Making "Quare" Spaces:

Re-membering Childhood as a Queer Practice of Indigenous African Place-making

Tandile Mbatsha

MBTTAN001

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of

Masters in Theatre and Performance

Faculty of the Humanities

University of Cape Town

Supervised by Dr Mbongeni Mtshali & Assoc Prof Jay Pather

2021

University of Cape Town

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

University of Cape Town

COPYRIGHT

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

PLAGIARISM 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, and has been cited and referenced.

Signed by candidate

ABSTRACT

Queers of colour are in real and constant danger as they are not seen to belong neatly to either Western queer culture (due to their blackness) or African culture (due to their queerness). This discursive violence legitimizes actual violence on black queer bodies. This research project uses performance as a tool to address black queer erasure and aims to debunk the tired claim that queerness is un-African.

In my final thesis production and its accompanying explication, I engage with memory and practices of queer self-fashioning as a means of contesting oppressive, hegemonic, and heteronormative ideologies of gendered racial belonging. Memory thus serves as both a critical concept and an aesthetic impulse in my practice of queer space making.

I use performances of intimate childhood memories of shame and othering to articulate how black queer subjects emerge in distinct relation and/or contra-position to the white Euro-American identity construct that dominates understanding of queer citizenship and politics. In so doing, I work towards naming and enacting a "quare" (Johnson, 2001, p. 8) politics that attends to the specificity of black queer lifeworlds. Producing a counterhegemonic queer space that is attentive to the potentially generative tensions between "queerness" and black African indigenous ontologies enables the envisioning and affirming of black African queer subjectivity in all its complexity.

I use Johnson's critical reframing of 'queer' as 'quare' as the basis for my engagement with queer-of-colour critiques of hetero- and homonormativity. Quare in this research study is deployed as part of various contemporary endeavours to locate racialised and class knowledge in identity. It is also used to articulate genderqueer and sexually non-conforming subjectivities such that ways of knowing are viewed both as "discursively mediated and as historically situated and materially conditioned" (Johnson, 2001, p. 13). The practice of self-reflexivity through performance is posited as a method for self-image fashioning in this study. Further, I show in my performance work that Johnson's (2001) construal of self-image-making and performativity have potential for restoring subjectivity and agency through the performance of self.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ndiyabulela kwizihlwele za kulo mama (Nontuthuzelo Mrawu-Mbatsha) oGqwashu, Gxiya, Mvambo, Lawu, Manzini, Siyaphi, Tikayivumi! Ekhaya eMazangweni, Chayi, Njanana, Ntelele, Ntubi, Zongozi, Msuthu, Sdudu, Dlangethafa, Madlozi, Mbambo z'nomongo! Andikoyik' ukulwa, nisecaleni kwam!

I owe a debt of gratitude to the Institute for Creative Arts, through the Mellon Foundation, and the South African National Research Foundation for the scholarship that funded my research.

I wish to thank my supervisors Dr. Mbongeni Mtshali and Associate Professor Jay Pather for their tireless council, for seeing me through this important research project. As well, I thank the many friends, colleagues, and acquaintances whose insights helped to shape this work; without their continual support, this project might never have seen the light of day.

It is with great love and respect that I especially thank my parents and sisters. I am most grateful for their unwavering support, love, trust in me, laughter and the family Sundays that were a fuel stop in this journey. Your generosity humbles me.

To Mam'Kwayi, Togu, Ngconde, my maternal grandmother, who's death nearly paralysed this research process. A stellar fighter in life, Makhulu continued to fight for me even in the other realm. Ndiyabulela Ntombi.

I dedicate this research to you and your tireless efforts in raising me to be a confident human being.

NONTAMPLANA BEAUTY SIKWEZA
NONTUTHUZELO SYLVIA MRAWU-MBATSHA

Ndiswele imilomo engaba iliwaka.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This Masters project reflects my interest in defining what space means for queer black and brown people in South Africa, specifically in (but not limited to) Cape Town. South Africa still has a long way to go towards materialising the post-apartheid constitution in tangible ways for the LGBTIAQ+ community. Ours is a country in which visibility has deadly repercussions for transgender, femme and queer people. My performance work thus seeks to unpack the black and queer experience of navigating such a society.

What does it mean to navigate the internal tensions of being queer in a society that tells one they are queer and proceeds to bombard the said queer person with religious and social norms that pronounce queerness as being unnatural? Such a society is in the powerful position of completely obliterating and erasing queer herstories and culture from its mainstream memory. Yet, same-sex relations pre-date colonial identity practices in Africa. For example, amongst the Ndebele and Shona tribes in Zimbabwe, the Nupe in Nigeria, the Azande in Sudan and Congo, the Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi same sex relations existed as a social given. Same-sex sex was believed to possess spiritual benefits for the individuals and communities in which same sex people lived, benefits such as promoting wealth, health and spirituality (or spiritual cleansing) (Tamale, 2014).

Evidence of queer existence in Africa can be found in some African languages. People who engage in same-sex intimate relationships were/are referred to in specific terms and by specific names. Moreover, historical artefacts, rock paintings and ancient tombstones (such as those in Egypt) depict men embracing one another.

This research study reclaims homosexuality/same sex sexuality as African and is invested in the generative potentialities of queering heteronormative Christian and Euro-American ways of being that are imposed on queer subjectivities in Africa. Further, this research study articulates specific ways by which queers of colour experience the world. Black queer people experience ostracization within the home and society. Such ostracism is layered with religious, cultural and traditional contradictions. Black queer Africans' indigeneity is questioned and they are brutally killed for being black and queer. Moreover, black queers do not fit neatly into the dominant Euro-American tall, skinny, white, gay and suburban queer mould. Tensions imposed on queers are the result of

hegemonic political, socio-economic and sociocultural standards that have become normalised in contemporary South African society. These have a lingering and life-threatening impact on how black and brown queer people commune.

This research project posits that queer space making, especially for queers of colour, is an act of resistance, of making black queer communities possible and visible. I will discuss homonormativity as an expression of heteropatriarchy, a direct impact of cis-heteronormative socialisation. "Heteropatriarchy" refers to a society or culture dominated by a ruling class of heterosexual males whose characteristic bias is unfavorable to gay people and womxn (women) in general.

I argue that queer subjectivities internalise heteronormativity, which manifests as regurgitation of the heteronormative binary--this or that and nothing in between, girl or boy, top or bottom, femme or butch/masc, masc4masc. Queer, transgender, femme and gender-nonconforming/genderqueer folk resist cis-normative expressions by adopting identities that are both feminine and masculine and none of the above. The result is that femme queer subjectivities are relegated to the margins of society.

Heidegger (1971) posits that the margin is not a dead-end without possibilities. Transgender and gender-nonconforming people audaciously inhabit the margin with no trade-offs or compromise of self, even in the face of death. Queer people of colour have for centuries made the margin a crucible for newness, love, community and a space possessing potential for something to "begin its presencing" (Heidegger, 1971, p. 23). An irrevocable sense of self and self-love "begins its presencing" at the margins.

Trans and genderqueer people, like myself, daily experience inadequacy. We experience imposter syndrome for just being alive because cis-heteropatriarchal people believe we should not exist. Queer black indigenous people of colour (QBIPC) need to remind themselves that such cis-heteropatriarchal people are in the wrong, that QBIPC are alive because we are speaking out. We have to remind ourselves that not only are we enough but that the system that weaponises the fantasy of a cis-heterosexual binary criteria for social identity prefers that we disappear.

Ultimately, we reinforce this as a system we will not allow to continue evaluating us (Vaid-Menon, 2021).

This study project is animated by doing queerness that is aimed at irrevocably choosing self and love of self in the face of the daily hate levelled at us. Whether calculated or not, there is always a risk when practising queer visibility as resistance in South Africa. Thus, my research project deploys acknowledgment and celebration of difference as one of many starting points in doing queerness. Acknowledging difference holds possibilities for ushering pathways towards equality. When acknowledgment of difference is reciprocated, we are more likely to see difference as fertile ground for generating newness.

In this project, I also deploy difference as a tool to fashion possibilities while inhabiting the "Third Space". The idea of the "third-space" derives from Homi Bhabha's (1994) hybridity theory which refers to a mix and posits that people draw on multiple resources to make sense of the world when constituting identity. Hybridity refers to a crucible available to marginalised people for making new meanings. The "third-space" is a conceptualization/theorisation of the space in which hybrid identities find themselves, especially in reference to the binary world we live in.

Furthermore, I engage ethnophilosophy as a way of "re-membering" via/with childhood memories and early practices of queerness, and re-membering with the semiotics or aesthetic impulses that surface. "Re-membering" in this research project means going back to history, going back to precolonial teachings about who we are and where we come from as Africans, what the isiXhosa language terms "*Buyel' Embo*". Re-membering is posited as a pathway to membering with African indigenous ontologies of being. Membering is the act of creating a memory in the present moment. Re-membering is deployed as a tool for self-fashioning.

I grew up as an effeminate boy who was never boy enough and never girl enough. Slurs such as "moffie", "sissy" and "girl-boy" were used to describe me to me. As such, I posit "re-membering" as a way of reclaiming self. Re-membering is posited as a practice queers can use to articulate themselves in the "third space". Here, I lean into and borrow from Chilisa' (2012) tenets of

decoloniality that are included in their indigenous research paradigm. These become a critical strategy of situating and asserting queerness as African.

This research study also incorporates the practice of performance. Rather than just a written output, my performances are grounded in Practice as Research (PaR) methods and methodology. The live production or exhibit of research is "a series of embodied repetitions in time of both micro (bodies, movements, sounds, improvisations and moments) and macro (events, productions, projects and installations) level in search of a series of differences" (Fleishman, 2012, p. 31). Specific to this project, these differences, namely gender expression, sexuality, social class, socio-economic make-up, etc. are shown to be a way of lifting individualism within the community while recognising shared oppression.

In the 21st Century PaR has become a well-established approach in creative performance and is used as a method of inquiry at Western universities, as well as in South Africa (Kershaw, 2009). Turning traditional forms of research on their head, PaR asserts that embodied and repeated practice elicits an output or illuminates process and constitutes research. The "as" in the term functions to problematise conventional notions of theatre and performance practice. Imperative to PaR are the notions of "embodied knowledge" and radical dislocation of ways of knowing. PaR thus dislocates the Euro-American intellectual tradition that privileges mind over body as the locus of knowledge.

PaR reclaims agency for knowledge production, steering it away from the centralised and hegemonic notion of (Western/Westernised) knowledge towards personal and decolonial practice/knowledge. PaR is in essence a coming back to self for knowledge. This turn away from impersonal and abstract theorising and scientific rationality towards action-based investigation orientated toward practical and agent engagement in the world is what Judith Butler (1993, p. 15) posits as doing/performing self for self as a self-reflexive moment. Butler's (1993) notion serves to expand PaR via the contention that performance of self is a reflexive practice.

According to Johnson (2001, p. 4):

> not only a performance/construction of identity for/toward an "out there" or merely an attachment or "taking up" (Butler, 1993) of a predetermined, discursively contingent identity. It is also a

> performance of self for the self in a moment of self-reflexivity that has the potential to transform one's view of self in relation to the world. People have a need to exercise control over the production of their images so that they feel empowered. For the disenfranchised, the recognition, construction, and maintenance of self-image and cultural identity function to sustain, even when social systems fail to do so. Granted, formations/performances of identity may simply reify oppressive systems, but they may also contest and subvert dominant meaning systems. When gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people of colour "talk back," whether using the "tools of the master" (Lorde, 1984) or the vernacular on the street, their voices, singularly or collectively, do not exist in some vacuous wasteland of discursivity.

I quote Johnson at length here because of the implications and potential that his as well as Butler's construal of self-image-making and performativity have for restoring subjectivity and agency through performance of self. Johnson's assertions lending themselves to empowering the disenfranchised LGBTIAQ+ people; he states that *all* we are as queer black Africans is valid and indeed knowledge. Further, I make use of the action of performing self to see oneself in this project as a moment of revealing and seeing self for self.

As with the action of standing in front of a mirror to see oneself, performance of self to the self in this research study is focused on excavating myself from the quagmire of what I call "queer shame" or shame of being queer--the shame society imposes on me for being queer. This project uses mirroring as a visual prompt of and for oneself through performance; seeing oneself is thus an act of resistance. Although somewhat fleeting and ephemeral, my final thesis performance has the potential to activate a politics of "quare" subjectivity--a black, queer and African politics linked to my identity.

The thesis performance also has the potential to situate and illuminate quare subjects in Africa. Thus, through durational and multimodal performance artwork, I intend to invoke memories of childhood play, particularly play deemed suitable only for girl children. These are play events in which I actually participated growing up; I propose these were–for me–instances that constitute the advent of my own queer self-fashioning/personhood. These acts of re-membering and subverting the shame of being feminine via performance are a means of asserting indigeneity for myself in queerness.

Re-creating and "re-membering" quare space in this instance derive from my memories of being shamed for playing with dolls and teacups. Being uSisi/uMakazi when I played "house house" with other children, wearing a jersey on my head as long hair and using a Shoprite plastic bag as

a swimming costume when playing Miss South Africa with my friend Nkosi and with my childhood boyfriend, Timothy (not his real name) were all real play events from childhood that provide rich "remembering" ground for my quaring.

I argue even my experience of colonialism is queer. When we played--"we" because these memories more precisely constitute a collective childhood memory of the black child—we played out colonial fantasies that were floating in our realities, in our living spaces. For example, wearing jerseys as long hair or wigs in our play was related to mental images we had of long, blonde and straight hair. Does my experience of colonialism through a queer lens then make my experiences less African? This is an important question, one amongst many, I attempt to investigate via performance.

Through naming and re-membering via using memory, this research study celebrates black queer presence precisely where it has been rendered culturally invisible and untenable. All the vivid memories I explore constitute proof to me that queerness is indigenous to my body and therefore African. This is because I am an African and my experience of culture has been and is queer since childhood. I propose that the aesthetic impulses I present in my performances, although retrospective, are in fact the beginnings of my quare (black and queer) self-image making.

I draw on my memories as well as the public discourse in which quares (queers of colour) engage on social media and other spaces in which they contest their visibility as black queer subjects. In this regard, a specific post comes to mind from an Instagram account with the handle @coachella.randy, posted on 30 November 2021 Oratile Masedi, only child of the late Jam-Ally presenter and South African popular culture iconoclast in the 1990's, Vinolia "V-Mash" Mashego, posted a video complaining about social media followers who tag them on annoying unrelated posts. In the video I am referring to, Oratile, fondly known as Coachella Randy, wears a grey t-shirt with the writing "*sizo nqoba*" (we will persevere) under a clenched fist that is held up to signify protest. They are wearing a yellow t-shirt on their head to mimic long hair, with the t-shirt neck fitting around the girth of the head and the rest hanging down their shoulders.

I purposefully make mention of the content of this video—annoying tagging of unrelated posts--to emphasise that the video was not intended as a performance of queerness or as entertainment

for others; it was a performance of self to others that happens to be queer. I am particularly struck by the universality of the t-shirt as a symbol for hair. The heteronormative gaze that sees long hair as a feminine aesthetic seems to be a universal feminine aesthetic grasped even in childhood. Long straight hair enraptures young boys in particular, boys who are attempting to circumvent dominant understandings of femininity at a tender age through play.

It is worth noting this idea of long, luscious hair invokes a specifically European/non-African coding of femininity as we were not mimicking wearing afros with our towels and t-shirts at all but only long "white people's hair". These vivid memories, collective memories as I have come to see them (learnt through quare engagement on social media), of quare self-fashioning bring me to the "*I AM*" moment in my life and in this research project. "I AM, here" is a declaration of "self-possession" despite heteronormative claims that I am not.

In this research study, I begin by discussing the widespread untruth about African sexualities as binary, gender rigid and heterosexual-only social identities of male and female. I highlight the missed opportunities in South African legislation to include LGBTIAQ+ as African, critical for combating hate crimes against quare people. I do this to foreground my basic argument that pre-colonial Africa was configured by sexually fluid societies; I would go as far as saying Africa was queer before the arrival of white/European settlers on its shores.

I also present and discuss literature on hegemonically violent African masculinities that choose rather kill and be complicit in the killings of their transgender and genderqueer kin than embrace diverse sexualities. I show how such African masculinities complicity preserve colonial Euro-American standards that intentionally preserve the privileges they have accrued from this still colonial society by dominating society with their interests in terms of gender, race, social class and sexuality power relationships. I also discuss homonormativity as a direct expression of heteronormativity, that is, homosexuals regurgitating or juxtaposing hetero gender binaries on to genderqueer subjectivities. Further, I discuss the dangers of homonormativity to the transgender and genderqueer community and how this threatens and stifles the potentialities that difference can engender.

As a way forward to address the hate and violence directed at quare peoples, I posit there can be no decolonisation without queer politics; inversely, there is no quare theory without decolonisation. In this regard, I look at Chilisa's (2012) methods for decolonising research; I also promote Practice as Research (PaR), leaning on Laenui's (2000) steps towards decolonising research and knowledge. I deploy Johnson's (2001) "quare" conceptualization and their assertion that "queer" fails to accommodate the racialised LGBTIAQ+ community. I posit articulating and recovering/reclaiming the "quare" person's experience of the world as transgender, femme, gender non-conforming, gay and lesbian, rehearsing these in performance as significant steps of/towards decolonisation, as offered by Laenui (2000) and Smith (1999).

I utilize the chapter outlines below to present my research findings.

Chapter 1: African Anxious Sexualities. Here, I discuss the impact of ongoing coloniality, heteropatriarchy and homonormativity on queer people of colour in the post-apartheid politics of South Africa, including the daily experiences of hatred, discrimination, violence and the serious threat of death. I challenge the notion of homosexuality and un-African and revert to indigenous, pre-colonial practise in Africa that evidences societies constituting diverse sexualities.

Chapter 2: Decolonising the Borders. Here I look at the paradox of quare subjectivities' location in society. Relegated to the borders as both a marginalised space, they also inhabit a third-space, a space of hybridity and a space filled with potentiality for the future possibilities for quaring self. I also focus on play as a generative methodology, including Butler's and Johnson's arguments of performance for the self and challenging queerness as a term that excludes queers of colour, discussing my performances in this regard.

Chapter 3: Literature Review. This chapter discusses in depth the key theorists who have informed my approach in performance as a quare making quare space.

Chapter 4: Difference: A Space for Generating Newness. I look in closer depth at the border location that provides the quare performer with possibilities for recovery, renewal and agency for resistance. In particular, I look at the use of metaphors, proverbs and storytelling as critical tools in my performance works.

Chapter 5: Quare Performance as Decolonial Practice. Laenui's (2000) five phases towards decolonisation form the focus of this chapter: rediscovery and recovery, mourning, dreaming, commitment and Action, which I discuss in relation to my performance works. Similarly, I look at Chilisa's (2013) approach centred on deconstruction and reconstruction, and self-determination and social justice, as well the critical act of self-praise/self-identification in my performances.

Chapter 6: On Memory. This chapter returns to the foundation of memory that has formed the lynchpin of this research study project of quaring spaces via PaR for reclamation and celebration of black, non-homonormative, non-heteropatriarchal identity and subjectivities in South Africa. I discuss Koleka Putuma's ideas of memory and trauma in her poem, *"Amanzi"* (water), which is a significant part of my performance, *I AM*.

I end with a brief **Conclusion** that emphasises the main tenets in using my body, being and spirit to quare my space via performance of my authentic quare self. This powerfully stems from, works with and transforms memories of suppression and oppression from the heteronormative gaze via play, joy and celebration of one's queer and black identity.

CHAPTER 1 : AFRICAN ANXIOUS SEXUALITIES

The sad and exhausted but widely accepted myth that homosexuality is un-African has time and again been valorised on the altar of falsehood. This untruth is anchored in the practice by those in power of selectively invoking African culture as a tool for gaining political popularity. Black and brown women in Africa are also familiar with this populism tactic: "when women assert their rights, particularly those rights that involve reproductive autonomy and sexual sovereignty it is un-African" (Tamale, 2014, p. 18).

The false claim that some or other identity or practice is un-African is based on the Western essentialist assumption that Africa is a homogeneous society, a claim in and of itself the result of coloniality. White settlers could not fathom African realities and African societies' way of life. In pervasive attempts to understand the Africans they had colonised, they began applying simplistic scientific and social science apparatuses to formulate ethnographies about African identities, societies, cultures and politics. The emergent Western discourses about Africa and Africans failed to accommodate the complexities related to Africa and its indigenous peoples (Tamale, 2014)

These discourses were deliberately used to "measure" and dismiss as less than the human beingness and intelligence of Africans—the bodies, minds, spirituality and knowledge possessed by African people. Thus, African bodies—my body included--cultures, sexualities, beliefs, et cetera were reduced to white Western homogenising notions of Africa and its people. Yet the reality is that Africa is made up of thousands of ethnic groups with rich, diverse societies, cultures, social identities and sexualities (Tamale, et al, 2014).

The life-threatening criteria and measures created to label same-sex desire un-African is a façade concealing neoconservative unrelenting patriarchy dressed up in the constructs of religions, traditions, nationalisms and laws (Msibi, 2011). Msibi notes a "new wave" of conservatism that works tirelessly and brutally to maintain social and institutional patriarchy. He asserts that heteropatriarchy's oppressive structures and constructs are to be found first and foremost in the law itself. It is a sad irony that while South Africa's democratic constitution condemns gender and sex inequality and discrimination marginalised people still do not enjoy the freedoms it proclaims for all the people of the land.

Repercussions of the deadly "un-African" trope relating to sexualities are different in each country on the continent. Nigeria, Malawi, Senegal, and more recently, Uganda have imposed harsh sentences against individuals convicted of engaging in same-sex relations. It is illegal to engage in consensual "gay" sex in thirty-eight out of the fifty-three African states (Tamale, 2014). In South Africa, queer individuals continue to be denied cultural and political recognition and are subject to shaming, harassment, discrimination and physical violence. These forms of violence are all driven by heteronormative patriarchy, with straight, cis-gendered men asserting their authority over women and men located outside their narrow frame of masculinity (Msibi, 2011).

South Africa's post-apartheid constitution has folded queer subjects into the national fabric; however, society's acceptance of queer people is violently ambivalent. This paradox is partly due to homonormativity, a politics that fails to contest heteropatriarchy while superimposing hegemonic binary roles, traditions and specific class and socio-economic arrangements in same-sex identity and practices. To put it bluntly, contemporary South Africa's neoliberal modernity promotes a highly masculinised, heteropatriarchal socio-political economy that dictates whether or not people are seen and accepted. The constitution of South Africa (Assembly, 1996) secures sexual and gender diverse people in legal terms only; however, the real lived experiences of femme, transgender and gender non-conforming people involve daily threat on their lives at the hand of others. We are dying as a result of unexamined, deeply held and unchallenged heteropatriarchal beliefs in democratic, post-apartheid South Africa.

It is a fact that homophobic, heteropatriarchal beliefs underpin national and social citizenship despite the existence of a progressive Constitution (Tucker, 2009). I suggest that if two significant changes had been taken into consideration in South Africa's history, the above would have been prevented. Firstly, the politicians and changemakers in post-political apartheid South Africa should have included the LGBTIAQ+ community in such significant political events as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to acknowledge the violence queer people had faced during apartheid in South Africa (Lupindo, 2020). The term "post-political apartheid" reflects that it is widely recognised that the 1994 first democratic election saw South Africa emancipated only

politically and not economically and socially. Socio-economic liberation remains elusive almost three decades since this historic moment.

Secondly, their ideas and vision for liberation and social justice post-apartheid should have included a more nuanced and meaningful understanding of queer subjectivities in a diverse society. Such a complex understanding of queer subjectivity should have immediately and directly been reflected in the values of inclusivity instead than in the feigned or tick box way it was done. These two non-occurrences squandered the opportunity to lay the critical foundation for diverse queer subjectivities to implicitly take root to concretely manifest change for all queer people in South Africa (Tucker, 2009).

A space for queer people to tell their experiences of exclusion and violence by the apartheid state at the TRC would have given them critical visibility and made them part of the emerging "free" democratic republic. This was a grave missed opportunity to give visibility and legitimacy to the LGBTIAQ+ community, to celebrate queer people as humans who had endured and survived apartheid in all racial and cultural groups. This would have been a moment of visible national acknowledgement that same sex people had been impacted negatively by colonialism-apartheid, including via individual experiences of homophobia as well as the erasure of societies characterised by diverse sexualities in Africa. The political transition was the key moment for South Africa to include transgender, femme and genderqueer people in its body politics but it failed to do so.

I contend that the currently prevalent trans and femme murders as well as contempt for sexual and gender minorities in South Africa emerged directly from this missed historical opportunity. Queer South Africa, as much as it is touted as being an exemplar of contemporary multi-ethnic, multi-racial African society seeking to include sexual minorities, has yet to reconcile constitutional promises with the daily experiences of queerness in its real-politik. The result of the historic failure of the post-apartheid vision may be seen in transphobic and homophobic killings as well as the widespread rape, sexual assault, femicide and other forms of violence against black women, girl children and cis-gender black boys, I would argue.

The future of African homosexualities is thus one of greater queer visibility and of the normalisation of gender and sexually diverse identities. Genuine conversations about diversity and inclusivity must occur for this to happen; speaking out as a quare black person is highly risky under the current circumstances of brutal violence directed at the queer black community. Thus, creative spaces such as the current one I have made in performance and PaR must be valued and promoted towards a groundswell of acceptance, not just tolerance, which is the goal of queer/quare activism in South Africa.

Homonormativity

Challenging patriarchy begins with looking at the concept and system of heteropatriarchy that is dominant in almost all societies, with homonormativity a related feature that needs critiquing. The term "homonormativity" was first popularised by lesbian and gay studies scholar, Lisa Duggan (2022), in her writing about the history of gender and sexuality. According to Duggan (2002, p. 8), "homonormativity is a politics that does not contest hegemonic heteropatriarchy, but rather upholds and sustains it, while promising the possibility of a demobilised gay culture anchored in domesticity and material consumption" (Duggan, 2002, p. 8).

In South Africa, Cape Town has been dubbed a "gay capital", implying it as a city that is gay friendly. In reality, though, white capitalist gay men predominate as custodians of the queer South African narrative and only their stories are told (Tucker, 2009). Homonormativity emphasises commonality with the norms of heterosexual culture, including marriage, monogamy, procreation and productivity. One can argue this is straightforward assimilation into heterosexual value systems that are replicated and privileged as LGBTIAQ+ visibility in which civil rights have become normalised. This conflation of national belonging to a community that is not necessarily defined by gender but with queer liberation and freedom has been theorised as homonormativity, which is ultimately an expression of heteropatriarchy (Duggan, 2002).

Figure 1: Intyatyambo Iyaphuma Engxondorheni*, a performance film I produced for my medium project*

The configuration in Figure 2, from *Intyatyambo Iyaphuma Engxondorheni*, a performance film I produced for my medium project, shows femme, transgender and gender non-conforming people as inhabiting the deadliest region of the border where they are further pushed to the margins by gay and lesbian folk. The perpetual marginalisation of quare subjectivities inspired me to work with images of suppression. The constriction by the rocks is juxtaposed with the fragility and aliveness of the body in my minor and medium projects. I use the contrast between the rocks and my body as a method of visualising the deathly reality of homophobia and transphobia faced by quare people.

More importantly, I want to draw attention to the resilient and triumphant self-fashioning of the black queer body despite the precarity of our threatened lives and brutal lived experiences. After 12 minutes of lying submerged under the rocks, I remove the rocks and stand tall, holding one rock in my hand. This is my statement that I will no longer be validated by a cis-heteronormative and homonormative society; I will stay in the margin and triumphantly create a new centre.

CHAPTER 2: DECOLONISING THE BORDERS

The "the borderland" is a term and notion coined by Gloria Anzaldúa. A cultural feminist and queer theorist, Anzaldúa in their book, *This Bridge Called My Back*, contends there are two borderlands--a physical and a psychological borderland. She points to the physical borderlands between Mexico and the United States, with the important counterpart to these physical borderlands being the psychological, sexual and spiritual borderlands. The borderland, to Anzaldua, is an imagined boundary and space full of potential to create new spaces of freedom. My research project mobilises the border as a material space and a construct through which to think about how perceived difference is produced and spatialised at this imagined boundary.

I will elaborate on my usage of the term "borderland" later in this essay. For now, I point to the lingering psychological borderlands, that is, the normalising of a binary gay/lesbian sexuality and gender performance. Gender performance in this space relies on stabilisation of the "masculine" men and "femme" women binary, the mere copy-paste of heteronormativity that creates the homonormative. The "femme or butch" and "top or bottom" dichotomy are reproductions of the heterosexual binary roles that assign queer subjectivities stringent roles.

These stringent roles further ostracise members of the LGBTIAQ+ community playing to the heteronormative binary. The landscape in the border for femme, transgender and genderqueer people is not a comfortable space to inhabit, riddled as it is with contradictions and contentions. Fatphobia, femmephobia, gender binaries, limiting sexualities to monogamy, brutal killings and rape are prominent features of this landscape (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Figure 2: Intyatyambo Iyaphuma Engxondorheni, my minor project iteration.

For my minor project, I worked with rocks and my body to communicate how cumbersome heteropatriarchy and homonormativity (more especially gender binaries) are to genderqueer people. The backdrop of the church in Figure 3 is not coincidental; it refers to the constraints of religion, particularly for black folk, that takes a toll on black queer people. Quare people are ostracised not only by their families but their communities too, including the church which plays a central role in community building in black communities. Many black families disown their queer children for fear of being rejected by the church community.

In both Figure 2 and Figure 3, I am seen submerged under rocks. I use rocks to signify the material used to end the lives of transgender and genderqueer people. Rocks are my aesthetic metaphor for the abrasive societal gender and sexuality norms of hegemonic heteropatriarchy. My work

mobilises the term “emerge” as a conceptual and practical framework to challenge hegemonic heteropatriarchy. I posit the process of emerging as a moment of agency--that moment in which one chooses to appear as they want; it is the moment of self-fashioning.

I physically submerge myself under the hard elements of the earth--rocks–and go through them one by one by carefully removing each rock so as not to hurt myself. The emergence is to show the fragile exterior of the human body as house to a resilient and transgressive quare soul. Further, the emerging also points to fragile African masculinities forced to sit in the quagmire of heteropatriarchy. These are some of the lenses related to emerging through which to read my work. The journey is of quare subjectivities emerging from heteropatriarchal constriction via removing the rocks or gender norms. Coming out scathed, they nonetheless find beauty in themselves, and this moment is what my work seeks to celebrate.

In celebrating this moment, my work is not attempting to romanticise strife--the act of going through the rocks and hard places—rather, the particular act of emerging the person one is at the moment of emerging is what is celebrated. This is how my work reaches for and attains the quare self-fashioning moment. Moreover, it posits emerging as a process of self-fashioning for black queer people, thus breaking the boundary/norm.

Anzaldúa (1987, p. 81) contends that borders, invisible and intangible as they are, are made to demarcate safe and unsafe places, to differentiate “us” from “them”. Borders are in a constant state of transition and making new/renewal. The prohibited and forbidden inhabitants of the border–fat, femme, transgender and gender non-conforming persons–are thus further pushed to the curb of the margin where they live among those who cross over, pass over or go through the confines of the homonormative.

German philosopher, Martin Heidegger (1971, p. 23), known for his contributions to phenomenology, hermeneutics and existentialism suggests the boundary is not that at which something stops. The boundary is rather, as the Greeks recognised, the point at which something begins its presencing (Heidegger, 1971, p. 23). For Heidegger (1971, p. 23) a boundary is not a dead end but a space possessing potential when resilience and hope propel the “other” to pass

through it. Anzaldúa's borderland functions in a similar way, that is, the boundary is where something begins its presencing. Configured thus, the boundary is a space to which queers of colour are relegated, there where nothing positive and beautiful is supposed to emerge, black queers forge their realities and resiliently fashion their quare identities.

Queer people in South Africa are dying exponentially every day, *kodwa* (however), we are not all dead. Those of us who are still alive continue to celebrate life, manoeuvring in and through the rough edges of the border that cuts deeply into us. The boundary is a similar region as the "third space", the widely cited concept coined by post-colonial theorist, Homi Bhabha (1994). According to Bhabha (1994, in Antener, 2019), the "third-space" is a space of transition, "a place where hybrid identities are possible, where dialogues between cultures evolve, a place where new things come to existence." Through Bhabha's configuration, the border is the "third-space"; as much as borders can separate cultures, the third-space is still a meeting zone for hybridity.

The "third-space" is a space for inventing, a space in which one might flourish, self-fashion and self-determine—it is a space where one can reclaim agency. I suggest one accomplishes this by rejecting the heteronormative centre as a space of absolute meaning-making while at the same time acknowledging the desirability of the centre as a place of perceived power, access and proximity in homogenous hetero-patriarchal society. My work is thus interested in creating *alternative centres* as opposed to a hegemonic centre; these alternative spaces can be free of coloniality and the heteronormative ideal. The space I create makes possible a new decolonial, anti-transphobia and anti-femmephobia "centre" that engenders newness. Mine is an equitable space for gender-diverse and homosexual people in South Africa.

The "third-space" contests and calls into question Western ways of meaning-making that are based on the false notion of a static and essentialised culture. Christianity is an extant example of a privileged Western belief and social system that holds sway over others. One has only to look at the entrenchment of Christmas and Easter holidays on our calendar to see the West's dominant positioning in our societies. The "third-space" recognises that essentialised views of indigenous cultures perpetuate binaries of the Other, as identified by postcolonial theorist, Gayatri Spivak (2010). Simultaneously, the third space becomes the ideological framework within which

colonized subjects come to understand the world. These are the "others" that typically represent Spivak's colonial and postcolonial subjects, subjects that exist only through or against the powerful gaze of colonial discourse. Spivak (2010) argues these spaces must be questioned and opened up to include the voices of the Other. This must be done to critically acknowledge the ways of being of subgroups in indigenous and essentialised cultures--the excluded within the already marginalised indigenous cultures.

Indigeneity can thus be constantly contested in the third space if it is theorized as a constantly moving target. This significant idea is supported by post-colonial scholar, Bagele Chilisa, who has written extensively on indigenous research and evaluation methodologies. Chilisa (2012, p. 38) argues: "[i]ndigenousness is interrogated to comprise the voices of those disadvantaged on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, ableness, health, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, age, and so on". I will delve deeper into Chilisa's indigenous research paradigm and her offerings in later discussions.

Similarly, Bhabha (1994, p. 15) writes:

> We find ourselves in a moment of transit, where space and time cross to engender a complexity of difference and identity. The moment of transit and/or process creates space for the "in-between", further providing the terrain for elaborating pathways to selfhood, whether singular or communal. These pathways initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation in the act of defining the idea of society itself. It is in the materialisation of the gap, namely the overlap and displacement of dominions of difference, that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.

Anzaldúa (1987, p. 3) writes these opening lines in her chapter titled "The Homeland, Aztlán: El otro México": "Wind tugging at my sleeve, feet sinking into the sand. I stand at the edge, where earth touches ocean. Where the two overlap a gentle coming together, at other times and places a violent dash". Anzaldúa's (1987, p. 3) defining of the borderlands here refers explicitly to geographical and physical boundaries between cultures. However, they also reveal "the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (Gloria Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 28). The borderland is both material space as well as the affective intensities produced by such spaces.

The image of my queer, black, prohibited and forbidden body dwelling in and inhabiting the edge of the ocean and land in my performance film, *Intyatyambo Iyaphuma Engxondorheni* (beauty can emerge from unfavourable places) draws from the above ideas about the borderland, third space

and hybridity. My performance speaks directly to the unbearability of inhabiting contentious spaces such as the border.

Anthropologist, Tim (Ingold, 2000, p. 153) argues “dwelling” constitutes immersing oneself in an environment as an inescapable condition of existence. In my view, this means inhabiting a world, culture or society in which violent form and meaning have already been attached to queer people, meanings and violence they are unable to escape. It is the similar space of Anzaldúa--the standing on the edge of the ocean and the land, simultaneously inhabiting the border to evoke a destabilisation of the fixity of national borders, the law and socio-cultural exclusions. This confrontation and contact with the border–this being in the third space–troubles the spaces the border exists to contain.

Figure 3: Sourced from the performance film, Intyatyambo Iyaphuma Engxondorheni *(Medium Project)*

Considering the inescapability of one’s queerness and the violent conditions surrounding the existence of black queer folk in Africa, in my medium project, I chose to work with images that visually gesture towards texture, space and body. What happens when my body is submerged in water, sand and rocks respectively? The water was cold. The sand was warm. Once I got under the sand I began to get even colder. The rocks were heavy when placed upon me. Once the rocks were

all placed on my body, I found ways to breathe so they would not collapse and hurt me. When removing them, I did so carefully so they would not shift and hurt me.

I posit my above practices mimic the careful choreography of quare people navigating homogenous hetero-patriarchal colonial society. The blacking of queer is in my history; it is the colonisation that is held in my body as a result of homogenous heteropatriarchy. Yet self-fashioning happens in the ways I choose to navigate my body, or in relation to how my body "re-members" with self in the precarious moments between life and death—my life in violent hetero-patriarchal South African society.

My work uses materiality as an aesthetic and discursive device. My quare body resiliently emerges through the sand as a kinaesthetic and cognitive potentiality or repository of resistance. I insert my small body in to a vast, uncomfortable and rough landscape, and document the dwelling and emergence of my body. The vast landscape juxtaposed with my small body speaks to the violent ways of South African society, which make queer subjectivities smaller.

Play as a generative methodology

Elizabeth Nelson and Joseph Coppin (Nelson & Coppin, 2005, p. 185) in *The Art of Inquiry: A Depth Psychological Perspective* trace the relationship between thinking and making in a theory they coin, *the art of inquiry*. In this theory, they identify the theorist and the craftsperson as separate entities. Hence, I and all the theorists I have invoked in this research paper argue that a body can inhabit these skills and use them (in the process) simultaneously or interchangeably. However, the methodology of working through these skills may differ as per task or project. The theorist makes or creates through thinking and the craftsperson thinks through creating. The theorist thinks in their mind and "applies the forms of thought to the substance of the material world" (Nelson & Coppin, 2005, p. 184).

My work inquires and explores how my queerness is quare and how one can go about asserting their quareness through memories of childhood play and re-membering with these early practices of quareness (Johnson, 2001). Nelson and Coppin (2005, p. 188) posit allowing knowledge to grow from the crucible of our practical and observational engagements with the beings and things around

us. They propose doing and engaging practically with the construal of self-image making as a way forward towards *self* (Nelson & Coppin, 2005, p. 188). Additionally, they develop the idea of research or inquiry as an active reciprocal relationship with the world. The art of inquiry is practiced in two distinctive and complementary halves held in balanced tension that work together to make the whole. In this regard, according to Davidson (2013, p. 407), the researcher actively seeks knowledge and is receptive to knowledge that seeks us. Inquiry necessitates patience, openness and acceptance.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

> Quare (Kwâr), n. 1. Meaning queer; also, opp. of straight; odd or slightly off kilter; from the African American vernacular for queer; sometimes homophophic in usage, but always denotes excess incapable of being contained within conventional categories of being curiosity equivalent to the Anglo-Irish (and sometimes "Black" Irish) variant of queer, as in Brendan Behan's famous play, *The Quare Fellow*
> -adj. 2. A lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered person of colour who loves other men or women, sexually or nonsexually, and appreciates black culture and community.
> -n. 3. one who *thinks* and *feels* and *acts* (and, sometimes, "acts up"); committed to struggle against all forms of oppression-racial, sexual, gender, class, religious, etc.
> -n. 4. One for whom sexual and gender identities always already intersect with racial subjectivity.
> -n. 5. quare is to queer as "reading"[1] is to "throwing shade"[2] (Johnson, 2001, p. 2)

Johnson's (2001, p. 2) definition of "quare" is a reconfiguration of the still-developing discipline that is queer studies. "Quare" is deployed here as a culture-specific positionality that Johnson found absent in the dominant and more conventional usage of "queer", particularly in academia. As much as queer theory constantly seeks to interrogate notions relating to experience and selfhood, it is unable to account for racialized issues faced by gays and lesbians of colour from "raced" communities. Scholars such as Anzaldúa (1987, p. 38) vehemently address this limitation, warning that "queer" is the road to hell paved with good intentions. Queer is used as a unifying tool: all "queers" of all races, classes, ethnicities are umbrellaed under this false banner. We need the unifying umbrella to solidify when confronted by outsiders but not at the expense of homogenising and erasing differences (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 38).

Moreover, "quare" does not only speak across identities, but it also *articulates* identities. "Quare" offers a way to simultaneously probe static notions of identity and locate racialised and class knowledge. This research study leans on Johnson's quare mandate to recapitulate and recuperate black, queer and, especially concerning this project, transgender, gender non-conforming and femme subjectivities. Transgender, gender non-conforming and femme people have been homogenised into the gay or lesbian sexual binary on to which heterosexual people impose their gender binary of man and woman.

[1] "Reading" is to insult imaginatively, in opposition to the blunt gay-bashing taunts of the straight world. Reading is gay-to-gay sparring.
[2] "Throwing Shade" is a black queens' product, significantly more nuanced than conventional, aggressive shit-talking. Throwing Shade is reading at a refined level; it's the curve to the pitch. It's more artfully executed, more dependent on constructing a veiled (or not-so-veiled) insult rather than relying on obvious crudities and innuendo.

Quare in this research study is deployed as part of ongoing LGBTQI+ endeavours at articulating self-fashioned genderqueer and sexually non-conforming subjectivities. My research attempts through performance are aimed at ways of knowing that are viewed both as "discursively mediated and as historically situated and materially conditioned" (Johnson, 2001, p. 13). Furthermore, quare studies acknowledge the multiple and varied points of departure in theorising among lesbians, bisexual, gay and transgendered people of colour--differences also conditioned by class and gender.

> And yet, oppressed groups are forgetting all the time. There are instances of this in the rising Black middle class, and certainly an obvious trend of such "unconsciousness" among white gay men. Because to remember may mean giving up whatever privileges we have managed to squeeze out of this society by virtue of our gender, race, class, or sexuality. Within the women's movement, the connections among women of different backgrounds and sexual orientations have been fragile, at best. I think this phenomenon is indicative of our failure to seriously address ourselves to some very frightening questions: How have I internalised my own oppression? How have I oppressed? (Moraga, 2002, p. 27)

Chicana writer, feminist activist, poet, essayist and playwright, Cherríe Moraga (2002, p. 29) articulates a "theory in the flesh" as an internalisation of classism and racism, complacency in embodying not only our oppressions but that of others as well. According to Moraga (2002, p. 28), "[w]here the object of oppression is not only someone outside of my skin but the someone inside my skin. In fact, to a large degree, the real battle with such oppression, for all of us, begins under the skin." Theory in the flesh emphasises the diversity within and among gay, bisexual, lesbian and transgendered people of colour while simultaneously accounting for how racism and classism affect our experiences and knowledge of the world.

Theories in the flesh also conjoin theory and practice through the embodied politics of resistance. This manifests in vernacular traditions such as performance, folklore, literature and verbal art (Johnson, 2001, p. 8). This research study seeks to bridge the gap left by queer theory in its consistent and critical failure to acknowledge the intellectual, aesthetic and political contributions of non-white and non-middle-class gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people in the struggle against homophobia and other forms of oppression. Quare theory is committed to interrogating identity claims of "black authenticity" that include rather than exclude people.

A theory in the flesh is one where “the physical realities of our lives–our skin colour, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings–all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 34). Thus, as quare people, we should define and locate the power we seek in the contradictions of our experiences as quare people. Mitsuye Yamada (quoted in Anzaldua, 2002, p. 32) notes the difficult collective cultural history of “unnatural disasters” relating to queer black people, which can be applied to black queer lives in South Africa. With the Coronavirus pandemic, we have collectively experienced great loss of lives which is palpably noticed by all; however, hate crimes and femicide have long been a pandemic in South Africa, even more so in 2020/21, yet it hardly seems to be noticed by mainstream society or a cause for concern.

Lindokuhle Cele, Adnaan Davis, Elma Robyn Montsumi, Nare Mpela, Liyabona Mabishi, Muva Kirvan Fortuin, and many others have all fallen victim to anti-black and anti-queer violence. I am tired. All this loss is psychologically exhausting to the soul. My performance work derives from this experience of loss and exhaustion; my work is a statement of defiance, a statement describing how our lives as black queer people will not be disposable; my work is a calling to me to go further in resisting the deathly power of the heteropatriarchal norm.

The queer black bodies—*abasishiyayo* (those who have died, or the dead) --died because they are quare. Thus, my performance work calls me “to resist the idea that I am a loss or deficient by questioning the very logic that constructs what is normal and what is not” (Scott, 2019, p. 24) through the performance of self. Performance of the self is a powerful moment of self-identifying (Butler, 1993, p. 14).

CHAPTER 4: DIFFERENCE: A SPACE FOR GENERATING NEWNESS

Advocating mere tolerance of difference is gross reformism as it does very little to change the oppressors' views of the so-called "different" people. Difference among people must rather be articulated in ways that clearly reveal and assess the damage of homogeneity. Moraga (2002, p. 30) observes, "we are afraid to see how we have taken the values of our oppressor into our hearts and turned them against ourselves and one another". As long as we are afraid to admit how deeply "the homophobes'" words have been ingrained in us, we will not see difference as a generative site. Difference is a doing space, thus seeking tolerance and not total acceptance would be a total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives.

Difference must not be merely tolerated but seen as a never drying well of necessary polarities amongst which our creativity can speak like a dialectic. (Dialectic or dialectics, also known as Hegels dialectical method, describes a method of philosophical argument that involves some sort of contradictory process between opposing sides (Zalta, 2022)). Only within the reciprocity of different strengths, acknowledged and equal can we generate the power to seek new ways to actively "be" in the world as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters (Anzaldúa, 1987). Our challenge is to subvert homonormativity by harnessing and not ignoring difference. We must view our differences not as causes for separation and suspicion but rather as a force for change. There is no liberation without community, however, and community should not homogenise one part of itself while shedding difference or its other parts.

In her essay, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House", black feminist and black queer activist, Audrey Lorde (2002, p. 112) explores this point. Those of us who stand outside the circle of society's definition of being acceptable, those of us who have been "forged in the crucibles of difference, those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are black, who are older, who know that survival is not an academic skill, know how to stand alone". Lorde (2002) challenges the assumptions of ostracization as a disabling space but argues rather that we are in a unique position to work towards creating the new community or society that spells true liberation for all. It is in the exact place of discomfort that we learn how to make our differences into our strengths. Lorde (2002, p. 113) sounds the call to "define and power" instead of divide and conquer as has occurred for centuries with colonialism, heteropatriarchy and homonormativity.

Other writers also illuminate this opportunity for struggle from/at the margins, as presented in the quotes below.

> Language, myth, truth, ancestral memory, dance-music-art, and science provide the sources of knowledge, the canons of proof and the stimulus structures of truth. (Molefi Kete Asante 1990, p. 19)
>
> Our stories are our theories and method. (Melanie Carter 2003, p. 40)
>
> For people of colour have always theorised–and I'm inclined to say that our theorising (and I intentionally use the verb rather than the noun) is often narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, since dynamic rather than fixed ideas seen more to our liking. (Barbara Christian 2000, p. 12)

In the above Asante (1990), Carter (2003) and Christian (2000) assert our truth is in our experience of living; further, that our lived experiences are legitimate banks of knowledge and theory about a people. Queer people have always theorised; their method is found in the ways they survive. Our collective worldviews of people are encoded in language, folklore, myths, metaphors, taboos and rituals, as referred to by Zeverin Emagalit (2001, p. 131). Chilisa (2001, p. 131) and Preece (2001, p. 131) also describe ethnophilosophy as the experience of the people encoded in their language, folklore, stories, artifacts, culture and values. These are the banks of knowledge storing their experiences, from which it can be retrieved (Chilisa, 2012, p. 119).

The ethnophilosophy of queer people of colour in Cape Town has been whitewashed by a small group of white cisgender and gay men in Greenpoint who use their privilege and capital to assert not just their queer identity but their dominating power as well. Gay clubs in Cape Town are financially and socially taxing to queer people of colour (Tucker, 2009), rendering us unequal and invisible in the Cape Town queer space. Thus, our current bank of knowledge as quares is dominated by white cisgender and gay men as it is suppressed via the exclusion of quare performance of self in this space.

Using Metaphors, Proverbs and Storytelling as Critical Tools

Culture is experienced; language, in all its manifestations, mirrors the experience of life, giving culture form and texture. *Intyatyambo Iyaphuma Endgxondorheni* is an isiXhosa proverb, a short

saying used commonly to express in a striking way some or other truth or familiar experience (Guralnik & Solomon, 1980; Chilisa, 2012). Chilisa (2012, p. 132) explains: "[p]roverbs are universal tools to describe socio-cultural events and practices". They articulate the very soul of society and function to promulgate a group's sense of collective identity, often containing its operative paradoxes.

Proverbs teach values about life and native "survivance", a term coined by prolific writer and literary critic, Gerald Vizenor (2008, p. 13). Proverbs and survivance refer to a people's active sense of presence over historical absence, uprooting and oblivion. The act of survivance cannot be missed or mistaken in native stories. According to Vizenor (2008, p. 14), "natural reason, customs, active traditions, and narrative resistance … [are] illuminated in personal attributes, such as humour and spirit". Survivance is more than mere survival; it is a way of life that nourishes indigenous ways of knowing.

Having said that, stories and proverbs can also transmit hegemonic ideologies that perpetuate the dominance of some groups through privileging their knowledge and practices that discriminate against gender, age, ethnicity, social class, ableness and so on. One such example is the Sesotho proverb "*monna ke selepe o a adimanwa*", which translates in English as "a man is an axe, so he can be shared". This proverb is aimed at encouraging womxn to accept sharing a man and promotes polygamy. (It is worth noting, the term "womxn" as an alternative spelling of the word woman; it began gaining attention and use from around 2010 via intersectional feminists' promoting of it as explicitly inclusive of gender diverse people.) Such idioms influence how people behave sexually and shape societal attitudes about behaviour that falls outside the perceived "norm", marking it as deviant (Chilisa, 2012).

Intyatyambo Iyaphuma Endgxondorheni, my performance film, employs a change-based research approach, an indigenous feminist methodology that seeks to draw from indigenous literature and community stories as a paradigm or frame of reference for discussion. (*Intyatyambo Iyaphuma Engxondorheni* is a Xhosa proverb that gives hope by likening the human experience of struggle and pain to a flower blooming in a landfill.) A change-based research approach is aimed at encouraging participants in performance and members of society engaged in a journey of

empowerment, transformation and healing. My performance work borrows from this indigenous feminist method and approach to bring about social change regarding homonormativity and heteropatriarchy (Chilisa, 2012, p. 122).

Cultural stories are central to the lives of what literary theorist and feminist critic, Gayatri Spivak (2010, p. 89) terms the marginalised "Other"; they disseminate information on how to live in an oppressive society. I use storytelling in my performance work to recuperate obliterated herstories of genderqueer people. The *story* in the performance is presented as a teaching tool in the form of sociological commentary (Chilisa, 2012, p. 123). As a *feeling* instrument, the verb "feeling" is used intentionally, placing emphasis on empathy as an action, where it is understood that allies should be doing the active work of speaking out against homophobia within their circles, including in the family.

A critique of indigenous storytelling is that not all cultural stories are valuable to community building. Some stories are enunciated from a heteropatriarchal perspective and are therefore oppressive. Such stories often exclude the voices of children, womxn, the poor, the disabled, homosexuals and some racial or ethnic communities. The diversity of stories and herstories in postcolonial and indigenous societies is vast. (It is worth noting "herstory" as a term used to frame history from womxn's or feminist perspective.) Still, quaring of stories is essential to ensure we do not reinforce a heteronormative society to the exclusion of the richness of queer potentiality and culture. Queer potentiality is a form of defiance that bolsters actions that resist heteropatriarchy. It functions as an adjuvant, that is, a facilitator for envisioning and inventing home (Wallace, 2018).

Figure 5: Intyatyambo Iyaphuma Engxondorheni *(Arcade 2018)*

Figure 5, above, signals or shows a practical use of Chilisa's (2012) change-based method. In this final thesis production of mine which accompanies the broader research project, I mobilise a work I premiered at Gavin Krastin's "Arcade" in 2018. In this work, I invoke a memory of a ritual performed in Xhosa, the rite of passage practice, *ulwaluko*. The ritual involves the ceremonious act of the initiate being smeared with butter by cis-heteropatriarchal men to replenish the skin's natural oils that has been dried out by the white clay the initiate applies on their skin the entire month of the initiation.

The ritual is also used as an opportunity to impart to the initiate knowledge about how to be a man. In the performance work, I asked women, transgender and queer people to apply the butter on my body as a means of undoing the violent memory I have of being touched by cis-heteropatriarchal men. In the thesis production, I will again use this ritual for a black cisgender queer man and I to smear butter on each other's bodies to interrogate intimacy, a memory I hold dear from initiation

school. This memory of intimacy was not celebrated and articulated because heteropatriarchy dismisses intimacy between male-bodied people. Yet it is the constant feature of intimacy among human beings that enables humanity to abound.

Botswanan post-colonial scholar, Prof Bagela Chilisa (2012), in her book, *Indigenous Research Methodologies*, presents a postcolonial indigenous research paradigm. She argues social science research should by now involve spirituality and reflect reverence for communal forms of living. Chilisa, (2012, p. 177) thus states:

> The Euro-western research process disconnects me from the multiple relations that I have with my community, the living, and the nonliving. Bantu people of Africa live a communal life based on connectedness that stretches from birth to death, continues beyond death, and extends to the living and the non-living.

As such, Chilisa engages with the Other from the broad perspective of the formerly colonised and historically oppressed, which includes children, womxn, the poor, the disabled, homosexuals and other ethnic and racial groups. This research study places focus on black and brown homosexuals and genderqueer people from my lived experience of being queer and black.

CHAPTER 5: QUARE PERFORMANCE AS DECOLONIAL PRACTICE

This research project advances decolonisation as one of the essential pathways to ridding society of transphobia and homophobia. Amongst others, Epprecht (2009), Chilisa (2012) and Tucker (2009) respectively show that homosexuality is not new to indigenous Africa. We now know colonisation, specifically via the Christian religion, rendered homosexuality an unwanted sexual and social practice (Epprecht, 2009). Lawyer and advocate for the health, welfare and culture of Hawaiians, Poka Laenui (2000, p. 15) argues that colonisation and decolonisation are social more than political processes, noting that governance of a people changes only after the people themselves recognise the need for change. Laenui (2000, p. 15) suggests five phases for decolonisation to successfully occur in societies still suffering from the violent impact of Western/Euro-American colonialism: (1) rediscovery and recovery; (2) mourning; (3) dreaming; (4) commitment; and (5) action.

These phases guide my decolonial practice, including in this research study; the decolonial impulse undergirds my performance work and is shaped by Laenui's (2000) five phases, as discussed below.

Rediscovery and recovery

In the first phase of decolonisation the colonised Other rediscovers and recovers their history, language and culture--essentially their identity. This involves questioning the captive mind of the colonised Other and historically oppressed. Here, for instance, womxn, those living with disabilities, transgender, genderqueer and homosexual people define in their own terms what is real to them and what their reality is. In making *Intyatyambo Iyaphuma Engxondorheni*, a performance film, I (together with the photographer and director) undertook a physical journey to the edges of Cape Town, past the Huguenot Tunnel and tollgate to discover and recover queer herstory. The Kroomrivier, beyond the Cederberg Mountain range, is a physical and natural boundary between Cape Town and Worcester.

We also travelled to the edge of the Cape Town City bowl on Signal Hill, to the edge of land and ocean at the opposite end of Cape Town--Muizenberg Beach and, finally, to Boulders Beach in False Bay with its colony of African penguins. All these spaces are natural sites on the edges of

Cape Town into which we inserted our forbidden quare bodies to assert our indigeneity on African soil. I chose these particular sites for filming because of their physical and socio-economic and political borders. There is a toll gate and tunnel that need to be accessed before getting to the Kroomrivier. The beaches are physical borders between land and water. Signal Hill is an atmospheric border--physical, natural and economic--between the Cape Town City bowl and Camps Bay.

Three black and brown femme queers travelled in a hatchback Polo Volkswagen, engaging in the act of identifying the best locations for the film. They travelled along the city's edges over two days. This film project was a journeying to recover black and brown queer stories and herstories through counterstorytelling to counter the narrative that queerness is not indigenous to Africa (Chilisa, 2012, p. 132). The work of rediscovery and recovery is emotionally exhausting, but unlearning coloniality and heteropatriarchy to recover from the margin and/or border is necessary. This critical work will unleash queer potentialities which must happen to topple heteropatriarchy and homonormativity.

In the quoted text below, multimedia artist and researcher focusing on black queer and feminist performance in post-apartheid South Africa, Dr Mbongeni Mtshali, unpacks the recovery of a body from the history of heteropatriarchy and embodied memories. Mtshali (2009, p. 9) posits:

> The recovery of the body that "wears" its history, in this sense, is to reveal and unsettle the ideological assumptions and circulations of power of which such archival histories are constitutive, because in the ruptures between the official record and the embodied memories of its signifies a contingent historical truth can be activated that offers a view of history-making as a process in which particular genealogies of power and agency are reified both by textual and bodily inscriptions of memory.

My performance work uses the body and its embodied memory to excavate harmful memories via resurfacing events and aesthetic symbols of queerness to re-member with the forbidden self. This constitutes doing the work of rediscovering and recovering parts of the self that have been discarded to please heteropatriarchal society in the dismal hope that the latter will embrace both blackness and queerness. Rediscovery in my performance work is about recovering the forbidden, deviant and Othered self. It is about illuminating that difference and probing it for generative and new possibilities to emerge. I consider all these critical efforts to retrieve racialised experiences for self-image making.

Mourning

Mourning, Laenui's (2000) second phase towards decolonisation, refers to the process of lamenting the violence endured by the historically oppressed and mentally colonised Other's relating to their identities and lived social experiences. As Chilisa (2012, p. 31) suggests, "mourning forms an important part of healing and moving to dreaming." As a performance artist, I put myself in precarious situations that are sometimes life-threatening. For example, in my very first performative exploration, I covered my eye with a tomato and carved it with a knife as the tomato juice dripped onto the floor.

I performed the above exploration as a way of mourning the life of Lindokuhle Cele, a femme quare person who was brutally and fatally stabbed in the eye in KwaZulu-Natal. Mvuyisi Noguda, Cele's killer, was found guilty of hate crime murder and sentenced to 25 years in prison (Igual, 2021). The performance reflects that the LGBTIAQ+ community is still in constant mourning here in South Africa because of the constant hatred and violence still levered at its members.

Dreaming

In this process, Laenui's (2000) third phase towards decolonialism, the colonised Others delve into their cultures and invoke their histories, worldviews and indigenous meaning-making to think through and imagine other possibilities of self-fashioning. Thus, another aspect of my work explores ball culture as a frame to engage my own culture--queer culture--where we live our fantasies. Quare space-making for queer utopia and potentialities is imperative to this process. Cuban American performance studies visual culture, queer theory, cultural studies and critical theory scholar, José Esteban Muñoz (2009), argues that queer space-making should not be dismissed as frivolous. It represents not only an emotional but also a deep political need for the actual emancipation of queer people.

Postcolonial transatlantic and African diasporic literature and culture scholar, Belinda Wallace (2018), contends that queer potentiality is powerful defiance against heteropatriarchy. Wallace (2018, p. 63) posits that "for these subjugated people, free was always potentiality, that is, an inevitability that was on the horizon". Freedom and defiance are inevitable for queer people of

colour, including in South Africa. There must be a powerful urge for freedom for defiance to occur (Wallace, 2018).

South African quare cultural organizer, Tazme Pillay, runs a nightlife quare space called *Death of Glitter (DOG)* in Cape Town. The form and intended function of this event are similar to a queer ball. In a live Instagram conversation with American writer and gender non-conforming performance artist, Alok Vaid-Menon, Pillay (2021) speaks about the important community work that *DOG* does for queer people in Cape Town.

In a world in which we are told our lives do not matter, the body becomes a powerful site of protest. While being perpetually excluded and murdered, the way we adorn our bodies and abstract ourselves becomes critical. Queer spaces make possible the embodiment of fantasy so that fantasy becomes lived experience. Queer black and brown people want to materialise the fantasy, want to make heaven real right here and now. Heaven is a religious concept reserved for the afterlife, for the "righteous" heterosexual, but will only materialise later for them. Queer people turn this belief on its head by dreaming (Pillay, 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic saw an abrupt stop to nightlife as a space for queer potentiality and impulses as with most activities in most communities in most parts of the world. Quare vitality and potentiality depend heavily on queer night life. The hard lockdown stopped and took away the livelihoods of queer, trans and gender nonbinary doing sex work. Many had to return to their homelands. The "biological" homes of most queer and trans people are not places of safety. This is a specificity regarding how quare and trans lifeworlds and experiences differ from most other communities. The lockdown was hard on queer and trans people's lives when nightlife ceased.

Nightlife for queer people is fundamentally a site of protest, art and embodiment of queer joy and pleasure. It constitutes a political space in which queer people come together to challenge heteropatriarchal socially acceptable meanings of being a man and/or a woman. Looks and glam are a form of political resistance, a way of celebrating we are alive. It is a radical act of self-actualisation (Adeyemi, et al., 2021).

It was to this nightlife that I turned for two more of my works--*The Solo Ball* and *Virtual Ball* with Vogue Nights Jozi. Vogue Nights Jozi is a space event for members of the queer community who seek visibility, survival and acceptance in a city that hardly acknowledges their existence. It is a movement that is redefining culture, shifting norms and proclaiming Johannesburg's nightlife scene that has rarely been inclusive. In June and July 2020, at the height of the Corona virus' first wave in South Africa, I facilitated a collaboration between Vogue Nights Jozi and The National Arts Festival.

I was the commissioned artist who worked with a team of 25 quare people to produce the short film, *The Solo Ball*, for the 2020 National Arts Festival. We also undertook a second such collaboration in which we hosted a *Virtual Ball* on YouTube alongside the National Arts Festival. The virtual ball has, at the time of writing, been viewed 479 times after the live premiere that had +-500 viewers and participants.

The Solo Ball profiled four artists who were at the time-based in Gauteng, Makhanda and Cape Town. These were queer black and brown, femme, transgender and gender non-conforming folk who shot their contributions with technical notes from the production's director of photography and concept notes from me. The film, *The Solo Ball* was created by 25 artists committed to dreaming, archiving and recovering quare subjectivity, with black and brown queer people directly or indirectly involved in materialising it at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Here, I lean on Chilisa's (2012) configuration of "self-praise" and contend that queer nightlife, the stretch between sunset and sunrise, provides an important moment for queer people of colour to praise themselves through glam, to play at night and to enjoy intimacy, music and dance. My work dares to dream by creating space for queer people to exist. Femme, transgender and gender non-conforming persons can actualise the fantasy of glamming up and being safe.

My work above is a case in point of doing queerness and defying heteropatriarchy to generate possibilities for quareness (Wallace, 2018). The coronavirus made life uncertain for everyone, with death becoming a potential certainty for everyone, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, class, body ableness and so forth. It was thus a no-brainer to undertake the making of this film for quare people; we live in constant life-threatening situations and danger, even before the arrival of the pandemic.

Creating performance work, dreaming and doing work about quare subjectivity in small, shrunken spaces was nothing new to us.

Postcolonial scholar specialising in transatlantic and African diasporic literature and culture, Belinda Wallace (2018) contends that queer potentiality is powerful defiance against heteropatriarchy. Wallace (2018, p. 63) posits that "for these subjugated people, free was always potentiality, that is, an inevitability that was on the horizon." Freedom and defiance are inevitable for queer people of colour, including in South Africa. There must be a powerful urge for freedom for defiance to occur (Wallace, 2018). This, my works, *The Solo Ball* and *Virtual Ball* reflect this urge for quare freedom, even at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chilisa (2012, p. 32) observes that, "[t]o dream is to invoke indigenous knowledge systems, literatures, languages, worldviews, and collective experiences of the colonised Other to theorise". African popular culture and African queer studies scholar, Xavier Livermon (2014, p. 510), also notes "if we are to employ the idea of queer space as a usable space, the everyday practices of leisure are a seminal site for understanding cultural creativity within the marginalised spaces occupied by black and brown South African queers". Performativity and the performance of self and joy are the imperatives in organising nightlife spaces and reveal both the potentialities and limitations encountered by black and brown queers as we try to construct liveable lives (Livermon, 2014, p. 511).

Commitment

Laenui (2000), as the fourth phase towards decolonisation, posits commitment as defining the role of research in community development as well as the researcher's role and responsibility to the community. Chilisa (2012, p. 16), in this vein, suggests that "[r]esearchers [must] become political activists [they must demonstrate] commitment to addressing the challenge of including the voices of the colonised Other in all the stages of the research process and [undertake] research that translates into changes in the material conditions of the local peoples."

Mthokozisi Ntuli and Damtew Teferra (2017), in the field of Higher Education Training and Development in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa, note the efficacy of social media to communicate

and galvanize social media users to participate in fighting for a collective cause and mobilising for action against heteronormative and homonormative hegemony.

I use Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to educate society about genderqueer people of colour by posting my performance work, photographs and videos of myself and my work. I share, retweet and re-post the work of femme, transgender and gender non-conforming people of colour on my social media accounts. I mobilise for the recuperation of the black and brown genderqueer person by visually making them visible, even if it at the moment visibility is only to a select few. This in turn conscientises my social media audience about the complexities and diversities of gender and sexuality.

It is important to note that there is no single "way" or process for people to express commitment. However, it is important to communicate and establish a collective definition of the desired direction. In this phase, a common cause such as #SAQueerLiveMatter is used to usher in action (Laenui, 2000).

My commitment to creating and producing queer black and brown content, including live performance, YouTube, a ball and social media posts is aimed at illuminating queer black and brown experiences/stories. My commitment to telling queer stories is embodied in the decision to continue shooting the performance film, *Intyatyambo Iyaphuma Engxondorheni,* even after having been caught by law enforcement officers at Boulders Beach for not having a Covid-19 permit to take photographs in a "public" space. It is embodied in my and the film team's commitment to waking up at 5h30am to catch the crisp morning light in Kroomrivier, for which we paid our toll gate fees and petrol money. Quare people's lived experiences of being othered and discarded compel this commitment to radical self-doing.

Action

Laenui's (2000) fifth and final phase towards decolonisation is self-explanatory. This is my commitment, every day, to be unapologetically quare and to make quare and genderqueer performance work despite the exclusionary and violent heteropatraichal and homonormative status quo. Recovering early memories of one's quareness from the quagmire of shame and self-hate is

decolonial action. Recovering oneself from internalised homophobia, femmephobia, fatphobia and quarephobia (the compounded fear of blackness and queerness) is decolonial action. Without consensus of commitment, Laenui's (2000) fourth phase, the preceding phases will not serve the decolonial aim.

Indeed, earnest attempts made at phase four translate dreams and commitment into strategies for meaningful social transformation to take place (Chilisa, 2012, p. 17). *Action* means to empower the colonised Other and to promote inclusivity and respect for everyone. It involves countless actions of defiance against socio-economic risks as well as physical risk taking that endanger one's safety. At Kroomrivier we transgressed a physical border, the hiking trail with a no-entry sign due to COVID-19 regulations.

What is action without risk? In my performance work, *I AM (ICA Live Art Festival 2022),* the smearing of butter on my body by womxn and queer people is taking action against a hegemonic heteronormative practice. In that performance, I invoke this memory as a way of redefining its purpose for my queerness. This practice creates space for the audience and I to unsettle and reconfigure intimacy with self and desire. Smith (1999, p. 112) suggests the following strategies of action towards decolonisation: (i) deconstruction and reconstruction, and (ii) self-determination and social justice.

In the ensuing section, I further discuss Laenui (2000) on the process of decolonisation, together with education scholar and critic of persistent colonialism in academic teaching and research, Linda Smith's (1999) framing.

Deconstruction and reconstruction

Smith (1999, p. 112) suggests destroying deficit theories by interrogating distortions of people's life experiences that represent queerness as a disease, and to retell and reimagine stories of the past to emerge the potentiality of the future. Chilisa (2012, p. 33) affirms Smith's strategy to emerge potential decolonial process, observing it facilitates the process of recovery and discovery. My work deconstructs heteropatriarchy via my reimaging and quaring my experience and memory of the Xhosa rite of passage for boys entering adulthood, *ulwaluko*.

Productions like *Umthunzi Wentaba*, a South African television drama series about the male Xhosa initiation (*ulwaluko*), produced by Seipati Bulane-Hopa, aired for the first time on the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) channel 1 in 2007. However, it was subsequently withdrawn for viewing, with the SABC citing reasons of the show being too graphic that had resulted in the public being disturbed. It took a complete rewrite of all the episodes for the production to return to the SABC screen three years later in 2010 (*News24*, 2010).

Another such case was *Inxeba* (The Wound), essentially an intersectional film about three Xhosa men involved in the period of the Xhosa male initiation. Two of the men, Xolani and Vija, engage in a sexual relationship. They do so annually during the period of initiation at the initiation school where they are caregivers to the initiates (SAHO, 2017).

My reading of these two characters is that they have reconstructed the initiation space as one in which they show mutual affection, away from the gaze of the villagers, until an urban gay initiate catches them. The overwhelming response to the film was upheaval and criticisms of "disrespect", "expressed by members of the Xhosa community of cultural appropriation and violation of the sanctity of *ulwaluko*" (SAHO, 2017). This response triggered me as a Xhosa queer "male-bodied" person who had undergone initiated in 2011. I made a performance installation in response to the intense homophobia in the criticism of *Inxeba*.

I was frustrated by the silencing of the experiences of people undergoing the rite of passage, especially the silencing of quare people. Initiates are exhorted to keep the practice a secret on the basis that initiation is a sacred practice. However, I felt it especially important to tell my story as a quare person, to articulate the quare person's experience of the ritual. My work is a counterstory to the heteropatriarchal and heteronormative *ulwaluko* narrative that seeks to obliterate the quare person's experience.

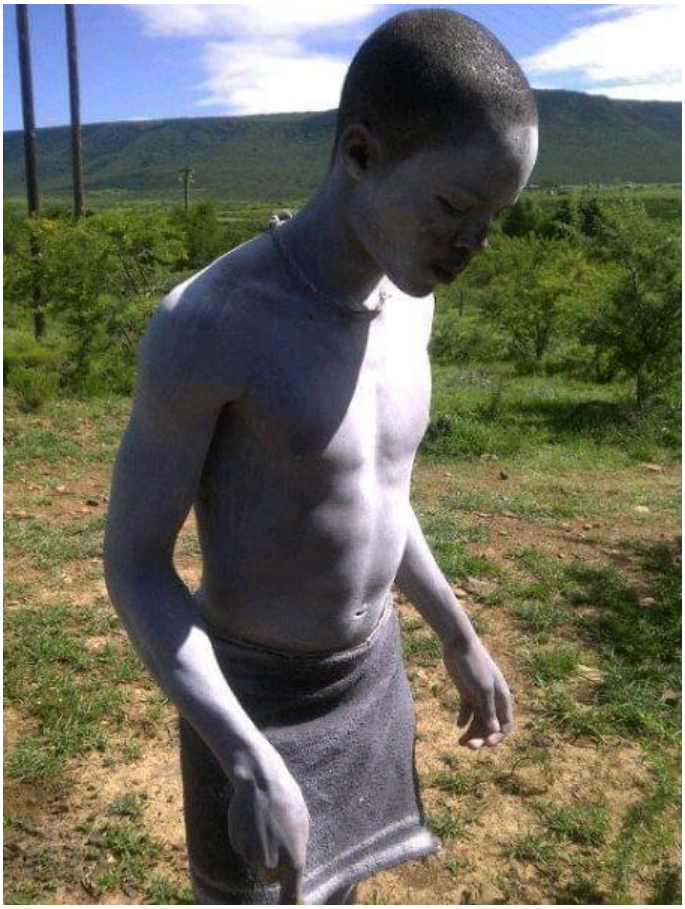

Figure 6: I Am pictured here at initiation school (2011)

My experience of *ulwaluko* was queer. I had two of my quare best friends travel from Johannesburg (along with my uncle living in Pretoria) to the Eastern Cape a week before my homecoming ceremony, referred to as *umgidi*. I anticipated their arrival with excitement, which spurred me to diligently perform the necessary steps to heal quicker. I could not wait to tell them about my fondling with a fellow initiate, an experience not unique to me I have since learnt from other quare people who underwent *ulwaluko*. One can only imagine how many boys have been violated thus my being forced to remain silent about this part of their initiation.

My friends would have breakfast at my home and walk up the hill to visit me. Figure 7, below, reflects we spent the days leading to *umgidi* under an African Thorn tree. Hiding from the scorching sun of Fort Beaufort (Bofolo), we drank Savanna, ate Champs fried chicken and gyrated to Beyoncé played on someone's phone. It was a special time and space. My work draws from these experiences, which in hindsight I see were immersed in quaring, deconstructing and reconstructing the narrative, the space and memory.

Figure 7: My friends and I under the African Thorn tree

Self-determination and social justice

This research study seeks to reinforce self-determination among the socio-economically, socio-politically and socio-culturally subjugated LGBTIAQ+ peoples, more especially, those of colour who are disempowered by Western hegemony and heinous, essentialist heteropatriarchy that continues to target and kill quare people. Quare people make real their worldviews via a process of self-determination, an action that lends itself to social justice via their countering of the hegemonic heteropatriarchy story. Self-determination aids in finding legitimacy for methodologies embedded in the herstories, experiences, indigenous and quare ways of perceiving and realising/materialising queer fantasies and value systems of joy and transcendence (Chilisa, 2012, p. 33).

Self-Praise/Self-Identification

For some queer people, self-identification follows on from significant self-rejection and self-hate. Thus, getting to a point where one can self-identify is in itself a substantive milestone, as cultural exclusion, among others, is a lived experience for the LGBTIAQ+ community. Self-knowledge and self-identity are cherished features in most African cultures. *Ukuzithutha,* the act of saying one's clan names, is an important part of self-identification. The clan names tell the family tree of a person, including the values of the family.

I have personally experienced problems with this part of my identity as *Ukuzithutha* triggers harsh memories of being force-fed masculinity by my uncles. At home, the practice of teaching a boy to become a man is done via highly heteronormative and alienating strategies that are rejecting of my quare self. However, what I see as nonetheless important about the practice of *Ukuzithutha* is the definition of self as related to the environment and its people and, importantly, to all aspects of nature.

Much like ball culture, the house you come from and the people that occupy the house are important identifiers in queer culture. Identifying oneself is validating and affirming as it relates one to a group of people and a geographic location. Using known symbols such as Xhosa beads, the symbolic red and white blanket and butter, especially the particular way I used the latter in my work, on my quare body locates me within a particular genealogy. I am part of a community, among a people, through time. And I am quare. This is my assertion of my quare identity into my family tree and my defiance of heteropatriarchy and quare actions for transformation toward social justice.

CHAPTER 6: ON MEMORY

As an additional discussion to contribute to an understanding of Intyatyambo Iyaphuma Engxondorheni, my dance film. I refer to Koleka Putuma's poem Amanzi, because of its evocative nature to the power of memory and re-membering. I associate it with Intyatyambo Iyaphuma Engxondorheni.

Line 10 and 11…I often wonder why I feel as if I am drowning every time I look out into the sea
This and feeling incredibly small…
Line 20 and 21…It's as if the reeds remember that they were once chains
And the water, restless, wishes it could spew all of the slaves and ships onto shore…
Line 33-36… But we, we have come to be baptised here
We have come to stir the other world here
We have come to cleanse ourselves here
We have come to connect our living to the dead here…

"Amanzi"/Water

I have taken excerpts from Koleka Putuma's (2017) poem, "*Amanzi"*, to draw from their configuration of memory relating to the body, mind and water remembering colonial Christianity and Apartheid. Putuma was born in Qheberha, Eastern Cape and is a South African queer poet and theatre-maker. Their debut anthology, *Collective Amnesia* (Putuma, 2017), as the title suggests, is concerned with history, specifically, exploring forgotten memories and herstories. In "*Amanzi*", Putuma moves between representing the ocean as the literal site of historical happenings and the suppressed trauma of this history in psychologically and public discourse (Burger, 2020). Burger (2020) notes that for Putuma the ocean is a metaphor for suppressed herstories.

This configuration also seeps into the representation of the ocean as an ancestral entity with *mauri* (life force), according to New Zealand writer, Christopher Braddock (2017). The indigenous Maori people of New Zealand believe that water is a life-force, and that the mauri within water provides all living things with their life sustenance (Braddock, 2017). Given the centrality of ancestors in some Southern African cosmologies, the ocean is a repository of historical memory

and spiritual meaning. Thus, I deploy Putuma's (2017) mapping of historical and cultural events and their becoming part of our psychological and public discourse as part of this research project. I use excavation of memory as a method to construct a counterstory that articulates the trauma of erasure.

Maori people, indigenous Polynesians of New Zealand, have always believed in a symbiotic relationship between people and nature. *Mauri* is a life force connecting people and things, an idea discredited by the Euro-American belief system in the rational. The Maori cosmology is grounded in similar beliefs found in African cosmology and spiritual practices. African cosmology acknowledges a life-force, *phakathi kwezinto ezibonakalayo nezingabonakaliyo*, connecting what is seen with the naked eye and what is seen with the spiritual eye that the naked eye cannot see.

I AM, a work I created and premiered at the Institute for Creative Arts (ICA) Live Art Festival in 2022. *I AM* is a culmination of the minor and medium projects undertaken in this research project. This work was intended as a counter statement to the tired "queerness is unAfrican" trope via my situating of my quare indigeneity within my culture and Africa. It is an emphatic statement against transphobia and homophobia. I mobilise collective and singular childhood memories of self-fashioning to recover obliterated herstories of queer people of colour. *I AM* is a real-time happening of self-fashioning and assertion of queer culture in and through my memories of being brought up as a Xhosa boy. *I AM* is my endeavour to remember with self, using childhood memories.

Figure 8: I am pictured here in I AM, Act 2

CONCLUSION

Michel Foucault (1978) shows that repression has indeed been the fundamental link between power, knowledge and sexuality since the Classical Age in Western/European culture. It stands to reason then that quare people living in societies formerly colonised by Europe and continuing to experience colonial domination socially and politically will not be able to free themselves from oppression without some cost. This has been our lives for the most part in post-apartheid South Africa, with the cost being hatred directed at us, ostracisation, discrimination, violence and death.

According to Foucalt (1978, p. 5), "[n]othing less than a transgression of laws, a lifting of prohibitions, an eruption of speech, a reinstating of pleasure within reality, and a whole new economy in the mechanisms of power will be required" to recuperate from silence and invisibility

those who are dominated and killed by heteropatriarchy. The same would apply to quare subjectivities emerging from and transcending the quagmire of subjugation.

Judith Butler (1993), in her book, *Bodies That Matter*, anticipates the contestability of the term "queer". She notes that it excludes as much as it includes, and that such a contested term may energise a new kind of political activism. In Butler's (1993, p. 230) words:

> The critique of "queer" will initiate a resurgence of both feminist and anti-racist mobilisation within lesbian and gay politics or open up new possibilities for coalitional alliances that do not presume that these constituencies are radically distinct from one another, is still relevant and needed. The term ought to be revised, dispelled, rendered obsolete to the extent that it yields to the demands which resist the term precisely because of the exclusions by which it is mobilised.

Interrogating the merits of the term "queer" for the black queer/quare community, whether or not and how it speaks to the experiences of black queer people, might open up new understanding and possibilities for meaningful alliances across the LGBTIAQ+ community. A quaring is necessary to include and propel racialised sexualities and to valorise the black queer experience as legitimately African.

In the performance that accompanies this written explication, I wish for the young, quare and transgender person to see themselves in the images I present in my performance work of self--when I get the haircut or wear a dress made with the iconic red and white blanket of Xhosa culture. When they see me performing self for self as a counterstory to the psychological and collective trauma as a moment of reflexivity, they must understand that reflexivity is open to them for attaining their own agency as quare people. The methods I have put forward in this research study constitute a powerful route towards agency for self-image making to make spaces quare.

Elin Diamond (cited in Johnson, 2001, p. 10) notes:

> [w]hen being is de-essentialised, when gender and even race are understood as fictional ontologies, modes of expression without true substance, the idea of performance comes to the fore. Having said that, performance both affirms and denies this evacuation of substance. In the sense that the "I" has no interior secure ego or core identity, "I" must always enunciate itself: there is only performance of self, not external representation of an interior truth. Moreover, in the sense that I do my performance in public, for spectators who are interpreting and/or performing with me, there are real effects, meanings solicited or imposed that produce relations in the real. Will performance make a difference? A performance, whether it inspires love or loathing, often consolidates cultural or subcultural affiliations, and these affiliations, might be as regressive as they are progressive. The

> point is, as soon as performativity comes to rest on *a* performance, questions of embodiment and political effects all become discussible.

In the above explication, performance is precisely the site in which hidden, normalised or misrepresented conventions can be investigated. Performativity manifests as performance in the murky and dangerous negotiation space when staging a reiteration of norms and discursive conventions that frame our hegemonic interpretations (Butler, 1993). According to Johnson (2001, p. 11), "between somebody's body and the conventions of embodiment, we have access to cultural meanings and critique". Leaning on Johnson's (2001, p. 10) understanding of performativity, I conclude that performativity must be rooted in the materiality and historical density of performance.

Thus, my performance works are not simple reflections or expressions of culture or even of changing culture; my performances are themselves active *agencies* of change; they represent the quare eye through which heteropatriarchal and homonormative cultures sees themselves. Performative reflexivity is a research methodology in which I, "acting representatively, turn, bend, or reflect upon myself, upon the relations, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, roles, statues, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other sociocultural components which make up my public self" (Johnson, 2001, p. 11).

My performance practice throughout the Master of Arts projects, even before, use materiality as a means in my process of making work that brings me back to my true self as a quare person. I employ water, sand, rocks and fire (when I burn *Imphepho*). I experience the embodiment of emerging in and through these materials kinaesthetically to rediscover, recover and redefine myself and to dream. I use the process, I name "quaring"/to black as a means of rewriting theory in my flesh and making new meanings of self that are embedded in early memories of self-fashioning. The memories of shame have been shamed and deployed to re-member with my quare selfhood.

In the thesis production titled, *I AM*, I work with air/space created by intentionally placing the audience at the far end of the theatre auditorium and use live projections to trouble visibility or lack thereof. I curate what and how the audience sees me, bringing back agency to self. My installations serve as aesthetic and cultural concepts to illuminate quare joy, intimacy and pleasure.

Performativity is a powerful means of countering not only my own heteropatriarchal imposed memories but also heteropatriarchy and its off-spring, homonormativity, that seek to oppress quare people.

Works Cited

Heidegger, M., 1971. *Building, Dwelling, Thinking.* From Poetry, Langauge, Thought, translated by Albert Hofstadter ed. New York: Harper & Row.

Chilisa, B., 2012. *Theorising on Social Science Science Research Methods: Indigenous Perspectives.* First ed. Bostwana: SAGE.

Tamale, S., 2014. *Aljazeera America.* [Online]
Available at: http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/4/homosexuality-africamuseveniugandanigeriaethiopia.html
[Accessed 16 October 2021].

Msibi, T., 2011. The Lies We Have Been Told: On (Homo) Sexuality in Africa. *Africa Today,* 58(1), pp. 55-77.

Stein, A., 2005. MAKE ROOM FOR DADDY: Anxious Masculinity and Emergent Homophobias in Neopatriarchal Politics. *Gender & Society,* 19(5), pp. 601-620.

Tucker, A., 2009. *Queer Visibilities: Space, Identity and Interaction in Cape Town.* First Edition ed. West Sussex: Blackwell.

Lupindo, E., 2020. Ukuba Ngabantu Abapheleleyo: Black Queer Space Making and The Unfinished Business of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa. Makhanda: Rhodes University: Unpublished Master of Science thesis.

Duggan, L., 2002. *Materializing Democracy.* First ed. Durham: Duke University Press.

Anzaldúa, G., 1987. *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* First ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Book Company.

Spivak, G., 2010. Can the Subaltern Speak? revised edition, from the "History" Chapter of Critique of Postcolonial Reason. In: R. Morris, ed. *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections of the history od an idea.* New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 43-150.

Chilisa, B., 2012. Theorising on Social Science Research Methods: Indigenous Perspectives. In: B. Chilisa, ed. *Indigenous Research Methodologies.* 1st ed. Botswana: SAGE, pp. 118-140.

Bhabha, H. K., 1994. *The Location of Culture.* 1st ed. New York: Routledge .

Ingold, T., 2000. *The Perception of tghe Environment.* First ed. London : Routledge.

Johnson, E. P., 2001. "Quare" studies, or (almost) everything I know about queer studies I learned from my grandmother. *Text and Performance Quarterly,* 21(1), pp. 1-25.

Butler, J., 1993. *Bodies That Matter: on the discursive limits of "sex".* first ed. New York: Roudedge.

Foucault, M., 1978. *The History of Sexuality: vol 1 an introduction.* First American Edition ed. New York: Random House.

Lorde, A., 1984. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches.* California: The Crossing Press.

Nelson, J. C. a. E., 2005. *The art of inquiry: A depth psychological perspective.* 2nd ed. Putnam, Connecticut: Spring Publications.

Davidson, S. C., 2013. The art of inquiry: A depth psychological perspective. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches* , 7(3), pp. 406-408.

Lorde, A., 2002. The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House. In: G. E. Anzaldua, ed. *This Bridge Called My Back.* United States of America: Third Woman Press, pp. 106-115.

Scott, L., 2019. Harnessing the Power of Queerness. In: K. Smith, ed. *They Called Me Queer.* Cape Town: Kwela Books, pp. 22-39.

Vizenor, G., 2008. *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence.* 1st ed. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.
Laenui, P., 2000. Process of decolonisation. In: M. A. Battiste, ed. *Reclaiming indigenous voice and vision.* Toronto: UBC Press, pp. 150-160.
Pillay, T., 2021. *Queer South Africa NIghtlife with Tazme* [Interview] (20 May 2021).
Livermon, X., 2014. Soweto nights: making black queer space in post-apartheid South Africa. *Gender, Place & Culture,* 21(4), pp. 508-525.
Nights, V., 2020. *YouTube.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KN0hnVKlTuo
[Accessed 23 June 2021].
Putuma, K., 2017. *Collective Amnesia.* 1st ed. Cape Town: Uhlanga Press.
Tjiueza, E., 2021. *Twitter.* [Online]
Available at: https://twitter.com/ErickeTjiueza/status/1396125818590482432
[Accessed 23 June 2021].
Braddock, C., 2017. *Animism in art and performnace.* 1st ed. Auckland: Palgarve Macmillan.
Roscoe, S. O. M. a. W., 1998. *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities.* 1st ed. New York: Palgrave.
Alimi, B., 2015. *The Guardian.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/09/being-gay-african-history-homosexuality-christianity
[Accessed 24 May 2021].
Fleishman, M., 2012. The Difference of Performance as Research. *Theatre Research International ,* 37(1), pp. 28-37.
Kershaw, B., 2009. Practice as Research through Performance . In: H. S. a. R. T. Dean, ed. *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts.* Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, pp. 105-124.
Antener, J., 2019. *Thirdspace.* [Online]
Available at: https://thirdspace-webseries.com/
[Accessed 29 January 2022].
Moraga, C. L., 2002. La Güera. In: C. L. Moraga & G. E. Anzaldúa, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back.* Berkeley: Third Woman Press, pp. 24-33.
Zalta, E. N., 2022. *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy.* [Online]
Available at: https://plato.stanford.edu/index.html
[Accessed 3 February 2022].
Wallace, B. D., 2018. Queer Potentialities and queering home in Shani Mootoo's Cereus Blooms at Night. *SAGE Journals,* 30(1-2), pp. 59-75.
Epprecht, M., 2009. Sexuality, Africa, History. *The American Historical Review,* 114(5), pp. 1258-1272.
Igual, R., 2021. *Mamba Online.com.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.mambaonline.com/2021/03/30/lindo-celes-killer-sentenced-to-25-years-for-hate-crime-murder/
[Accessed 5 February 2022].
Muñoz, J. E., 2009. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity.* 1 ed. New York and London: New York University Press.
Wallace, B. D., 2018. Queer Potentialities and queering home in Shani Mootoo's Cereus Blooms at Night. *Cultural Dynamics ,* 30(1-2), pp. 59-75.

Adeyemi, K., Khubchandani, K. & Rivera-Servera, H. R., 2021. *Queer Nightlife.* first ed. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
Ntuli, M. E. & Teferra, D., 2017. Implications of Social Media on Student Activism. *CODESRIA,* 15(2), pp. 63-80.
Smith, L. T., 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* First ed. New York: Zed Books.
News24, 2010. *News24: Breaking News First.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.news24.com/news24/graphic-circumcision-drama-returns-to-sabc-20150429
[Accessed 9 February 2022].
Pansegrouw, C., 2019. *Inxeba.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.inxeba.com/
[Accessed 9 February 2022].
SAHO, 2017. *South African History Online: Towards a Peoples History.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/placing-film-inxeba-wound-historical-review
[Accessed 9 Febraury 2022].
Mtshali, M., 2009. *Sounding the body's meridian: signifying community and "the body national" in post-apartheid South Africa theatre.* Pietermaritzburg : University of KwaZulu-Natal.
Burger, B., 2020. 'Our respect for water is what you have termed fear': The Ocean in the Poetry of Ronelda S. Kamfer and Koleka Putuma. *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 46(1), pp. 23-38.