”, and “human foldedness”. Given my extensive engagement with fabrics, stitching, sewing, and netting within this study, I apply this text and Tim Ingold’s *Bringing Things to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials* (2012) to discern the distinctions and complexities between weaving and entanglement as it pertains to working with fabrics.

Traditionally, a woven piece of fabric embodies a discernible logic, characterised by a structured grid and the systematic interweaving of threads. Unlike the interconnectedness inherent in entanglement, the structure of woven fabric allows for the removal of individual threads without causing the entire fabric to unravel. In contrast, entanglement conveys a sense of complexity and interrelatedness, wherein the manipulation of one element inevitably impacts the entirety of the network. This intrinsic entanglement engenders a perception of messiness, ambiguity, and non-linearity, thus complicating disentanglement and underscoring the notion of precarity. This conceptualisation of entanglement resonates with my approach to embroidery and sewing delicate recycled plastics together, wherein I reject traditional stitching techniques in favour of a more improvisational and expressive method akin to painting with thread.

Furthermore, I read Tim Ingold’s text, *Bringing Things to Life: Creative Entanglements in*

a World of Materials (2012), alongside Nuttall's text to flesh out my material intuition of entanglement. By reframing race through a queer and Feminist lens, Nuttall's text foregrounds the interconnectedness and fluidity of identity constructs. This fluidity, in the project of art-making, links to Ingold's idea that art-making follows a fluidity inherent in materials. He equates this following of materials-in-flow with cooking and alchemy and states that according to Elkins it [alchemy/art] is an "old science of struggling with materials, and not quite understanding what is happening" (Ingold. 2012:32). This is what the processes in my studio feel like as I start with intuition, feeling, and/or observation and flow with it and my materials in a circular motion of constructing, deconstructing, reiterating, and juxtaposing.

In my performance practice with the group that forms a part of *The Bizarre Bazaar II* production, I explore these elements by considering direction, tempo, synchronised movements, and the relationship between bodies as they move through space. The line and the circle become interesting here. A network of lines created by the movements of performers can form a web or a knot and the circular motive can create the feeling of looping in the same pattern, zooming in or out, and connection or union. The concepts "intimacy", "gesture", and "human foldedness" are explored through movement sequences in which the gaze of the performers becomes very important and intense, gestures are mirrored by each other and repeated over time, and the folding of bodies between and over each other are also explored. These performance elements will be further unpacked in Chapter 5.

4.2. The Performance of/with Things

Figure 4. Stitching the Veil, 2023, Hiddingh Campus Playroom.

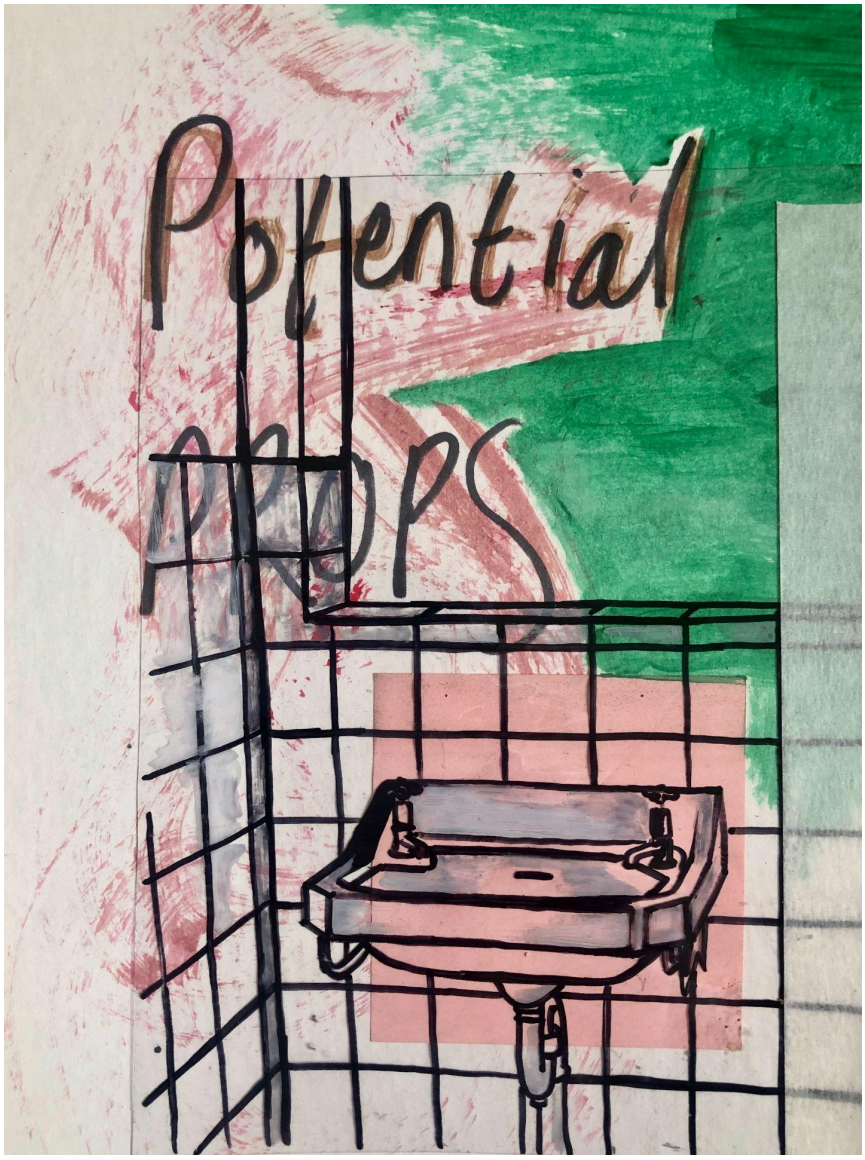
In my Fine Art training, I was taught to consider everything within the exhibition space as part of the artwork, highlighting the interconnectedness between things, space, and viewers' interpretation. In my performance work, artefacts become extensions of the performing bodies, actively contributing to the creation of meaning within the performance space. For example, a koeksister becomes a nexus for layered performative action. The intimate untangling of a koeksister by a performer results in the breaking apart of a recognisable structure. The visceral element of this performative moment is heightened by the dripping sauce and squishing sound of the koeksister as it messily breaks apart. It is then presented to spect-actors of *The Bizarre Bazaar* who consume it and become complicit in the consumption of the norms, values, ideals, and violence it represents. The reaction of the spect-actors to the bits of koeksister (repulsion, delight, humour, rejection, etc.) co-creates the meaning of the performance

moment alongside the koeksister and the performer serving it.

Embracing the term multimedia artist, I bring together my training in Fine Arts and the independent practice I had five years before starting this masters study. The creative entrepreneur part of my practice involves a coaching practice in which I support and help execute the creative practices and projects of my clients. To build out this business, a key feature of my practice became filming myself while creating and talking on social media about how I practise art. When I continued to do that from the beginning of this study, I realised that besides the “formal” performance art practice I have, I have also been performing my artistic personality for my online audience and, therefore, have an interesting relationship with my role and activities as a creator. The “role” of the creator and my engagement with and animation of the things I create, is a role I started fleshing out in *The Bizarre Bazaar I*.

The first *Bizarre Bazaar* presentation was a key experience in my development as a performance artist, offering a platform to showcase the labour-intensive and iterative nature of my creative process. The performance-installation aims to highlight the inherent performative qualities of all elements within my artistic practice as the “making sessions” in my studio are iterations of the performances I do in the final piece. By disclosing the months of meticulous stitching and sewing that takes place behind the scenes by repeating the same action in the performance, the installation invites viewers to engage with the hidden labour inherent in artistic creation, representative of the often-overlooked realm of Feminine labour. While at the same time, using the act of creating things in real time to speak to the creation of Femininity as our collective and individual construction.

4.3. Resourcefulness and “The Insanity of Packing an Oxwagon”



A performative trope of idealised heteronormative Femininity I have tracked in my conservative Afrikaner community of origin (in a country that knows political and social precarity well), is a sense of resourcefulness. This points to the original resourcefulness and self-reliant nature of my Female settler ancestors (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:245-249; Sonnekus, 2020:34). I see this quality in my creative practice as well: I mostly work with recycled materials as I am obsessed with domestic things that hold artistic potential.

The recycled materials extend beyond what comes through my kitchen to materials

collected over generations by my grandparents and great-grandparents. On both sides of my family, there has always been an inclination to collect. In the barren Karoo where the threat of survival always felt close, the accumulation of things provided a sense of safety to my ancestors. These things do not hold a lot of commercial value in the contemporary world - but to the only artist in my family (me) they offer access to a kind of memory (or flow) that is fascinating to follow. This practical/literal cutting up and deconstructing my inheritance links to Ahmed's idea of Whiteness involving what came before you and engaging that consciously (Ahmed, 2007:154).

This tendency in my practice to reuse challenges the modern Afrikaner Femininity trope that promotes status through consumption (Van der Westhuizen, 2016:8), reflected in Krog's poem at the beginning of this paper, in "stylish sunglasses and hair tinted against the grey", "yoga in flowery leotards" and "Sanderson linen". This element of recycling and reusing materials brings back the aspect of circularity in my methodology for producing art. At the same time, it is representative of the notion with which the normative Femininity of apartheid has been recreated and repurposed in the "new" South Africa (Van der Westhuizen, 2013:198).

I have noticed another performative heteronormative Afrikaner Feminine trope in my conservative community of origin which Krog calls, "die waansin van wa pak" (the insanity of packing an ox wagon): a constant buzzing busyness that White Afrikaner Women embody. This busyness takes the form of a methodology of planning. I produced all the costumes and installation elements for *The Bizarre Bazaar* by hand because of a "methodology of planning". What has been changed in my practice is the "mercilessness" element Antjie Krog describes as typical of Afrikaner Women's planning; in my creative process, I have trained myself to rest. However, this was not easy as it goes against everything I was trained to be: "Idle hands are the devil's workshop" (a translation out of Proverbs 16:27 in the Bible of one of my grandfather's favourite Afrikaans sayings).

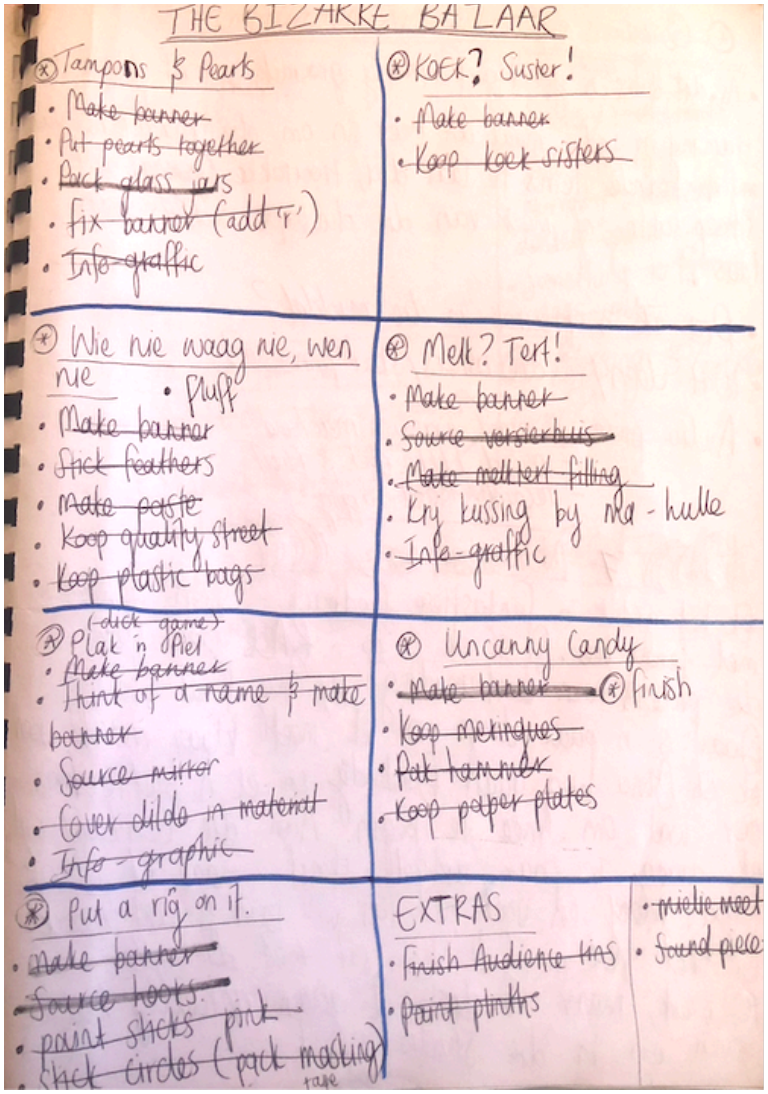


Figure 5. planning lists for *The Bizarre Bazaar I*.

Planning and executing something successfully, again, links to my inheritance. My mother and my grandmothers trained a systematic consideration and working into me - it can be argued that this rigorous approach to production links to Western and capitalistic ways of being and is linear in method. In this practice-based endeavour, I have tried to plan as best I could but in the physical building of an installation, costume, or performance, I recognise the limits to my planning and have to adjust. Allowing my process to curve, which makes the line of planning flow into a circle once more.

5. The Bizarre Bazaar: “Attentively Gesticulate the Rhythm” of my Performance Work

Figure 6. *The Bizarre Bazaar* installation, 2023, Hiddingh Campus Playroom.

In this chapter, I look at the main practical output of my study - the performance-installation called *The Bizarre Bazaar I* (the medium project in the trajectory of this creative research) which I created in November 2023. I start this section by illustrating how the minor project for which I created this interactive performance piece, called *Koljander-Koljander (Coriander-Coriander)*, led me to construct *The Bizarre Bazaar I*. I illustrate the performance techniques I used by describing *The Bizarre Bazaar I* and point out further performance techniques I am developing for the second iteration. Additionally, my process of creating, performing, reflecting and integrating feedback in the second seminar paper about the piece has led me to new questions and considerations moving towards the final showing of *The Bizarre Bazaar II* in November 2024.

Leading up to the *Koljander-Koljander* performance (the first performance exercise of this course), my research question became more defined. It formed around this idea of

being haunted by the past and playing games: how do the games we play as children train us to play specific cultural and gendered roles as adults? How can performance art challenge this phenomenon in Afrikaner enclaves? *Koljander-Koljander* (Coriander-Coriander) was an experiment to test out playing games as a performance technique with the audience and to see how the group from the CTDPS would respond to being instructed in Afrikaans. Additionally, I wanted to test how much interaction I could evoke and how much of a childish tantrum I could get away with in this “play-play” space by suddenly changing the rules of the game as they suited me. In this performance, I was intrigued by how children mimic adult activities, like playing "house-house" or "doctor-doctor," using play to practise cultural and gender norms they have observed.

Koljander-Koljander led to an interest in how spaces like NG church catechesis and Voortrekker organisation’s dances serve as events/activities that reinforce Afrikaner gendered and cultural roles through ceremonial games. This performance exercise led me to delve deeper into games that directly engage with domestic Afrikaner and gendered politics and expose the violent nature of the songs sung while playing these games. This direction of research curved me back to the White wedding ceremony and its associated games, especially in how they reinforce the gender roles central to the Afrikaner identity. During the creation of *The Bizarre Bazaar I*, I started considering how to disrupt these norms by "making myself strange/bizarre," to challenge the perceived normalcy of Afrikaners' position in South Africa and to explore new ways of performing Femininity.

Figure 7. ***Futuristic Volksmoeder greets spect-actors*****, 2023, Hiddingh Campus Playroom.**

The combination of child-like play or naïvity, bizarre events, and strange hauntedness is characteristic of Reza de Wet's plays. She engages the complicated and violent history of Afrikaners and the entangled histories of hardship, land, war, and the problematic relationship of domestic workers in White spaces in her work. In *Missing*, there is a fantastical circus world created by the characters, which is never seen but sketched vividly in the viewer's/reader's mind. To each of the Female characters, this unseen world means something else: it offers Meisie an escape from her unbearable circumstances, it is an unknown external threat to Miem which allows her to stay blind to the internal threat (Constable), and for Gertie, it is a past transgression that offers her knowledge others do not have and makes her special as she is so deprived of what makes a Woman "successful" (a husband and family). The same theme is prevalent in *Diepe Grond* where Sukkie en Frikkie's twisted actions are manically motivated by the idea that they will one day find water and it will change their (self-imposed) misfortune. This escape to a fantasy world that offers something better links to the problematic nostalgia Afrikaners have for a pre-democratic South Africa or a twisted future in which

the past is restored (Schutte & Viljoen, 2021:71).

The idea to create an alternative world that highlights the bizarreness of gender expectations instead of offering a utopia emerged from the imagery evoked by De Wet's plays and significantly influenced the design of *The Bizarre Bazaar I*. I decided to create a kind of "fever dream", an alternative reality that my performers and I occupy as an unsettling playground, emulating the visuals of mystical realism. In this installation, I explored how the performance techniques of juxtaposition, playing games, multisensory experiences and audience participation can bring about my argument. Furthermore, the choice to construct the installation within a cramped space was motivated by a desire to evoke the ambience of a fairground set against a desolate backdrop. Instead of utilising the entire Playroom on Hiddingh Campus, I created space around the installation so the spect-actors could circle it and enter it - viewing it from multiple perspectives. This also forced the spect-actors to be close to each other as they navigated the installation - a technique used to heighten their awareness of each other, encourage collaboration, and observe each other actively add to the performance as they played the games.

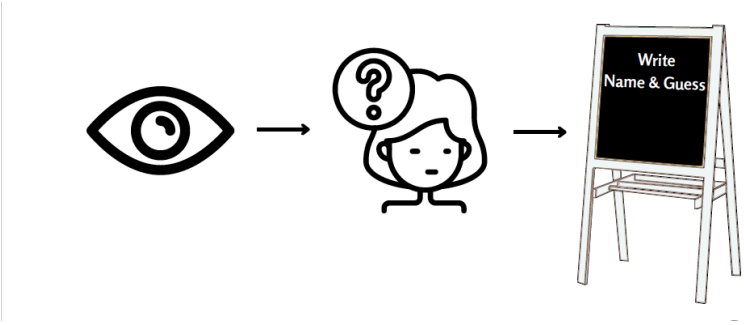


Figure 8 & 9. Tampons & Pearls & Instruction Infographic, 2023, Hiddingh Campus Playroom.

Originally, the aesthetic intention of *The Bizarre Bazaar I* installation was to create a sense of visual overwhelm. I use various techniques throughout the installation to heighten the senses of the spect-actors. For example, the first stall displaying tampons

and fake pearls (Figures 8 & 9), involved the interactive element of participants guessing the quantities of each container. Here I used the instruction to guess the number of tampons to force spect-actors to stare at tampons - objects so often hidden and clouded in shame. In other games, spect-actors had to relinquish their sight to participate. For example, the stall, “Wie nie waag nie, wen nie” (who does not dare, does not win) (Figure 10), consisted of three identical boxes adorned with feathers along the rims. Within these boxes, spect-actors encountered a viscous paste-like substance which elicited a visceral reaction, fake fur material, and Quality Street chocolates, but they could not see into the boxes and did not know what they would encounter inside. This added an element of risk and mystery to the game while offering a multisensory engagement with the installation.

Figure 10. Guest Engaging with Boxes, 2023, Hiddingh Campus Playroom.

Upon receiving feedback indicating that the approach to create a tightly packed visually immersive experience in the Playroom venue proved overly intense for spect-actors, I acknowledge the need to consider the spatial and aesthetic balance of the piece. I am planning to work in Hiddingh Hall as the site for the second iteration of *The Bizarre Bazaar* - drawing on the idea of the church or school hall in which many of these gamified events like bazaars take place. This venue's architecture will ensure more creative opportunities for the installation of the stalls and placement of the other performers. It offers more angles from which the spect-actors can engage with the

performance-installation and an atmosphere of a community gathering as the acoustics in the space quickly makes a group of people gathered together sound really loud.

Juxtaposition was the most prominent performance technique I used in *The Bizarre Bazaar I* to highlight the theme of risk and violence fundamental to the entire performance-installation. By setting up a tension between elements such as shock, surprise, sweetness, softness, innocence, and hospitality/domesticity I underscored the violence embedded in the training and performing of normative Femininity. Throughout the entirety of *The Bizarre Bazaar I*, a slowed-down recording of a jingle from a Dell washing machine played continuously, reminiscent of a fairground or ice cream truck tune. This audio choice contributed to an eerie and unsettling ambience within the space, adding to the domestic and maniacally repetitive feel of the experience. I further used repetition in the soundscape by adding additional audio layers, including recordings of me whistling, whispering, and singing a tune referred to as "klikkie-bekkie-klinkie-bek", a song about how a tattle-tail will get hurt as a consequence of telling on someone. As the spect-actors moved through the space the tinkling sound of the bells around their necks generated by their movement contributed to the immersive auditory experience of the performance. This eerie soundscape juxtaposed with the yelps, encouragements, laughters, and chattering of the audience created a disconcerting and confused ambience.

I did not anticipate the spect-actors' loud and enthusiastic involvement in the games at *The Bizarre Bazaar I*, which completely drowned out parts of the crafted sound piece. In hindsight, I realise any audio used in the piece needs to be louder, which has informed a deliberation to work with microphones where possible. Additionally, I am guiding my extended performance group[17] to play with improvised sounds that respond to the audience's engagement - adding an extra layer of improvisation to *The Bizarre Bazaar II* and pushing the use of repetition further. Another consideration for the final is playing with the intensity of the sound piece. Initially, when spect-actors entered *The Bizarre*

[17] Working towards the final performance, I have decided to invite a group of Woman-identifying creatives with a performance background from my artistic community (6-8 individuals at the moment) to explore the themes I have written about in this paper in monthly movement sessions with me. This choice is informed by a well-established practice of collaboration and group "musing" that is a part of my creative process. I hope to utilise these sessions in the expansion of my body performance sensibility.

Bazaar I, there were a few minutes of silence before the audio slowly faded in and built up. Afterwards, spect-actors reflected that the initial silence was disarming and awkward (this can be clearly seen in their quiet and hesitant entry in the linked video at the beginning of this chapter). While this can be an intentional element to play with, I now understand that the audio is crucial for shaping the initial tone for engagement.

Figure 11. *Futuristic Volksmoeder serves Koeksister,* 2023, Hiddingh Campus Playroom.

The performer stationed at the second stall carefully deconstructed koeksisters, a traditional South African treat (Figure 11). Each tiny piece was meticulously placed on a plate and presented to the spect-actors, transforming the once-familiar confection into disconcertingly flesh-like bits and again forcing the audience to really look at the treat and what is being done to it. The squishing sound of the Koeksister between the gloved, awkward fingers of the performer evoked a visceral reaction from many spect-actors - some refusing to eat the treat. The juxtaposition of sexual/bodily motifs with

domestic/ordinary items, like the yellow dishwashing gloves worn by the performer, added to the theme of making the recognisable strange. This theme is continued in the stall entitled "Plak 'n Piel” (Stick a Dick)(Figure 12) centred on a participatory activity of sticking a dildo onto a lipstick drawing of a big mouth on a mirror - akin to the traditional game of pinning the tail on the donkey. To mitigate being too direct and infuse a sense of whimsy, I wrapped the dildo in a doily. This juxtaposition of the overtly sexual object with the delicate, domestic aesthetic of the doily served to underscore the tension between taboo and familiarity within the context of the performance-installation.

Figures 12. *Plak ‘n Piel,* 2023, Hiddingh Campus Playroom.

At the 4th stall (“Melk? Tert!”)(Figures 13 & 14), one of the spect-actors needed to assume the role of offering milk tart filling in an icing bag to another guest, inviting them to kneel on a pillow and open their mouth so it could be squeezed into their mouth. This was intended to evoke a sense of intimacy and discomfort as the receiver was not sure of what they would be ingesting, the texture could be experienced as bodily and gooey,

while the taste was quite sweet. The paste-like substance, at the “Wie nie waag nie, wen nie” stall, further plays upon associations with bodily fluids and body hair, thereby continuing a subtle yet persistent sexual undertone throughout the installation and creating an iterative experience where the spect-actors engage with the same kind of substances in various ways throughout the installation.

Figures 13 & 14. *Spect-actors serving each other melk tert and Infographic* 2023, Hiddingh Campus Playroom.

The stall designated as "Uncanny Candy" (Figure 15), featured a performer who meticulously retrieved meringues from a plate enveloped in bubble wrap. With deliberate, slowed-down movements, the performer transferred the meringue onto a

paper plate, proceeded to shatter it with a hammer, and presented the fragmented pieces to the spect-actors. Again, spect-actors were captured by the careful moments of the performer and watched attentively how the fragile confection was violently crushed. This act of deconstruction imbues the consumption of the confection with an element of strangeness and violence, disrupting traditional expectations associated with culinary presentation and hospitality.

Figure 15. ***Futuristic Volksmoeder crushes Meringues*****, 2023, Hiddingh Campus Playroom.**

The circular set-up of the installation guided the spect-actors to initially enter and move clockwise from stall to stall, around the heap of maize flour in the centre of the room. However, when the spect-actors recognised the set “rules” for their engagement in the performance-installation (communicated by infographics) their relaxation was palpable - they became louder and broke the circular flow from stall to stall they originally followed. An interesting spect-actor performance moment took place during the rehearsal viewing when one guest accidentally kicked the heap of maze flour in the centre as they tried to navigate the tight space packed with about 12 spect-actors. After their body touched the

previously avoided area of the room, other spect-actors bent down or sat on the floor and played with the maize flour. This brought about the question for future exploration: how can I craft more moments that encourage the spect-actors performing the installation to “break” the rules?

The Bizaar Bizarre I involved three participants, myself and two other individuals identified as White Women. I positioned myself among the circle of stalls near the entrance of the performance-installation, facing out of the circle (figure 4). My positioning allowed me to appear as either an integral part of the exhibited stalls or as the creator of the surreal atmosphere. I sat at my stall ignoring the spect-actors completely as they competed in the games and explored the performance installation. Feedback indicated that my role in the performance was not clear enough and that I could push my detachment from or involvement in the event more. I am exploring the extension of the theme of me as the creator of the piece in the second iteration by playing with the concept of a “studio” or “dress-makers” stall among the other bazaar stalls. From this position, I imagine dressing up the performers as well as reconstructing elements of their costumes into other items as they take them off.

With the first iteration of *The Bizarre Bazaar* concluding in a durational format, I was left with the question of whether I should leave it open-ended, creating a feeling that the bizarreness of this particular bazaar is continuous. Upon receiving feedback, I understand that a “special ordering of time and space” (Deriu, 2013: 15) will contribute to “articulate action” (Bogart, 2007:21) and, therefore, decided to create a more deliberate temporal arc indicated and curated by the performers' movements and actions. My role in the performance is one of the temporal aspects I am developing further, as well as considering more choreographed moments between the other performers. In my practice sessions towards the final, I am looking at the repetition and synchronisation of recognisable movements and gestures like getting dressed, looking in the mirror, altering appearance, and fitting clothes. I am also drawing inspiration from the illustrations in the *Volkspele Handleiding* (1941), Victorian, and swarm-theory[18]

[18] Swarm theory in dance and performance draws inspiration from natural systems like flocks of birds, schools of fish, or swarms of insects, where collective behaviour emerges without central coordination. In these systems, individuals follow simple rules based on local interactions, leading to complex, adaptive, and coherent group movements. This approach often shifts focus from individual expression to group

techniques to craft a new rhythm of movement in the performance and pathways for spect-actors to navigate through *The Bizarre Bazaar II* - further building out the temporal arc of the work.

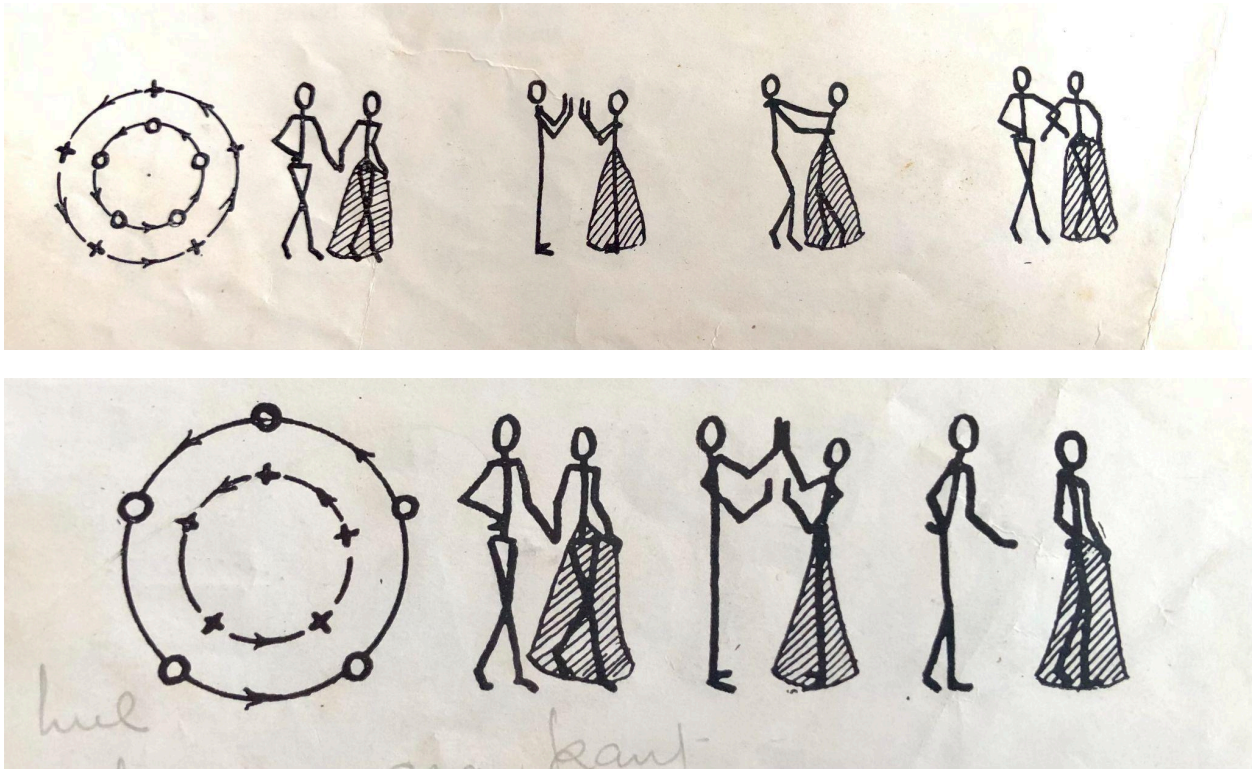


Figure 16. Illustrations of dances out of the Volkspele Handleiding (1941).

Volkspele (Figure 16) is a traditional form of folk dancing in Afrikaner culture that was developed in the early 20th century to preserve and promote Afrikaner cultural heritage, particularly when Afrikaner nationalism was gaining momentum. The term "volkspele" translates to "nation's games" and the dances are typically performed in groups, often at cultural festivals, community gatherings, or other social events. Volkspele involves a series of choreographed dances that are often accompanied by traditional Afrikaans folk

synergy and mutual influence. Key theorists include William Forsythe (2012) who integrates improvisational systems into his choreography, emphasising real-time responses between dancers, resembling swarm behaviour, Steve Paxton (1972) explores physical interaction through contact improvisation, a key element of swarm dynamics, and more. In this study, however, I intuitively guide exercises to inspire the performers to move in unison or interpret each other's behaviour by giving prompts informed by the theoretical research on White Femininity.

music. In the choreographed sections of *The Bizarre Bazaar II,* my performers are slowing down and exaggerating some of the *Volkspele* movements and using intense eye-gazing when moving closer to each other in a circle. When they meet in the middle of the installation they exchange a series of strange gestures, take elements of their costume off and exchange it, and/or repeat the words or sounds from children's games in a macabre way.

Figure 17. *Futuristic Volksmoeder gathering spect-actors*, 2023, Hiddingh Campus Playroom.

At the core of *The Bizarre Bazaar* experience, there is a question: what is all of this for? The costume I wore during the first iteration hints at an answer: the wedding dress serves as a visual manifestation of the ongoing struggle to conform to the archetype of the idealised bride. Within normative Femininity, the culmination of gendered training for children is oriented toward the preparation for marriage and domesticity. The two accompanying performers in the first iteration, Hanna Todd and Grace Lorenzo, were clad in veils covered in collaged eyes, attached to hoods reminiscent of *Voortrekker* hoods. Their *Volksmoeder* costumes, constructed from materials such as duct tape and

woven polypropylene bags (Figure 17), evoke a sense of transition and progression within the cultural narrative, however, the reference to the roots of their costumes is still recognisable. The visual motif of the *Volksmoeder* outfits adeptly captured the ethos of order, organisation, and industriousness synonymous with the organisational structure of the bazaar. This imagery evoked a sense of relentless activity and purposeful engagement, reflective of the pervasive sense of obligation and duty inherent within traditional gender roles.

Furthermore, the notion of working blindly, without pause or reflection, was encapsulated within this imagery, suggesting a perpetual state of busyness and directed activity characteristic of societal expectations. The decision to render the other performers faceless, their visages obscured by a multitude of eyes (a motif that will be continued in the final performance), serves as a poignant visual metaphor. These eyes represent societal scrutiny, judgement, and surveillance which, in turn, obscures the performers' individuality and agency. By concealing their faces, I emphasise the dehumanising effect of societal expectations, wherein individuals are reduced to mere embodiments of external perceptions rather than autonomous beings with intrinsic worth and agency. In my performance practice with the group, I am exploring ways to confront the spect-actors with the individuals behind the veils in the second iteration.

The juxtaposition of the wedding dress with the *Volksmoeder* attire suggests a continuum of Female experience, from youthful indoctrination to the perpetuation of traditional gender norms. Is this portrayal an exercise in "good girl" conditioning, emphasising the norms to adhere to or avoid? Alternatively, does it serve as a platform for the exposure and interrogation of unspoken societal expectations? Ultimately, the installation functions as both a staging ground for bride-to-be/good-girl training and a provocative exploration of gendered cultural norms, inviting spect-actors to engage with the complexities of gender performance and societal conditioning.

6. Conclusion: Towards the Final Showing

This paper navigates the complexities of White Femininity within South Africa's socio-cultural landscape, using performance art to critique and (potentially) transform normative gender constructs. Initially, I focused on childhood games as formative experiences shaping gender roles, but over time, my framework expanded to include gamified adult rituals, such as bazaars and weddings, which reinforce normative White Femininity. Through the performance-installation *The Bizarre Bazaar*, I aimed to highlight the intersectionality of White Femininity, addressing the often-unspoken expectations around innocence, sexuality, class, and race, challenging the persistence of problematic behaviours and privileges despite the formal end of apartheid.

In *The Bizarre Bazaar I*, I explore how gender roles are taught and performed, drawing on Schechner's theory of social performance to distinguish between the limiting effects of traditional "training" and the liberating potential of "education." This contrast sheds light on the rigid, repetitive nature of gender socialisation in conservative Afrikaner communities. The aim is to make White Femininity appear "bizarre," underscoring how strange and uncanny these deeply ingrained roles are when viewed critically.

Chapter 1 focuses on how the construction of gender within South Africa's White, empirical framework has been intimately tied to the enforcement of apartheid and the perpetuation of Afrikaner Whiteness. This system, defined by binary and heteronormative structures, historically oppressed those marked as "other" while reinforcing rigid gender roles and racial categories. Engaging with Judith Butler's concept of performative gender, I argue that gender is fluid and socially constructed. The nationalist heteropatriarchal system that shaped White Femininity also suppressed Afrikaner homosexuality as a threat to this ideal, making this study a queer project within Afrikaner culture.

In Chapter 2, I explore the constructed nature of racial identities, recognising how "White" and "Black" have different meanings in various contexts. Drawing from Sara Ahmed's critique of Whiteness and Nuttall's theory of entanglement, I argue that Whiteness operates like a "(bad) habit," perpetuating exclusionary practices. I also discuss how Afrikaner enclaves maintain conformity, often led by Women who enforce

gender norms on each other. In private spaces like apolitical media and music, Afrikaner Femininity is commodified while deeper political engagement is avoided, posing a challenge for disrupting these spaces without being reabsorbed or relegated to the radical fringe.

Chapter 3 uses the work of Christi van der Westhuizen and Azille Coetzee to analyse Afrikaner Women's roles, particularly the persistent *volksmoeder* identity. Rooted in ordentlikheid (politicised respectability), this ideal continues to shape Afrikaner Femininity, with many Women unknowingly performing gender roles linked to nationalist and colonial ideologies. I argue, alongside Coetzee, that scrutinising and challenging these norms offers a way for Afrikaner Women to disrupt Whiteness as a dominant identity. While the *volksmoeder* motif has shifted from its historical roots, Afrikaner women still face a paradox of expected domestic responsibility combined with infantilised sexuality, which stems from apartheid-era gender roles. These roles continue to influence contemporary Afrikaner femininity, reflecting cultural amnesia and resistance to change.

My methodology, outlined in Chapter 4, reflects my Afrikaner heritage and is rooted in the resourcefulness of recycling materials. This "circular process" of deconstruction, reconstruction, and iteration is a key aspect of my practice. Drawing from theorists like Nuttall and Ingold, I emphasise the labour-intensive nature of my creative process. In the first iteration of *The Bizarre Bazaar*, I used minimal, repetitive actions such as sewing to highlight the often-overlooked realm of Feminine labour. In the second iteration of *The Bizarre Bazaar*, I plan to further explore the breakdown of normative Femininity by juxtaposing my role as a creator with the actions of other performers.

In Chapter 5, I reflect on the performance-installation *The Bizarre Bazaar I*, which I created in November 2023. This project evolved from an earlier piece, *Koljander-Koljander (Coriander-Coriander)*, which tested interactive elements and language dynamics from Afrikaner cultural contexts. In *The Bizarre Bazaar I*, I delved deeper into how cultural rituals, particularly games, reinforce gendered roles from childhood into adulthood. Drawing inspiration from Reza de Wet's exploration of fantastical worlds, *The Bizarre Bazaar I* was designed as an immersive environment where minimalistic, repetitive and slowed-down actions contrasted with vibrant

installations. The use of traditional Afrikaner imagery, such as *Volksmoeder* costumes and rituals, emphasised the persistence of these cultural practices while critiquing their normative aspects. Interactive elements allowed the audience to engage with and deconstruct traditional gender roles. Moving forward, I plan to develop *The Bizarre Bazaar II* by enhancing the temporal and spatial dimensions, aiming for deeper audience interaction and more nuanced critiques of gender performance.

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