

https://dspace.org/

Seeking joy – Between Secrecy and Silence in a white Afrikaner Home

Greyling, Marcia Elizabeth

2024
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/44809
Greyling, Marcia Elizabeth. (2024). Seeking joy – Between Secrecy and Silence in a white Afrikaner Home [Masters dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg]. WIReDSpace. https://hdl.handle.net/10539/44809

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Seeking

joy



Between secrecy and silence

in a white Afrikaner home

By

Marcia Elizabeth Greyling

Seeking joy

Between secrecy and silence in a white Afrikaner home

Marcia Elizabeth Greyling

University of the Witwatersrand

Masters of Arts in Fine Arts

597691

2024

Life doesn’t frighten me at all

Not at all

Not at all.

Life doesn’t frighten me at all.

Maya Angelou (1986:47)



For

Jeanine

Use your magic my

Little Woman

ABSTRACT

This mapping practice reveals how biomythography, theoretical enquiry and making can reveal a complex narrative of Afrikaner whiteness and its relationship to silence and secrecy. Themes of secrets and silences indicate the discomfort of witnessing discrimination and by virtue of speaking out, facing rejection and alienation along with those you defended. The image of the unhappy queer child speaking out at the dinner table against the "in group" is employed as visual metaphor.

Self-portraiture finds expression in self-writing, performance and transgressive acts representing the tools acquired in my search for a self-affirming identity. My practice is an intentional repetition symbolising therapeutic disclosures; often repeated through voicing in order to work through trauma. A confessional divulges itself, both hidden yet exposed. A haunting insidiousness manifesting as what is not disclosed relates to concealment, protecting family secrets and the silencing repercussions of truth seeking and fearless speech.

Opening up a conversation, this writing does not desire to suggest answers about changing whiteness as bad habit. Rather, I bring what is lurking in the background of white actions to the family table for an open disclosure.

I am the source of the family's *dis-ease* as I reveal a difficult, painful and uncomfortable conversation in which we must face our whiteness. In this explorative manner I keep open the force of this critical engagement and invite participation in this reparative work.

I examine how we are stuck in the bad habit of whiteness as a study of self.
Through this self-determined act, may I find joy.

SouthAfricanwhiteness, biomythography, self-determination, trauma, Afrikanerwhiteness

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It took me a long time to complete this project. Many days, nights and hours were spent grappling, contemplating, re-working, researching and making, to create what you are reading and engaging with now. This project would not have been possible without the input of my loving supervisors, Gabrielle Goliath and Natasha Christopher at the Wits School of Arts. Without the guiding hands of these absolutely seminal women artists and thinkers I would have been lost. They drew a map crafted with love; a love that can only be emitted by women in this way. They not only gave me a road to follow into this unfamiliar terrain I navigated, they illuminated my academic travels with insight, knowledge and curiosity. They nurtured my soul and practice in a dedicated and never faltering way.

Even though my time with you Gabrielle, was cut short, I want you to know that you have made a lasting impression on the person that I have become over this period and that I am still becoming. You remain a visionary and one of the kindest souls I have ever come across. Thank you for the time and energy you have invested in my work.

To the loveliest of mentors and teachers I have ever known, Natasha. There aren't words to express how much your particular contribution towards not only my work but towards me as an individual has meant to me. I have gone through some very troubling times throughout the completion of this project and yet you were always there, always. As a support, as a guide, and as my art mother. I will miss you more than you could ever imagine, your time with me will remain etched on my soul for the rest of my days. I hope to remain, slightly sensitive always.

My thanks goes out to the University of the Witwatersrand for awarding me the Post Graduate Merit Award scholarship which enabled me to undertake this study. I would also like to give special thanks to Sharlene Khan and David Andrews who fought for me to be included into the Honours programme in 2020. If it was not for your belief in me and my abilities, I would never have been able to get as far as I have in my Fine Arts studies.

I would further like to thank other scholars who have been more than kind, but exceptionally helpful towards my work. I would like to thank Roelof Petrus Van Wyk who has been a big influence and kind presence since I wrote a review on his PhD exhibition, I NDEX:XY in 2019. Thank you kindly for your willingness to open up my mind to ideas I would not have considered

without you. Thank you for being a gay Afrikaner, thank you for making me feel ok with being one too. I'll always remain Joyous for you. My gratitude goes out to Abri de Swardt who shared with me his time, knowledge and mind and has been deeply significant towards the theoretical framework of my practice. I express my heartfelt thanks to Terry Kurgan for her willingness to help me access her writing, *Everyone is Present*, a big guiding force towards the tone of my work. I would like to give thanks to Reshma Chhiba at the *Point of Order* for her contribution in realising my MAFA exhibition, *Seeking joy – Everyday Rituals of Becoming* which would not have been possible without her input, expertise and commitment.

My appreciation goes to my loving and supporting partner, Jesse. Thank you for your effortless support, love and unwavering belief in me.

Thank you for helping me love and believe in myself again. Lastly, I would like to thank the two generations of women who raised me, my Oumas – Marie, Hannetjie and my dearest Irish grandmamma, Joy.

My gratitude goes out especially to my mother, my Moeder, my ma, Andorette. Sonder mamma, sou niks van die moontlik gewees het nie. Jy is my inspirasie, my rots. Jy is 'n wonderlike ma, vriendin, vrou en mens. Ek is so dankbaar vir jou in my lewe. Dankie dat jy altyd in my glo. Ek is so lief vir jou

I would not be the person I am today if it was not for your love for me and the way you taught me to be wilful as a survival strategy within a culture that silences women and those falling outside of accepted cultural norms, gendered expectations and sexualities. Thank you for giving me life, courage and time. Thank you to the matriarchs in my life and the way that you've helped me cultivate a feminist outlook without my conscious realisation of the wilful subject I had emerged into. Thank you for my self-determination. Thank you for making me a wilful subject.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

DIE OPENBARING.....page 8

PRAAT 1.....page 17

A history of white Afrikaans people as told by Joy

PRAAT 2.....page 48

Forming whiteness as habit: The entanglement of biomythography and practice

FINALE PRAAT.....page 110



læv.Éªn.dÉr

*The lavender flower symbolises purity, **silence**, devotion, serenity, grace, and **calmness.***

*Its colour is associated with the **crown** chakra, an energy centre associated with higher purpose and spiritual connectivity.*

Breathe...
*Breathe in the **calming** scent of lavender.*
*Do not absorb. **Let it be***

DIE OPENBARING

* In a Biblical sense, the book of *Openbaring* refers to the book of *Revelations*. Sometimes referred to as the "Openbaring van Johannes" because God had imprinted visions into John's mind which predicting the rapture. This naming is also personal making reference to my father, Johannes. Named after John the Baptist, he was an ordained minister of the NederDutch Reformed Church. Most of all, *Die Openbaring* is a metaphor for my wilful act of bearing myself open. I speak courageously, unafraid and raw in a self–determined transgressive act.



1:1-3. ***Voorwoord***. Die hele boek Openbaring is eintlik 'n brief (vgl. by 4). Die eerste drie verse is 'n voorwoord tot die brief. Hier word gesê waar dit vandaan kom en wat die inhoud daarvan is. [1]: 'n *Openbaring* is iets wat bedek was en nou oopgemaak word. Dit bevat visioene en die verklaring daarvan. Dit is *Jesus Christus* wat hierdie openbaring gegee het. Maar in laaste instansie kom dit van *God* die Vader af. Hy het die openbaring aan Jesus Christus *gegee*. Jesus het weer *sy engel gestuur* om dit aan *Johannes* duidelik te maak (vgl. 22:6,16). Dit het geskied deur middel van beelde of tekens. Die betekenis daarvan was destyds bekend en die mense het dadelik geweet wat dit beteken. Die boek wil nie dinge verberg of geheim hou nie, maar juis bekend maak. As ons die betekenis van die tekens ken,

Extract taken from *Die Openbaring* 1: 1–3 (Revelations), New Testament
From my mother's *Verklarende Bybel* 1983 translation (*om te verklaar* means to define or make meaning of)

The below Afrikaans Biblical extract can be understood as follows:

The book of Revelations or (Die Openbaring) functions as an open letter. 'n Openbaring is defined as something concealed being opened up and revealed. Within this context the knowledge and an understanding of its truthful content is shown through visions. These prophecies came from Jesus Christ entrusted to him by God the Father. His angel was then sent to John in order to explain the meaning and message of the revelations shown through symbolic imagery…. This book does not wish to obscure anything nor to keep any knowledges secret, it is the intention of this book to reveal all…

Titled *Seeking joy*, this research draws on my personal experience as a white Afrikaner, woman and unhappy queer[1]. I name myself this way in the tradition of Audre Lorde who believed strongly in the power of self–naming. Introducing herself as a "black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet". I make use of the methodology of self-writing[2] as research informed by biomythographic expression. Inspired by Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of my Name: A Biomythography*, biomythographic works are part historical, part fact and part fiction. This work can similarly be viewed as reflexive ethnography which refers to the use of feelings and thoughts as a means of analysing and interpreting observational data (Tullis 2013:245).

In my writing and praxis I make use of reflexive ethnography, biomythographic writing as well as self-writing. These forms are blended through my research and therefore, I believe it crucial to bring them into conversation. Self-writing then, writing about the self as object or subject involves a praxis of care (Foucault 1988: 27-28). Which is informed by my own thoughts and feelings in relation to observations of my life and relational others (reflexive ethnography). Biomythography becomes entangled from this point of departure in the style and means through which I address observations of my lived experience.

Seeking joy looks at how poetic writings and art praxis have the ability to unravel a complex narrative of whiteness and its relationship to silence and secrecy in a white Afrikaner household. The concepts of silence and secrecy revolves around navigating the uncomfortability of bearing witness to discrimination and by virtue of speaking out, experiencing the repercussions of this wilful act as alienation.

I study memory both personal and collective, cultural tradition and generational beliefs making use of the methodologies of self-writing, making as ritualistic practice, as well as critical engagement and reflections on theory. I map the identity of the white Afrikaner through my considerations of a painful and complex history, culturally accepted myths and political mythologies, the insidiousness of whiteness and its subjectivity. Through these research

[1] The queer's unhappiness stems from the world that regards them to be unhappy. The family as an object of happiness, can only be preserved by making the queer child's unhappiness the point of concern and the root of unhappiness for the happy family (Ahmed 2010:43).

[2] Michel Foucault refers to self-writing as a means of taking care of the self which he inextricably connects to a continuous activity of writing. In the 'Technologies of the Self' he expresses that the self as such is theme, is object or subject of this writing activity (1988: 27-28).

strategies I discover a pattern of fault lines, methodologies, sociohistorical freight and violence that must to be spoken in order to work through traumas both individual and collective.

I begin a conversation through my analysis that leads to a moment of critical pause and thereby I keep open the force of this critique; as whiteness remains unfinished. I discuss the individual or the self and the self's ability to exercise agency within acts of self-determination. I see this as an act of *becoming* and an intentional transgression of that which I was told to "do" and to "be" as forced through "Afrikaner", through "woman". I transgress against that which does not serve me in an act of becoming (Butler 2004:92). I begin to think of individuation as in flux as well as the influence of self–determination thereupon.

As Butler explains, (2004:6–7) self-determination is only accessible within a social sphere which supports and enables this exercise of agency. Not everyone has access to self–affirm safely. For those who have this opportunity freely available to us, let us not make light of this responsibility and opportunity and accept this as a moment to speak fearlessly for ourselves keeping in mind always, those who are not able to do so out of self-preservation motivated through a fear of violence.

Performativity is connected to remembering through a hand that writes and a mind that thinks about a life lived as white, as female, as Afrikaans. Used as a tool for accessing as well as articulating my biomythographic story. It is within the fragility and ever changing state of subjective remembering that the fiction/fantastical of my voicing finds expression. I connect this temporal beauty to the tradition of beautiful writing. A strategy employed by black feminist writers and scholars to speak about painful topics such as loss, longing, trauma and death. I pay tribute to these women and queer voices through my use of this method in the writing of my story done as a way of working through trauma.

In the same way that Sara Ahmed does not wish to give an authoritative account of how to address racism (2007:165); I borrow from this intention and refuse to give an answer to how it is that we should deal with the bad habit of whiteness. Because; that is not the point of my critique. I keep this enquiry open because whiteness is an unfinished history that has not been fully described. I focus my work on the story of white Afrikaners, past and present and through this work I grapple with the inherent violence that my identity carries.

This research is a means of making sense of my inherited identity and the person I am becoming wilfully within a narrative of white Afrikaner conservatism. With this work I find the courage to practice *parrhesia* or fearless speech as identified by Foucault (2018:60). Through a personal laying bear of my own story in its complexity, vulnerability and ugliness; may my courage and honesty used to open up a difficult conversation encourage others to speak their traumas should this access be available to them. May we meet in a therapeutic communal coming together in the spirit of empathy, and listen with compassion to one another's pain. Pain which is individual, generational and collective.

Speaking the truth is never quite that simple as the truth may be what results in the continuation of a cycle of pain, oppression and violence. As being vulnerable and laying yourself bare in this way may place you in harm's way. This possible threat of danger exist in various degrees. The first may be, that in disclosing your confidential story with others you are made vulnerable to ridicule, humiliation and shame. Secondly, true parrhesia, if not met by an empathetic listener may reify already existing psychic traumas and cause invalidation. Lastly, this honesty may result in bodily harm or threats of violence towards a person should the listener meet them with malicious contempt. This conversation is necessary and difficult; uncomfortable and messy. Much courage is required to undertake this reparative work.

PRAAT 1[3] *– A history of white Afrikaans people as told by Joy,* illustrates the way in which whiteness is given meaning socially, economically and politically through theoretical critical engagement with the work of other scholars. The second part of this chapter speaks to *volks* trots (national patriotism for your people) as a key ingredient of Afrikaner nationalism, the shaping of a nationalist ideology and the political enforcement of this as *normal* and *right*.

Other aspects discussed include the operations of the children of nationalistic Afrikaner patriotism. In particular, the cultural movement, known as *Die Voortrekkers,* commonly understood to be much like the Scouts of North America, the ideologies of this youth movement are sinister and encourages a fostering of Afrikaner nationalist sentiments. I include a moment of reflection on Afrikaner Christian Calvinism which works to fuel conservative leanings, a return to tradition and the enforcement of gendered discourse. I

[3] *Praat* is a colloquial Afrikaans word meaning to speak, address or voice oneself and can also be understood as a conversation or dialogue. I name my chapters in this way in order to highlight the intent of this work – to open up a dialogue and to invite engagement on a true human level.

similarly discuss apartheid as it relates to the psychology of minority white rule, and the use of political myth and mythology as the foundation of Afrikaner nationalism. Through this writing I pick out the particularities of the South African context and the ways in which whiteness articulates itself both overtly and in more insidious ways.

PRAAT 2 – Forming whiteness as habit: The entanglement of biomythography and practice, takes the shape of a metaphorical holding on to, illuminating and reflection on an inherited familial story engaged with through my own beautiful writing. My personal experience is related to my art practice considered as rituals of the everyday willed in a journey of becoming.

PRAAT 2, is crafted through the tools of self-writing as a form of meaning making and makes use of the narrative voice as a performative act. The biomythographic tale illustrates a narrative of personal reflections on a childhood spent growing up in Pretoria, South Africa. A city that is still commonly associated by patriotic Afrikaners as the only remaining bastion of Afrikaans culture and ways of life. It is similarly a disclosure of some of the silences and thinly veiled secrets within my nuclear family.

In this chapter I relate my own feelings, reflections and transgressions enacted through my praxis to a past which traumatises me, and I begin the painstaking, reparative journey towards closure, acceptance and moving through this pain in a very publicly vulnerable confession. My *openbaring* spoken through parrhesia, transgresses, challenges, provokes and provides strategies for survival, becoming and acceptance. I explain in unfiltered language why I have done this, what it means, represents and what it is that I wish to be understood from it.

After a poetic deliberate on *Seeking joy – Everyday Rituals of Becoming*, my practice steps into conversation with the work of other queer, white Afrikaners and artists moving their theoretical themes, thought and practice in a light that informs my own. I discuss our practices in resonance and difference most notably informed by gendered experiences. Through this open and inquisitive dialogue of artistic comparison, I express how these gay Afrikaners have expanded my own ways of thinking, understanding and relating, what I will carry forth in my practice and personal ways of being intending a continuation of this reparative labour of love and personal responsibility.

This paper concludes without providing any finite answers but instead provokes questions begging for engagement from those who read it. This is my intention; to pose a challenge to

my reader to meet me in open dialogue on a human level so that the force of this critique may remain open. Through this meeting in participatory dialogue, I encourage empathetic listening, an empathetic coming together and an acceptance of a collective responsibility to work in a reparative manner through our pains. This critique remains open as a commentary on the incomplete history of whiteness and the continuation of a bad habit.

PRAAT 1

A history of white Afrikaans people as told by Joy

In speaking about and thinking through whiteness I utilise the critical considerations of Sara Ahmed as a tool for understanding. I refer to her work as well as the work of Reni Eddo-Lodge as explanations of the workings of whiteness and how it is defined and viewed in other parts of the world within theoretical discourse as informed by a different geo-specificity. I use their thought as a precursor to the historical information about South African whiteness that is engaged with here. This discourse labours to build up a framework for articulating whiteness as concept and as habit in a general, theoretical and worldly view. To disseminate South African whiteness which has its own history resulting from a unique set of circumstances, this chapter uses as a guiding force the analytical writings of Nicky Falkof which breaks apart popular media sources addressed through thought provoking questions often informed through the psychoanalytical. I consider writings on whiteness as discussed from the West as well as work that finds particular footing here, because South African whiteness has a complex, difficult and quite unique history within this geo-specific location.

To be read as white, is for your body to be read as neutral as a result of a coding of humanity in the norm of white). In an effort to quantify whiteness which refuses a pinning down, remaining elusive and slippery, I manipulate it into conversation with its relational concept; white privilege. White privilege can be explained as an embodied experience in which there are no negative consequences resulting from your race (Eddo-Lodge 2017:86). Racism can be defined as power plus prejudice (2017:64). In order to speak such violence is to give name to the silently dangerous. There are unavoidable repercussions that take place as a result of acknowledging and defining the supposed absence of whiteness, through this act whiteness becomes deafening. Whiteness becomes visible causing an absolute distortion of its general wallflower-like expression; always present but hardly noticed. Eddo-Lodge's words

hold much value, yet, what do they mean in a South African context post-apartheid? Whiteness is no longer enforced by law as the norm, whiteness is only centred when deemed problematic, which it oftentimes is. What does Afrikaner whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa mean? In a country where structural racism is still prevalent, where people are still deeply affected by the history of apartheid as well as the continued story, after effects and power of whiteness? These are the questions I wish to grapple with and disseminate in this chapter.

Social action informs the habitual expression of whiteness. Ahmed's core idea is formulated around how whiteness orientates bodies, thereby affecting what bodies are *able to do*. Tying to ideas of whiteness, she asks pertinently, "What does it mean to notice whiteness?" and "what does making the invisible marks of privilege more visible do?" (Ahmed 2008:149) . Bear with me as I try to find meaning in all of this. Let's not get stuck, instead let us have theorists in this field of enquiry guide us in phenomenological thought and ask instead, what is it that "whiteness *is* doing"? (2008:150, own emphasis).

Ahmed's desire is to re-position whiteness as an issue of phenomenology[4]. She considers whiteness to not only be 'real', but 'material' (physical and material currency linked to privilege, an idea pulled from Karl Marx) and lived (ibid). *The Phenomenology of Whiteness* intends to critically engage with whiteness as a category of experience which is displaced as a category through experience. In other words, Ahmed considers how whiteness becomes universal (2008:150).

Phenomenology becomes a strategy showing how whiteness is an effect of racialisation resulting in boundaries (2007:150). Though Ahmed does not extrapolate what kind of boundaries she means, I consider a racial divide resulting in a class divide. For a body to 'do things' this 'doing' is dependent not on habit but on the way in which the world itself is made available for the body to take action and for this action to take place (2007:153).

[4] Phenomenology is seen as a discipline of philosophy understood as an inquiry into the structures of human experience and consciousness. In a literal sense it refers to the study of "phenomena": things appearing or the way in which things appear to us in our experience; the way in which these things are experienced by us and the consequent meanings which these things have or that we attribute to them from our experience (Smith 2003:1) or orientation.

Ahmed draws our attention to Fanon through her articulation of his request that we consider the 'historic-racial' schema which sits 'below' the racial and historical dimensions beyond the surface of the body, underneath the skin. The body is described through phenomenological means; becoming an orientation. Fanon implies that the black man must look beyond the surface. I would, similarly, like to encourage my readers to do the same – look beyond the surface; scratch deeper. My work in this chapter will divulge the history of colonisation, imperialism, and the mythology of apartheid.

Our racial inheritance is a social as well as bodily given because of the histories that inform them. Histories such as colonisation, imperialism inherited class privilege, or historical disadvantage, and in the South African context, apartheid. Through this history of colonisation the world becomes 'white' as Ahmed posits. She further expresses a crucial sentiment that for me, ties into the psychoanalytic; that bodies *do* remember such histories, even when our consciousness do not remember (own emphasis added). Race is received from others as our inheritance of a painful history (2007:153–154). I begin to think of inherited trauma, unacknowledged trauma in relation to discrimination, the histories of racism which, as Ahmed reminds us, our bodies, *do* remember.

My ideas are built around the work of Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela who reminds me that feelings of internal displacement within people in their own home countries are rising (2007:24). I am deeply hurt by the history of my people, I am deeply hurt by the wrongs they have committed onto the indigenous peoples of this country and onto this land. I do not feel at home here, because my people stole from and displaced the rightful owners of this land.

Another white Afrikaner who spoke to this feeling of displacement, hurt and not knowing how to feel at home is Antjie Krog in her writing on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, called, *Country of My Skull*.[5] This deeply relates to the archival video piece I made in my Honours year, titled, *Welkom in Bethlehem* (see video linked in title) which made use of a Spanish volk song titled *"Canción Mixteca"* (1912–1984) referencing a feeling of

[5] Written in 1997, Krog speaks about South Africa as her "country" yet simultaneously she sees herself as outside of the ability to naturally belong. She is aware that for her to belong, this belonging will have to be given to her by others. She is confronted with the chance that she will be boxed into her white privilege without the possibility of true belonging. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and what it symbolises causes her to break down and leads her to ask who she is in a traumatic and psychoanalytic way.

homesickness from an expat perspective. But if you are German, Dutch, Irish as well as have indigenous genes…. If your people have been here so long that you don't know where you are from or how to feel about where your settler ancestors come from. Or even being a descendent of white settlers? I myself descend from a German settler named Johann Greyling, all Greylings do. He was an employee of the Dutch East India Company and came to the Cape Colony in 1725 (Greyling 2002:1). What do you miss? I have always longed to feel that I belong. That my presence does not cause uneasiness, pain and mistrust. I feel displaced.

Artist statement:

Welkom in Bethlehem

Welkom in Bethlehem is a short film compiled using biomythography. The film consists of history (archival footage that belonged to my great grandfather), a combination of audio narratives (a poem titled 'Korreltjie Sand' by Ingrid Jonker as well as an audio story and or poem written by me). The narrative that I wrote tells the story of my ancestors within my own conception of them. However, since I did not know them, and deliberately did not ask more about them at this early stage of working with my family's film archive, this film that lays bare a lot about whiteness and its construction within this time period (1950s South Africa), since

the film shows white Afrikaner micro communities at this time. Through the narrative, the use of melancholic poetry as well as a folk song, the image of the white nuclear family is deconstructed. Ingrid Jonker's poem *Korreltjie Sand*:



Korreltjie Sand

Korreltjie korreltjie sand
klippie gerol in my hand
klippie gesteek in my sak
word korreltjie klein en plat

Sonnetjie groot in die blou
ek maak net ‘n ogie van jou
blink in my korreltjie klippie
dit is genoeg vir die rukkie

Kindjie wat skreeu uit die skoot
niks in die wêreld is groot
stilletjies lag nou en praat
stilte in Doodloopstraat

Wêreldjie rond en aardblou
korreltjie maak ek van jou
huisie met deur en twee skrefies
tuintjie met blou madeliefies

Pyltjie geveer in verskiet
liefde verklein in die niet
Timmerman bou aan ‘n kis
Ek maak my gereed vir die Niks

Korreltjie klein is my woord
korreltjie niks is my dood

Small Grain of Sand

little grain of sand
pebble rolled in my hand

pebble thrust in my pocket
a keepsake for a locket

Little sun big in the blue
a granule I make out of you
shine in my pebble little grain
for the moment that’s all I can gain

Baby that screams from the womb

nothing is big in this tomb
quietly laugh now and speak
silence in dead-end street

Little world round and earth-blue
make a mere eye out of you
house with a door and two slits
a garden where everything fits

Small arrow feathered into space
love fades away from its place
Carpenter seals a coffin that’s bought
I ready myself for the nought

Small grain of sand is my word, my breath
small grain of nought is my death

* *all translations from Afrikaans to English are my own.*


A great part of our cultural identity as Afrikaans people is built around Christmas.


If it wasn't for our summer Christmas' we would probably have left by now

My cynical narrative writing stands in opposition to nationalistic Afrikaner whiteness in its use of language. Other visual elements that act as interventions are the glitching images and layering of music as sonic malaise.

The song *"Canción Mixteca"* (1912) is a migrant folksong written by an Oaxacan composer who had resettled in Mexico. Deeply sad, it is imbued with a homesickness and melancholic mourning for past belonging. There is no remedy for this pain as this home no longer exists for the expat. "*Canción Mixteca"* has over the years, evolved into a cherished song of a heart-breaking final goodbye to your home and its loving acceptance. It has been claimed by Mexican expats as an expression of longing for what has been lost and feelings of displacement in your new surroundings (Cohen 2004:2).

"Canción Mixteca" similarly symbolises my own feelings of displacement and a longing for a home that I have never known and can only imagine. It is not necessarily a home, a building that I long for. I yearn to feeling safe in my self–expression, accepted, comfortable, wanted and most of all, I desire belonging. I have never felt at home in my predetermined conditions as a white, female Afrikaner growing up under a constant scrutinising surveillance by the church going community. Not allowing me to live as child, but instead in their placement of me into the category of a spiritual example of virtue, robbed me of the innocent carefree expression of youth. I was not afforded the ease of a childhood of self-expression and authentic enjoyment; with every move I made there was an immense anxious awareness that I was being watched and ridiculed for something I did not even know I was doing. These experiences of being fundamentally wrong, and wicked at my core has psychology impacted my self-worth and ability to accept and love myself for much longer than I would like to admit.

My longing for a home to call my own which does not exists, is deeply unsettling, cloaked in contradiction. As this home is not made of concreate nor brick, I hunger for a belonging spiritual in nature. I grapple in awkward contemplation without resolution reminding me of the unending sadness of the expat in *"Canción Mixteca"* . I acknowledge the self-affirming work that must be done in order to find my place of belonging comfortably as soul, as person, as woman. In my resonance with the Spanish folksong of missing a belonging; I symbolically cut down the image of whiteness which has never given me a home. Instead of a glorification of western composition I gently oppose the use of western music, and aesthetics and carry with me a deep, rich mourning paying homage to the pain of displacement embodied in this folksong.

Images 1–5: Stills from *Welkom in Bethlehem*

From Ingrid Jonker, a poets work I look to a white gay Afrikaner artist working in the present moment, Abri de Swardt. I find a correlation between my discussion of land and its annexation to de Swardt's discussion of water. In the body of work, 'Streams' (2015 – ongoing) de Swardt uses the aesthetic of a stop bath a process of photographic film development as a metaphor and an extended site transposed onto moving water, specifically rivers. This acts as an inquiry into the emergence and contextually unsettling dissolution of the photographic medium (de Swardt: 2024).

In the work de Swardt submerged photographs in the river where the current of the river speaks to the images in a physical sense where some sink, some flow and some are held in place by the current (de Swardt: 2024). These images, personal, intimate and vulnerable in nature shape to the river and become and archive of temporality. Photographs which are oftentimes understood as frozen moments in time, seep away, sink and float on expanding into the more than human.



Fig 1 - 'Streams V' (2015 – ongoing) Abri de Swardt



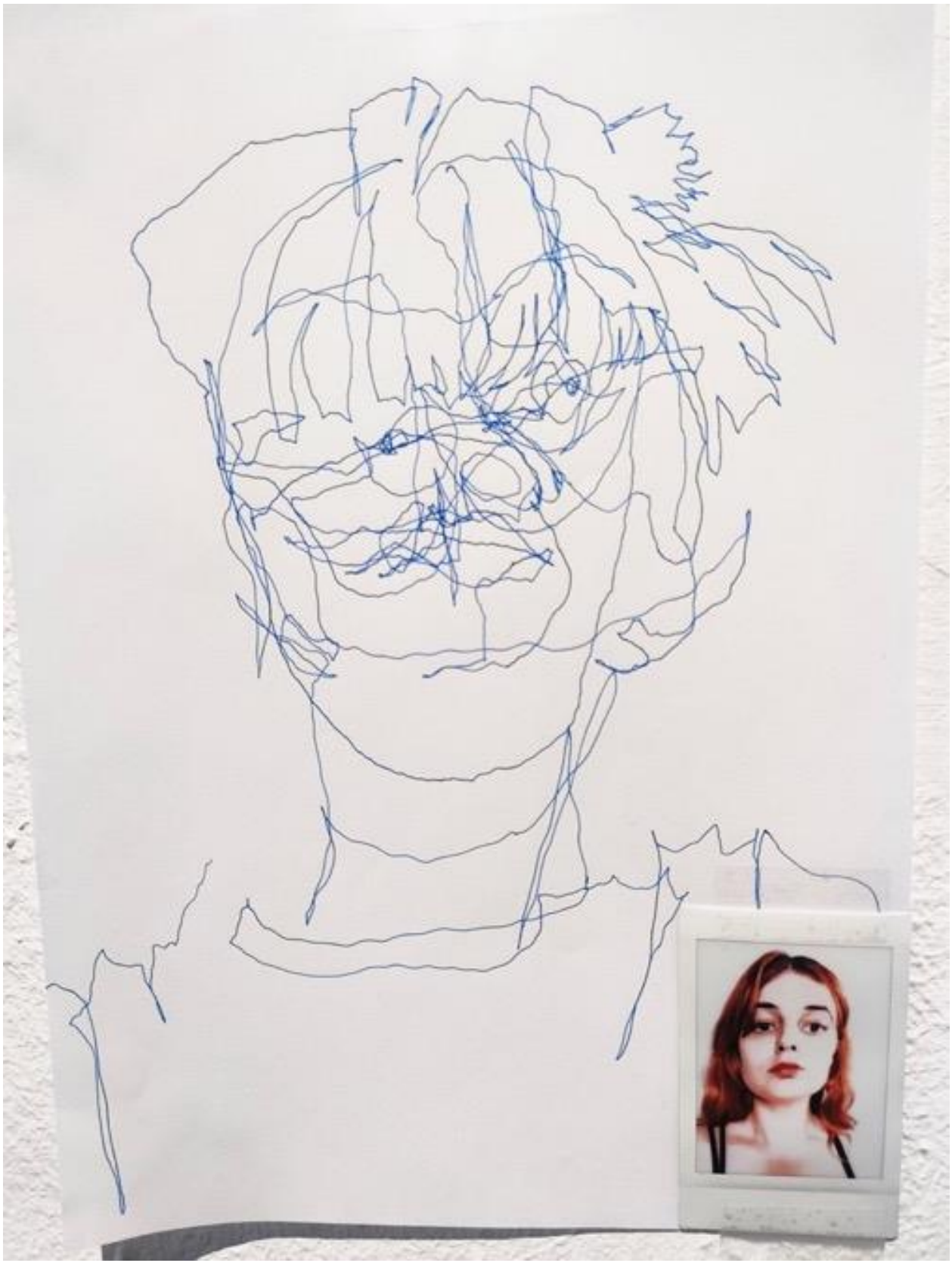
Fig 2- ‘Streams III’ (2015 – ongoing) Abri de Swardt



Fig 3 - ‘Streams IV’ (2015 – ongoing) Abri de Swardt

Across ‘Streams’ photographic prints morph into sites of instability. de Swardt thinks of this 35mm analogue film meditation as a system of non-settling (de Swardt: 2024). Non-settling speaks to my concerns of displacement which I would like to connect to discomfort. When as settler bodies, we are inherently uncomfortable in a stolen land and its ecology we are displaced and we cannot settle, nor do we feel at liberty to do so.

The temporality of ‘Streams’ echoes with my work, ‘The Distortion of Self’ (2021 – 2023). My body of work consisted of a large set of blind contour drawings that existed only for the duration of the MAFA exhibition, Seeking joy – Everyday Rituals of Becoming (2023). This is due to the choice of paper, standard A4 cartridge paper and the means by which this body of work was held up, scotch tape. Upon removal of the works they were ripped, torn and no longer held the status of artwork. de Swardt’s photographic work which contained images of the artist and relational others morphed with the river whereas mine became a physical manifestation of the title of the body of work – the self became distorted. he vast set of self-portraits, warped and twisted in its artistic output were juxtaposed with photographs of myself and relational others. These self-portraits became unrecognisable after removal as the ‘self’ ripped and fractured both literally and metaphorically.



‘The Distortion of Self’ 2021 – 2023, photographed by myself

Trauma, affects us on an individual level as well as on a societal level Gobodo-Madikizela reminds (2007:24). And I begin to wonder what the trauma of apartheid looks like, structurally, on a societal level as well as on the level of the individual. This question and its answer could keep us busy for multiple volumes of writing. I will therefore, not speak to the experiences of others, I can simply speak to the generational trauma I have inherited from my white Afrikaner parents.

My mother's trauma is informed by the way that girls are raised to live in the image of 'die volk's moeder'[6]. This has consequently resulted in feelings of guilt that is experienced when setting boundaries and expressing displeasure. This comes from an expectation of female submission pressed upon our women and reified through Biblical interpretation, doctored into Afrikaner nationalist ideology as what is *right* and willed by God for his chosen people. This is my inheritance; I too struggle to articulate boundaries, to say no.

The woman, the mother, the daughter may never question the man who she is meant to live her life in subservience to an ideal Afrikaner femininity which looks like an acceptance of being less than man, of no engagement in the political and an honouring of the duty to self-sacrifice, for father, husband and son.

These gendered norms move subtly and are often passed on intergenerationally from woman to woman, masquerading as the culturally correct and as a way of being in the world that should be deeply desired by women themselves as a symbol of our worth. Ideas of what the Afrikaner woman is and how she should be still affects many white Afrikaans women articulated in the archetype of the good Afrikaner "*vrou*" (woman). I too have been corrupted by these deeply skewed indoctrination attempts through my high school which deeply imprinted these beliefs as the only way to embody respectable womanhood. It has done great psychological damage to my value of self as I have never, been regarded an example of a good Afrikaans woman. I am the one that is used as an example of how not to be and my lack

[6] The figure of die *volk's moeder* refers to an archetypal Afrikaans woman who is meant to live in the image of a good mother, a good wife and a good Christian. Her primary responsibility is to bear children of white Afikaner descent to continue the growth of the Afrikaner nation and to raise her children according to Afrikaner practices and beliefs.

of a husband and family is used as examples of why my opinionated feminism is undesirable. I, am still in a process of unlearning.

Then there is the unspoken trauma of my father. Drafted into the border war (Angolan War) against his own political beliefs that were much more liberal than his father's and his peers informed by his post-graduate degree in philosophy and a deep desire to understand the human condition without judgement or prejudice. My father lived in an idyllic socialist daydream that he was never able to actualise and his deep respect for all life made this racist war and the bombs exploding around him a deep psychological shellshock that he has still not escaped nor chooses to acknowledge.

His trauma begins with his deployment into the South African Air Force. He never went for therapy after the war despite being trained in psychology years later as a dominee, making me believe that he is quite aware of his psychological distress. He self-remedies in destructive and avoidant strategies, this spiritual malady often presented through his acute depression, a deep-rooted sadness that lives in me too; an uninvited guest.

I believe that his involvement in the Air Force was difficult on a variety of levels. Especially politically as my father looked up to people like Johannes Kerkorrel. He was a man to whom the Afrikaner rebellion deeply resonated. He collected bootlegged copies of these forms of protest, in vinyl and tape. Johannes Kerkorrel en die Gereformeerde Blues Band spoke the protest my father felt in his heart. The band was openly in protest of the National Party and became associated with the Afrikaner rebellion against apartheid (Shifty Records: 2024).

Civil disorder was expressed musically through the Gereformeerde Blues Band who fashioned themselves the musician outlaws of Afrikaner culture openly critical of 'volks trots' and apartheid. Rock morphed into a political performance and satire that was difficult to stifle (Shifty Records: 2024).

Ralph John Rablie, known by his stage name, Johannes Kerkorrel was a Afrikaner singer, song-writer, playwright and journalist. From Johannesburg Rabie worked for Die Burger and the Rapport newspapers (Shifty Records: 2024).

The stage name alone spoke to his protest against apartheid as informed by the church in the choice of 'kerkorrel', in Afrikaans meaning church organ. In 1986 Rabie performed political

cabaret at arts festivals at a time that the state was under a lot of pressure to put an end to the apartheid regime (Shifty Records: 2024).

Rabie was fired from the Rapport in 1987 for his use of Botha (National Party president) speeches in his protest music. He became a full time musician and performer after this with the group Johannes Kerkorrel en die Gerefromeerde Blues Band (the Reformed Blues Band). This naming choice defiantly made refrence to the Reformed Church (Shifty Records: 2024).

My father's hidden treasure was his copy of 'Eet Kreef' (Eat Crayfish) by the group released in 1985 by Shifty Records. Though commercially successful, the album was banned from radio by the South African Broadcasting Corporation.

My father's love for Kerkorrel translated to my own from a very young age as he would often listen to this music especially in his car. From 'Eet Kreef' he would listen to "Hilbrow" and sing his hart out, crying at times. I would mimic this.

Hilbrow

Song by Johannes Kerkorrel en die Gereformeerde Blues Band

Ou man sit by die straat kafees
En kyk al die mense loop heen en weer
Die boemelaars raas by die Wimpy bar
En Fontana is oop tot laat in die aand
Kaalvoet kinders sit in die straat
Wys parkeerplek aan
En hou dan die hand
En hou dan die hand
En hou dan die oop hand
Gee gee gee
Gee gee gee
Jou sente, jou drome, jou klere vol gate
Gee jou hart vir die Hillbrow
Gee jou hart vir die Hillbrow
Uit Quartzstraat hoor ek n meisie my roep
Daar's 'n Hari Krishna wat vra wat ek soek
Ken ek vir Jesus, vra 'n man op die stoep
Tussen Hillbrow Records en Estoril Books
En dis lank na twaalfuur
En die Hillbrowtorings
Sy sein in die nag

Sy sein in die nag
Sy sein vir die junkies wat wag
En gee gee gee
Gee gee gee
Jou sente, jou drome, jou toekoms vol gate
Gee jou hart vir die Hillbrow
Ja gee jou hart vir die Hillbrow
En die ligte gaan aan in die Chelsea Hotel
En stemme en musiek klink in elke woonstel
Ons sit in die son en drink wyn
Ons survive met ‘n hel se lot pyn in die land, ja
Kom ons drink op die een wat sy drome oorleef
Op die een wat kry wat hy vra
Gee gee gee
Gee gee gee
Jou sente, jou drome, jou toekoms vol gate
Gee jou hart vir die Hillbrow
Ja, gee jou hart vir die Hillbrow
Komaan gee jou hart vir die Hillbrow

Translation:

Old man sitting at the street cafes
Ou man sit by die straat kafees

And look at all the people walking back and forth
En kyk al die mense loop heen en weer

The bums are rowdy at the Wimpy bar
Die boemelaars raas by die Wimpy bar

And Fontana is open until late at night
En Fontana is oop tot laat in die aand

Barefoot children sit in the street
Kaalvoet kinders sit in die straat

Show parking space
Wys parkeerplek aan

And then hold hands
En hou dan die hand

And then hold hands
En hou dan die hand

And then keep the open hand
En hou dan die oop hand

Give give give
Gee gee gee

Give give give
Gee gee gee

Your pennies, your dreams, your clothes full of holes
Jou sente, jou drome, jou klere vol gate

Give your heart to the Hillbrow
Gee jou hart vir die Hillbrow

Give your heart to the Hillbrow
Gee jou hart vir die Hillbrow

From Quartzstraat I hear a girl calling me
Uit Quartzstraat hoor ek n meisie my roep

There's a Hari Krishna who asks what I'm looking for
Daar's 'n Hari Krishna wat vra wat ek soek

Do I know Jesus, asks a man on the porch
Ken ek vir Jesus, vra 'n man op die stoep

Between Hillbrow Records and Estoril Books
Tussen Hillbrow Records en Estoril Books

And it's long after twelve o'clock
En dis lank na twaalfuur

And the Hillbrow Towers
En die Hillbrowtorings

His signal in the night
Sy sein in die nag

His signal in the night
Sy sein in die nag

She signals to the junkies who are waiting
Sy sein vir die junkies wat wag

And give give give
En gee gee gee

Give give give
Gee gee gee

Your pennies, your dreams, your future full of holes
Jou sente, jou drome, jou toekoms vol gate

Give your heart to the Hillbrow
Gee jou hart vir die Hillbrow

Yes give your heart to the Hillbrow
Ja gee jou hart vir die Hillbrow

And the lights go on in the Chelsea Hotel
En die ligte gaan aan in die Chelsea Hotel

And voices and music sound in every apartment
En stemme en musiek klink in elke woonstel

We sit in the sun and drink wine
Ons sit in die son en drink wyn

We survive with a hell of a lot of pain in the country, yes
Ons survive met ‘n hel se lot pyn in die land, ja

Let's drink to the one who survives his dreams
Kom ons drink op die een wat sy drome oorleef

On the one who gets what he asks for
Op die een wat kry wat hy vra

Give give give
Gee gee gee

Give give give
Gee gee gee

Your pennies, your dreams, your future full of holes
Jou sente, jou drome, jou toekoms vol gate

Give your heart to the Hillbrow
Gee jou hart vir die Hillbrow

Yes, give your heart to the Hillbrow
Ja, gee jou hart vir die Hillbrow

Come give your heart to the Hillbrow
Komaan gee jou hart vir die Hillbrow

At the tender age that I would sing this song with my father wholeheartedly I did not understand its political significance. The way in which Rabie was commenting on how dreams were only a thing that a privileged view (the whites) could aspire to under apartheid rule.



My feet pictured with my father's copy of 'Eet Kreef' 2024

lived in it for what felt an eternity. He ate baked beans and bully beef (corned meat) which he excitedly ripped open with his swiss army knife. He wore his combat uniform that still fit remarkably well, meticulously applied camo-paint to his face and was seen leopard crawling

all over the garden. As far as I know, he still sleeps with nun chucks on his chest, convinced that it is only a matter of time before a sniper snuffs him out for his participation in a war, that he had no choice nor say over.

His conscience plaguing him day in and day out; he is a firm believer in morals and ethics and the inherent value of all life; equal in his eyes. He taught me to honour all life in this way through encouraging empathy and consideration for the tiny finches that flocked on the pavement.

My father, had educated me in many things resulting in my particular brand of feminism. Sexism and homophobia has always deeply saddened him resulting in his decision to dissolve ties with his former church. As my father believed that his purpose was to show love and acceptance to all, he could not stand by a church that demonised homosexuality.

Gobodo-Madikizela explains that generational trauma remains as this trauma can become an inheritance (2007:24), reminding me of Ahmed when she states that our bodies remember histories even as we forget them psychologically. Trauma must be acknowledged, it cannot be pushed aside, as trauma can be extremely overwhelming affecting social, emotional as well as physical wellbeing (2007:24). Immense trauma has the ability to rupture the organisational matrix of an individual affecting the way in which this particular trauma is remembered (2007:24), or re-remembered. Trauma, oftentimes, protects us, protects us from remembering something horrific that our psyches are not yet adept to process. I believe that in this way my father's psyche protects him from facing a dark past that he does not know how to seek closure from.

Events that result in trauma often produce other traumas through its effects shaping a void (2007:24) within the individual, society, etc. This void and or absence, becomes a condition resulting in the shattering of self (2007:24). The notion of the self unravelling relates back to early psychoanalytic opinions held by Breuer and Freud (2007:25). This theory expands in that the shattering of self or of the integrity of the psyche has an impact on the way in which our traumatic memories are stored (2007:25), remembered and when they choose to come up as well as to whom and when. I relate this to my own trauma which inadvertently and at the most inopportune of times attacks me with its urgent need to be worked through. My bodily experience of this trauma, which presents itself as immense emotional distress from the outside, sometimes even leading to my body shaking uncontrollably, oftentimes results in

a repetition of trauma for those who bear witness to this display of pain in both its physical as well as its psychological manifestation.

Traumatic memories are not stored and remembered in the same way that we remember normal everyday experiences (2007:25). These uncomfortable and oftentimes distressing memories are backed up fragmentally in our minds. An unfortunate consequence of this trauma is that it has the ability to take over our mental experience (2007:25) and mental wellbeing. Victims of trauma often experience being incapable of escaping their traumatic memories which encroach upon their lives while they simultaneously attempt to disengage from the images of these experiences (2007:25).

There is a phenomenon that has been studied in traumatic stress research in which trauma victims will re-enact and or inflict similar kinds of trauma onto others (2007:25). This trauma and its continuation, takes on centrality in the lives of trauma survivors (2007:25). Such re-enactments take on the form of actions motivated by anger, revenge, violence committed against self and oftentimes are seemingly unconnected to the original traumatic event that affected the individual (2007:25). This repetition of trauma takes place as a result of the trauma sufferer not having incorporated this trauma into their psychic and cognitive faculties and therefore, exists in a void of fragmentation (2007:25). Similarly, I would like to argue that this trauma begs for an outlet and a way of making sense of what has happened to the self. A way of making sense of events is sometimes to replay it – I believe this is also where these re-enactments come from.

But how does one express your experience of trauma in a healthy way? How does one enable this trauma to become a part of your psyche and cognitive thinking in a way that does not lead to further traumatisation? Gobodo-Madikizela suggests what I believe to be a beautiful way of voicing hurt of this nature – language (2007:25). Through language, trauma can be transformed into narrative (2007:25) – a narrative that can be the story of a survivor. I speak in this way as I have faced my own share of immense psychological, physical and life threatening trauma and do not consider myself a victim.

To change the narrative from victim to survivor is a strategy of survival. We do however, run into some difficulty when considering that extreme trauma can be unutterable; so horrible that language cannot convey the pain the survivor has endured (2007:26). This remains a reason why survivors have a difficult time transforming their lived experiences of trauma into cohesive

narrative accounts (2007:26). Remember that the memory of the traumatic event is fragmented; partially documented; suppressed and, some of it is simply too difficult to say to another human being. Primo Levi expresses it well, “our language lacks words to express this offence” (1985:9).

No matter how difficult, painful and uncomfortable, speech is a key factor in working through trauma (2007:26). Speech enables the survivor to rebuild their image of self (2007:26), to process and move on from what has happened and enables them to become future empathetic listeners to other survivors of trauma. In order to properly process and work through what has taken place requires the trauma experiencer to reconstruct verbally what has happened to them so that healing can take place. We must bear witness to our trauma; we must bear witness to each other's trauma.

In my life whiteness, Afrikaner whiteness, white Calvinistic Afrikaner whiteness as informed by the NederDutch Reformed Church of South Africa resulted in some of my trauma. The trauma of being cast aside, of not being good enough of an example for others, the trauma of being made to feel wicked in my core being; of being a disappointment as I was never a good Afrikaner girl, nor woman, I had failed in this cultural gendered expectation. As in the beginning the idea of bearing witness connects here with the introductory chapter of this writing - *Die Openbaring*. I am bearing witness in my writing, in my research, in my articulation as well as in my practice. I am laying myself bare and through my verbal articulation of this pain, I work through my own psychological distress. This has been my reparative work towards restoring my fractured sense of self.

In order to heal trauma it must be voiced. The core ingredient in order to find a way towards healing is to be heard empathically, to be met with the time, consideration, compassion, understanding and simple listening that an empathetic listener gives. This enables the experiencer of trauma to externalise what has happened to them (2007:26). But, to listen empathically requires courage (Apfelbaum 2002:13). It is clear that a community, a safe space, must be created for trauma and its unfortunate effect, often times that of shame to die. As when shame is voiced in safe spaces it disappears.

As Gobodo-Madikizela reminds, when we come together to narrate experiences of trauma, others are encouraged to “re-find” (2007:26), re-articulate and re-define the language that has been taken from them. This form of collective sharing becomes a critical sharing

(2007:28). The challenge that exists in this collective sharing is that we are bound up in our humanity, that we are human beings who have been hurt by varying means (ibid), yet we are all human and therefore we must not only respect one another's sources of pain but show compassion and encouragement when we bear witness to another's path towards psychic healing of the self.

Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok voice that, "we must be able to remember the past, recall what was taken from us, understand and grieve over what we have lost to trauma, and so find and renew ourselves" (1994:12–13). However, what if there is no willingness or ability to engage with the experiencer's trauma as an empathetic listener? Here it becomes evident that trauma being unspeakable reaches far wider than simply the limitations of language (2007:28).

In order to heal, the experiencer of trauma must have access to an empathetic audience. And here again, I am pulled to the title of my research, silence and secrecy. A silence and secrecy which was created as a result of not having the access to speak – access to an empathetic listener; circumstances in which the trauma survivor is made to feel that they are too much. When they attempt to give narrative to their trauma they are silenced as they are making others feel uncomfortable. My father's trauma remains unspoken and has become, a thinly veiled secret not to be spoken of. The trauma has thus become, "a secret that will not be revealed" (Moreiras 1996:204).

How does one heal and transcend ones trauma if your trauma is silenced? To give voice to ones trauma is to honour your own memory and the past voices who have been silenced, it opens up a future for those who come after us (Gobodo-Madikizela 2007:28) to no longer be afraid, and to no longer remain silent victims of fear and past circumstances and acts done to them.

Marx, as cited by Ahmed, regards people as creating history and that this form of making is informed by our inheritance (2007:154). This particular inheritance can be looked at from different yet corresponding notions, such as, our racial inheritance and our socio-economic standing etc. – these speak to one another as your racial inheritance is likely to inform things such as your access to objects or your racial privilege to explain it another way. To make this point more succinct, I would like to extract from Marx's writing the following: "Human beings

make their own history, but they do not make it arbitrarily in conditions chosen by themselves, but in conditions always – already given and inherited from the past" (Balibar 2002:8).

However, to draw from the work of Étienne Bilibar, to be dominated by the already established order does not depend on the ideological universalisation of the order's principles. Therefore, prevailing principles and or ideas cannot be drawn from the dominant class. Billibar believes that dominant ideas have to be the ideas of the class which is dominated. As he put it, "…the ideas which state their theoretical right to recognition and equal capacity" (2002:9).

My reader might have already made this connection, that this inheritance can be reframed in terms of orientations – and by this is meant bodily orientations. Ahmed makes this notion clear when she states, "…we inherit the reachability of some objects, those that are 'given' to us, within the 'what' that is around". Objects here mean more than simply 'things' or items, it can refer to things more intangible such as concepts, a concept such as privilege. As Ahmed explains, whiteness is an orientation which puts objects such as habits, capacities, styles, aspirations and techniques within reach. Race within this phenomenological framework, therefore, becomes a conversation about what can be reached, what is perceivable and what you are able to do 'things' with (Ahmed 2007:154).

Whiteness, as Ahmed theorises, becomes a point of departure through which the world presents itself to the subject; it is articulated as a frame of reference and is thus, a point of inheritance. I feel as bold as to say that whiteness then, can be viewed as hereditary and therefore, has the capacity to reproduce itself. Whiteness is reproduced through the view that it embodies a positive residence, as Ahmed articulates, this positive residence is seen as "property of persons, cultures and places (Ahmed 2007:154). It follows then, that whiteness becomes "like itself" (ibid) and can be regarded, for example, as a family resemblance (Ahmed 2007:154) once again linking to the idea of whiteness being hereditary.

What strikes is the notion that one's inheritance can be refused (Ahmed 2007:154). I wonder what a refusal of such an inheritance looks like. And for me, this is a question I wish to explore throughout this research paper. As Ahmed expresses further, likeness is an effect of proximity of a shared residence. In the example of race she states, bodies are regarded as similar, therefore, whiteness for example, can be regarded as a *characteristic;* as an effect of such proximities. The familial, is therefore regarded to be about what is *familiar* – what is, implicitly known (Ahmed 2007:154).

Ahmed then confronts us with the idea of how whiteness has staying power through habitual acts or, as she expresses, habits. To Ahmed, the idea of habituality is linked to bodily as well as a spatial inheritance. According to Pierre Bourdieu habits can be linked to the unconscious or to what is considered to be routine, habitual behaviours. Whiteness, then described as habitual, suggests that whiteness is an act that bodies simply, 'do' – the body taking on the shape of an action. It is Ahmed's argument that the body is habitual in the way that it 'trails behind' an action (2007:156).

She further elaborates by stating that white bodies do not become stressed by the objects or others that are encountered as this whiteness "goes unnoticed" (2007:156–157). She continues by stating, "When bodies 'lag behind', they extend their reach." This means that spaces take on the shape of the bodies that inhibit them, and that this orientation is focused around certain bodies more than others (2007:156–157). There are many points which Ahmed makes that I wholeheartedly agree upon. However, I believe that aspects such as whiteness being unnoticed as she states, lives within a different realm in modern day South Africa. As much as institutionalised whiteness is still felt, lived and experienced, I believe that whiteness is being seen and through this frightful sight, being questioned. This fact can be seen in for example, attempts to decolonialise education.

However, Ahmed addresses my point almost directly when she says that whiteness is only an invisible aspect to those who do not inhabit it (Ahmed 2004:b). She importantly notes that whiteness is not reducible to white skin or something a person can have or be. "Whiteness is an effect of what coheres rather than the origin of coherence" (Ahmed 2007:159). Ahmed draws her point to Audre Lorde when she states that relationships of power 'intersect' the way in which we inhabit a given category which is dependent on how we inhibit others. The body then, is a point of meeting (Ahmed 2007:159).

She articulates that if you have inherited class privilege, you will therefore, clearly, have more resources available to you. This can be shaped into capital, and therefore, into what pushes you forward or above others (2007:160). Whiteness then becomes a form of class mobility. One's ability to inhabit this body of privilege is dependent upon what lies behind you. Bodies can move up when their whiteness is not disputed. Ahmed states that to take up space requires being given an object which in turn, allows the body to be inhabited in a certain way

(2007:160). Fanon speaks of a bodily form of privilege when referring to the experience of being white (2007:162).

What does this inherited privilege look like in the South African context? What is the racial schemata and the history of this in the Southern African context? Who were and still remain the privileged few? To answer this I will give an overview of the history of colonisation and imperialism in the following section.

Grappling with histories personal and collective

There is so much that can be said about the Voortrekkers[7], the settlers who "crossed the Drakensberg barefooted" as well as the youth organisation and its involvement in the apartheid psychology of young white Afrikaners. My personal interest lies here. I have a particular investment in this topic as a result of my father's association with the group that would later on lead to my own. I was a member of this cultural, religious and ethnically specific organisation for twelve years. In this time I had graduated from a *Drawwertjie*[8] to a *Presidents Verkenner*[9]. It took me many years of reflection to notice the sinister foundations and history of an organisation that I was deeply involved with. What follows is an overview of the South African landscape in a political sense, during colonisation and imperialism. Later on I wish to highlight why the Voortrekkers became an important symbol in shaping white Afrikaner nationalism.

The period I will to cover in this historical account on colonialism to imperialism in South Africa spans from 1840–1880. The *Boers* or *Afrikanders* as they called themselves, erected two boer republics limited to white men (people). Their intent to grow and expand their republics was dependent upon the conquest of the original inhabitants and relied on their ability to alienate these "enemies" from their land (Etherington, Harries and Mbenga 2010:319). Please note, that the historical information shared here and in the following pages will receive little engagement as I simply wish to lay bare the historiography at play at the time in order to shape a more holistic understanding of race relations as well as how colonisation and imperialism in the country came to shape and influence the political ideology of apartheid and the specific way that my parent's indoctrination came to shape my childhood.

A new urgency existed for British colonies to expand as wool farming, plantation agriculture and the mining of diamonds delivered success to the colonial forces. This resulted in a demand for both the acquisition of land as well as inexpensive labour practices (Etherington, Harries and Mbenga 2010:319). This of course did not only lead to extortion but in some

[7] In a literal translation, *Voortrekker* refers to those who trek ahead. These are Afrikaners who descended from the Dutch, German and French settlers. They were given this name as they trekked away from the Cape Colony in order to escape British rule.

[8] Referring to a bird found in both the Southern region of Africa as well as Asia. Its colloquial meaning is to be swift footed. Young female scouts in the Voortrekkers were named this way.

[9] The highest achievement the organisation can bestow based on outstanding leadership in the organisation.

cases slavery; which was unlawful as slavery had been abolished in 1833 and took effect in the British colonies in 1834 (2010:321).

Race became a defining factor socially, materially and politically as the colonies expanded through plunder and occupation causing classification to be enforced amongst racial lines. This affected who belonged and who did not, says Etherington, Harries and Mbenga. However, I would like to add that class created as a result of not only the racial divide, but the deep influence that it would carry in relation to who had access to what was similarly intertwined in these factors. Indeed, racial classification became a way of attributing value to persons. This division among people was heightened as languages were identified and transcribed through markers of differentiation such as ethnicity, consequently resulting in these groups forming their own histories, practices and ways of being. During this time, Christianity moved from the coastal plains to the interior. Many of the Christian converts adopted the beliefs and practices of the missionaries where others refashioned them to their own local customs and established African mysticism (2010:321).

The 1840s saw colonial farmers begging the state to revoke the treaty system and to take control of areas that they considered to be “unproductive” African land. Humanitarian activity was on a rapid decline in the empire as slavery had been abolished (2010:321) almost as if, discrimination, prejudice and oppression was not an everyday lived experience of the lives of indigenous, brown and black people under colonial rule and for generations to come.

The humanitarian cause resulted in a bundle deal of freedoms being negotiated for indigenous peoples that included freedom from slavery, the right to practise free trade as well as the right to practise their own religious beliefs. Of course, in a cruel morose irony, this freedom had many conditions connected to it that included that indigenous people had to denounce what the Europeans considered to be “dark superstitious” beliefs, regarded as primitive and naive. These “superstitions” and “primitive” ways, as seen by the settlers included polygamy, bride wealth and dancing amongst other practices. Disillusion simmered among the indigenous inhabitants of the country as the power of their ancestors felt more tangible than the intervention of a Christian God (2010:321).

Collaborating with Lucy Lloyd, Wilhelm Beleg began research into the languages and customs of the KhoiSan (2010:327). After his death in 1875 she continued his work in particular through a folk-lore journal lending inspiration for some of the first ethnographic essays to

surface in South Africa. The South African Philosophical Society established in 1877 secured the colony's connection to what they believed to be, metropolitan streams of knowledge. In the late 1830's Andrew Geddes Bain discovered a fossil of a prehistoric reptile while building a road in Fort Beaufort. These events resulted in an unexpected political aftermath. European scientists and scholars believed that their findings in the country were universal and disregarded the input of indigenous peoples. Discoveries made by palaeontologists, geologists, zoologists and botanists made Africa out to be a prehistoric place full of primitive species that were extinct in more "advanced" parts of the world. Their twisted and arrogant racist ideas influenced the way in which scientists and scholars viewed the indigenous inhabitants of this continent in a damning way (2010:328).

In 1840, the New Testament appeared in Setswana, in 1846 it was released in isiXhosa and in 1855 in South Sesotho. These languages were categorised by Bleek as Bantu. This linguistic work by the missionaries was paralleled by an attempt to understand and aid in the colonisation of indigenous peoples. By mid-century the essays and monographs created by the missionaries had developed a distinct genre of ethnographic writing, dividing the indigenous peoples into clear groups as tribes. This made room for Gustav Fritsch to create the first ethnographic survey of the Bantu peoples of South Africa in 1872. Enforcing these linguistic categories into tribes and then into an overarching social group known as the "Bantu" created categories for scientific enquiry to examine and analyse these people for study in the same way that animals and plants are studied (2010:328). An utterly inhumane, dehumanising and racist affair.

Oftentimes these highly subjective and discriminatory texts would portray Bantu and Khoi-San languages as underdeveloped, soft and effeminate. The ethnographic work made from a Eurocentric lens, aimed to look at the indigenous people by attempting to find European customs in theirs. Failing this, they would be considered as primitive by these writers. These writings resulted in even more distance being created between Europeans and Africans. These texts further continued to show colonised peoples as tribesmen living out an early stage of evolution or failing this, as a group of people on the brink of extinction. Alternatively, in an absolute arrogance, these European writers would write about them as an inferior race in desperate need of colonisation and Christian doctrine (2010:329).

In the 1860's the first railways were constructed and upon the discovery of diamonds they were extended to Beaufort West and Cradock in 1881. Cape Town became energetic as a

result of a new political confidence. In 1853 a constitution was passed as a result of ideas of liberal democracy that came from Britain (2010:330).

For the first time in 1872 the Cape colony could elect its own prime minister. Between 1875–1884 a huge and rather imposing building was erected to act as the house of the newly elected parliament. This was located at the top of Adderley Street, the main thoroughfare of Cape Town. This building neighboured a slave lodge that was turned into the Supreme Court. These institutions were aimed at uniting law, knowledge, politics and religion as a bastion of settler power (2010:331).

Knowing these histories is a painful matter. That the old slave lodge, a space of immense hurt, betrayal, alienation, othering, fear etc., was simply transformed into the Supreme Court is immensely disrespectful. It is clear that settlers, colonists, believed themselves to be supreme rulers of this land, above the indigenous and rightful owners of this place. It hurts me immensely to know this history and to understand without a doubt that my ancestors were deeply entrenched in a system of oppression from colonial times until the end of apartheid in 1994. What is even more devastating is my personal knowledge in relation to white Afrikaner nationalistic, white supremacist movements that are still, well, alive and continuing to seek recruits using modern means such as Tik-Tok to justify their disgusting beliefs of racial superiority.

The elected government was expected to partake in the defence and expansion of the colony. Soon after the amaXhosa listened to the prophecy of Nongawuse and killed their livestock and crops, Mfengu and Thembu emigrants crossed the Kei where a conflict arose with the local Gcaleka amaXhosa. As the conflict reached a precipice, the British aided their allies, pushing Sahili and his people towards the east. Within the decade, Mfengu and Thembu immigrants had occupied the old Gcaleka land carrying the endorsement of their British supporters (2010:334).

In 1866, the annexation of the Ciskei would end, as the British took up possession of the area dividing it into two districts named, King William's Town and East London. The annexation of this area resulted in an increase of isiXhosa-speakers in the population affecting pass laws that were consequently redrafted. This change was reflected in the fact that black people were no longer considered automatic foreigners of their own country. Similarly, as the need for both labour and land increased with the discovery of diamonds, the annexation of the

Transkei was eminent. In 1877–1878 the last Cape Frontier war took place as the amaXhosa took a final ineffectual stand against British colonisation and imperialism (2010:334).

J.H. Hofmeyr began a political movement aimed at protecting the interest of Dutch farmers in 1879 while at the same time, S.J. du Toit began a political party named the Afrikaner Bond, and launched the first Afrikaans language movement. Unfortunately, though Cape Malay Muslims had written some of the first Afrikaans texts in Arabic, du Toit did not welcome these writers to his movement based on racial prejudice. Die Afrikaner Bond was taken over by Hofmeyr a few years later and the right to use Afrikaans in Parliament, civil service as well as in court was established (2010:334).

Both Africans as well as Boers were agricultural and pastoral societies. Resulting in both of these groups having to recover from an equally disturbing period of Ndebele invasion and the Great Trek, respectively states Etherington, Harries and Mbenga (2010:336). However, I do not believe that they can be compared in any form, simply by virtue of the fact that even though Afrikaners or the Boers can be considered as both the colonised and the colonisers, their white skin gave them a form of privilege not available to Africans. Outside of this simple observation, Afrikaners had their own republics and lands. Whereas the indigenous peoples of this country were ultimately not seen as citizens until the pass laws were altered slightly. They were similarly not permitted to own land and were often evicted and displaced by the colonists when their presence made them feel “uncomfortable” or “unsafe” or alternatively, they simply wanted the land they were occupying for themselves.

The reason why I have decided to include this particular history, is because it is helpful in understanding the racial tensions, divides and apartheid policies that the National Party had forced onto black, brown and indigenous bodies. Let us continue to look at a very complex set of histories, horrific and rather confusing, when one considers that the National Party ensured that many historical lies were published, taught and absorbed as fact by the white population.

My father would oftentimes tell me about his experience growing up during the height of apartheid. He was born in the 60s and as a result grew up during a time of turmoil. As a child he was permitted to play with all children in his small town and he had many friends who lived in informal settlements. When he had reached a certain age he was told that his friendships with black children were no longer appropriate.

Nicky Falkof speaks to history, identity, nationalisms and the idea of racial purity in her work *The End of Whiteness*. As she explains, by the 1980s in South Africa the National Party's long reign had resulted in an immense influence on the lives of white people: politically, socially and in their everyday lives (Falkof 2016:62). National Party fascism led to an inward-looking mentality, played into white fears of African nationalism and normalised a colonial narrative of benign paternalistic action that held true the white man's responsibility to protect the "uncivilised" black people from being led astray by communism – which would lead to the country's (the white man's country) collapse (Falkof 2016:62). By and large, it was Afrikaner Nationalism that led to the oppression and systematic othering, racism and discrimination against this country's indigenous peoples – at least it was used as an overarching justification for even white civilian's casual racism.

As Falkof explains, "…Afrikaner nationalism developed and influenced more general white South African ideas about whiteness, blackness and racial purity". Nationalisms are formed in our minds (Falkof 2016:62). Nations are described as 'imagined communities' by the British academic, Benedict Anderson. He concludes this idea with, "…in the minds of each lives the image of *their* communion." (own emphasis added) – referring here to the members of a particular nation. In other words, though members of the same nation might never meet, know of one another etc cetera, they share a kinship, a communion as a result of their shared imagined community. Mockingly, white Afrikaner nationalists regarded themselves to be the South African nation when they were and still are the descendants of an aggressive colonising force.

Nationalisms then, make use of the concept of naturalness; what is meant here is that thought is shifted towards the psychic concept of the nation as biology correct; as inherent or in Afrikaans – *van self sprekend*[10]. Therefore not created nor constructed, not devised and carefully planned nor grafted over, not imagined. Within the context of the South African apartheid state, this naturalness became prevalent as a result of the white state's normalisation of "casual everyday racism" (Falkof 2016:62). This normalised racist behaviour, action and thought backed by the white fascist state was typified by a commonly held belief that the norm of racial, political and class segregation, was the way it was as, it was *right* and *correct* [own emphasis] (Falkof 2016:62). White people falsely believed that they not only lived in a country that was *only for whites* but they *owned this country*, this soil and that it was

[10] Something that doesn't have to be questioned or said, it simply is so – self-evident.

their *right* entrusted to them by the Lord (for more reading on this strange cultural and ethnic belief – which is still prevalent among certain white supremacist Afrikaners – read about the battle of Blood River, also known as the Battle of Ncome River and the promises made between the Voortrekker commandos and God.)[11].

Stuart Hall notes that, "Identities are constructed through, not outside, difference" (1993:349). What is illustrated by Hall is that all identities are in need of an outside in order to see themselves as a natural state of being – a group of peoples or a person that does not fit into the ways in which the 'in-group' defines the 'self'. According to Falkof, "We are defined by what we are not as much as by what we are" (Falkof 2016:63). This is an interesting point to make not only in relation to my nuclear family narrative but in relation to white Afrikaner identity – which has a very complex and oftentimes contested history. What I mean here, is that there are white Afrikaners who specifically denounce and refuse to accept nor acknowledge the story of their true heritage among other historical facts such as their Creole roots, as opposed to the nationalistic fairy tale fed to our parents which is accepted as fact by such individuals. White Afrikaners built up their nationalism through denouncing blackness, by shaping who they were in exact opposition to not only black people but in opposition to brown people and let's not forget English liberals.

In order to maintain minority rule during the oppressive and psychotic apartheid regime the National Party worked to establish and maintain an Afrikaner Nationalist Mythology[12]. As Leonard Thompson notes, a specific political mythology (Afrikaner nationalism was a political strategy that worked on a variety of levels but especially a psychological one, using

[11] More helpful insight can be gained on this topic when looking into the history of the Voortrekker Monument and the connected day which resulted in this monument being erected – the Covenant or in Afrikaans, Gelofte Dag (Day of Promise). A day that was and is still celebrated among certain white Afrikaners on 16 December. This cruel monument was literally constructed as a tribute to God himself for saving the "outnumbered" Afrikaanse boere from the "merciless" Zulu warriors. A ridiculous statement to make when simply taking into consideration that die boere magte (boer army) literally had firearms at their disposal, making this "fair" fight anything but fair. This was a battle about land, land which certainly did not belong to the settlers. Many zulu warriors died that day, staining the river blood red. This merciless ripping away of human life was foolishly, in my opinion, regarded to be an omen and therefore a prophecy from God to the Boer leaders that they were a chosen people of God much like the Israelites.

[12] A political myth refers to a story told about the past in order to legitimise or discredit a regime. A political mythology refers to a combination of myths that are used to reinforce one another and to form the historical foundation of said regime or its rival (Thompson 1985:1).

propaganda to aid in their brainwashing of whites) is a result of its particular context. Here geo-specificity and socio-political context in other words, becomes critical. Apartheid ideology and execution is an example of the way in which a specific and unique set of circumstances relating in particular to a deep racial and ethnic divide led to a minority of white people ruling with oppressive military, police and legislated force through *onderdrukking*[13] of the majority of black, brown and other indigenous South Africans. In this vein, it is clear to see that the Afrikaner nationalist mythology resulted from the fact that white Afrikaners have never been a numerical majority in any particular area they forced themselves into (Thompson 1985:25).

Afrikaners, themselves having faced discrimination, extortion, forced assimilation and being placed in camps (women and children) among other examples by the British colonists, who regarded them as a rudimentary and primitive people; sadly continued a rhetoric of hate based upon racial divides when they came into control of the country. Having faced a traumatic oppression by the British, they had re-enacted this trauma in a seemingly unconnected way. Ironically, they were of the opinion that what they were doing was right and even supported by God. During the Second World war the colonisation and imperialism ended as Afrikaner nationalists gained control of South Africa in the 1948 general elections (1985:26). Indigenous peoples felt encouraged by the end of British reign and sought to gain a political stake in the affairs of the country. As a result two main themes emerged within the construction and continuation of the Afrikaner nationalist mythology. The first of these was mobilisation lending itself to a strong theme of liberation. During the late nineteenth century, clergy (an important and powerful force in Afrikaner nationalism), politicians (oftentimes former members of clergy) as well as writers began to speak the notion of an Afrikaner nation into written and spoken form (Thompson 1985:25). This of course did not include all Afrikaners and was limited to the racially white. Politicians and cultural leaders expanded this motif throughout the first part of the twentieth century resulting in a mythology of mobilisation (1985:27).

The second theme which perhaps had the most negative and long lasting after effects was that of legislated racism. When the National Party took over control of the country from the British the newly established government focused on legitimising their racial and discriminatory policies (1985:27). What was the precursor of this schizophrenic form of rule

[13] To oppress, literally translating to pushing someone under when directly translated from Afrikaans - a language that symbolises violence in its vocalisation to many South Africans as it is associated with apartheid.

and oppression? A former oppression. During the 1830s several thousand white Afrikaners decided to leave the Cape Colony as a result of a variety of grievances and to break away from British rule which they regarded as oppressive and to move towards the mainland where they established Boer Republics (such as the Republic of Natalia[14] – this flag is still the flag of the Voortrekker Youth Movement) limited to white men. A cruel method the British employed to suppress their resistance included removing Afrikaner women and children from their homes and forcing them into concentration camps where more than twenty thousand succumbed of dysentery and other ailments. A number which was grievously exaggerated in the myths I was told as a young child by the elders in my community. I do not blame them, as they truly believe the historical mythology they were fed by the generations before them. I also attempt to meet them on a human level, consciously aware of the propagated political mythology they were taught in schools during National Party rule. Another, less immediate method involved forcing Afrikaners to be educated in a British model (1985:28).

As Thompson articulates, Afrikaner nationalism was the result of the unique environment in which it came to maturity developed over decades; the movement became more and more sinister in its foundations and here I refer specifically to the racist ingredient. The political mythology of Afrikaner nationalism and its racist component defined as apartheid – literally meaning to be separate; was dynamic in that it changed to fit the changing circumstances in which it found itself (1985:28). In its formation Afrikaner nationalism, sometimes ironically referred to as volks trots[15], involved at its core a powerful neo-Calvinist[16] component. After the day of the Covenant the name that was given to the day that the battle of Blood River took place, the Afrikaners regarded themselves to be, much like the Israelites, the chosen people of God which to them, implied a destiny of their people. This can be understood when looking

[14] The Republic of Natalia was established in 1839 after the Voortrekkers achieved a victory at the Battle of Blood River. This Republic soon came to an end as the British annexed the region.

[15] Definition: National Pride – this is ironic as white Afrikaners are simply a cultural and ethnic minority descendants of European settlers and not representative of South Africa as a nation in its totality.

[16] Neo-Calvinism is a term coined by Anne Anema in 1897 and refers to the view that God's supreme power extends over everything. This includes life, scholarly pursuits, science, arts, mathematics, geography, business, media, economics, law, literature, ethics, the church, theology and the family unit. The movement was founded in the nineteenth century in the Netherlands and is primarily associated with Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck.

at some examples of early political speeches given in support of this idea. In 1944, chairman of the Afrikaner Broederbond, J. C. van Rooy had the following to say on the subject:

*In every People in the world is embodied a Divine Idea and the task of each people is to build upon that Idea and to perfect it. So God created the Afrikaner People with a unique language, a unique philosophy of life, and their own history and tradition in order that they might fulfil a particular calling and destiny here in the southern corner of Africa. We must stand guard on all that is peculiar to us and build upon it. We must believe that God has called us to be servants of his righteousness in this place. We must walk the way of obedience to fait*h.

As Thompson states, the neo-Calvinist component was essential during the mobilisation period of Afrikaner mythology (1985:28). This has, however, declined, but has not disappeared completely, however, many white Afrikaners have moved to a more secular way of life (ibid). Afrikaans as a spoken language grew to be distinct from Dutch as it evolved in Southern Africa through the simplification of its syntax, by changing vowels, through dropping vocabulary items that did not seem relevant, and through its incorporation of loan words from other languages such as Malay, Portuguese Creole and KhoeKhoe (1985:30–31).

The most significant event that led to an increase of Afrikaner nationalism was a symbolic ox-wagon journey in 1938 celebrating the centenary of the Great Trek (1985:39). This "trek" boasted eight wagons named after prominent Voortrekker heroes or *helde* in Afrikaans such as Hendrik Potgieter, Piet Retief and Andries Pretorius (ibid). Voortrekker or *Volk's Helde* have received a martyrdom and or Saint status in the Afrikaner Nationalist framework and stand as examples of what a "good Afrikaner" must strive to be. As a child I was endlessly kept busy with the tales of such people, especially the children, Racheltjie de Beer… Japie Greyling. Their bravery was always emphasised and many of these figures – especially the Voortrekker leaders have statues erected to them all over the country. This is in my opinion, *helde verering* – hero worship. I find the mythology of my people to be full of gaps and contradictions, as one of the principles Afrikaners hold close to their hearts is that they must not idol worship… What is this behaviour exactly but idol worship? As God said in Exodus 20:3–5 "Jy mag geen ander gode voor my aangesig hë nie." Translating to, "Thou shalt not idol worship". The centenary event featured each wagon starting its journey from a different point of departure and as they passed through small white towns they were welcomed by eager supporters. They all ended their journey on a prominent hill that overlooks the capital city of Pretoria. This zeal is

demonstrated by a journalist who wrote, "...The Afrikaners on the Rand had made a pilgrimage to a new symbol of nationhood" (1985:28).

During 1934–48, D. F. Malan's more radical National Party was in control during a time of immense industrialisation. As a result of the poor circumstances prevalent in the reserves, many black people began migrating towards the cities where wage labour was in demand (ibid). Incapable of policing the migration for labour, white people became fearful of what this would mean for their hegemonic, separatist existence. At the same time radical nationalism was imported from German thought through a number of Afrikaans intellectuals who had returned from the country after completing degrees at German institutions. They were, sadly, drawn to the inhumane aspects associated with German nationalism such as Anti-Semitism; the importance of the nation over the individual became an emphasis in the doctrine that would outline not only Afrikaner nationalism, but its associated racial oppression (1985:42).

Afrikaner nationalist mythology has been transmitted through the elaborate means of education, religious and communication networks. It has ruled the historical consciousness of a great deal of the Afrikaner population since the National Party came into control of the country in 1948. The secret white supremacist movement, the Afrikaner Broederbond (est. in 1921) was primarily responsible for this heinous outcome (1985:46). Since their successful election (the NP), an astounding number of cabinet ministers have belonged to this organisation, as well as many heads of Afrikaner churches and universities. Their influence was so widespread that they were even involved in great state corporations such as the SABC (the South African Broadcasting Corporation) and SASOL (the South African Coal, Oil and Gas Corporation) to name a few (1985:46–47).

Though the country boasted advanced technology, television came to South Africa very late as the government was hesitant to the medium lest it may result in imported television programming which could endorse anglicisation and undercut the established racial "norms" (I put norms in quotation marks here as this racial schemata was anything but normal) (1985:48). Television, after much finessing and preparation came to the country in 1976. In typical National Party fashion, all programming – the news, the radio and television was poorly covered up nationalist propaganda. Despite being obligated to use a lot of imported television content, the government made sure to circumvent content which showed white and black people in positive social situations; this especially applied to material relating to interracial sexual relationships.

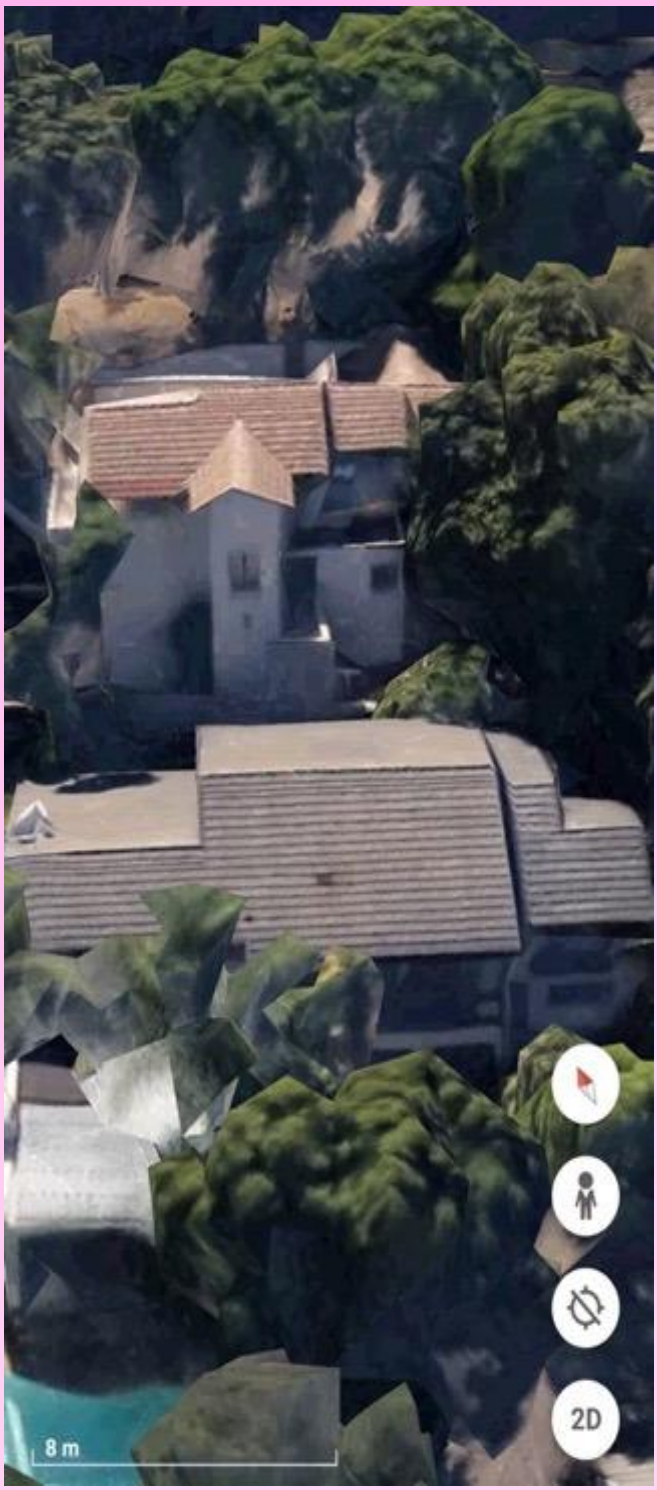
In 1948 the government legislated a compulsory divide between English and Afrikaans children, placing them into distinct schooling systems based on an ethnic, religious, cultural and language divide. In Afrikaans medium schools a "Christian-National" philosophy applied where the children were to be "imbued with the Christian-National spiritual and cultural material of our nation….We wish to have no mixing of language, no mixing of cultures, no mixing of religions and no mixing of races". History was taught in Afrikaans schools from the perspective that God had "willed separate nations and people" (1985:50). White students in both Afrikaans and English-medium schools, wrapped up in their privileged, segregated existence, had no understanding nor access to information about the realities of what it meant to be a person of colour under apartheid oppression (1985:63).

After 1959 after the establishment of segregated schooling for "non-white" students the government's feeble attempts to use black education as a tool for psychic indoctrination hopelessly failed. African scholarly institutions in fact became spaces where students gained knowledge and mentorship in politics informed by Black Consciousness and held at its core, a liberatory injection (1985:68).

South African whiteness and its historic political normalisation took place as a result of the unique circumstances in which it developed. This resulted in a minority of the (white) population ruling the majority of the country's indigenous peoples. White privilege is an experience in which the colour of your skin does not result in the negative consequences of racism. The white experience is not and has never been the norm. What Afrikaner whiteness means today, I believe, is dependent on who is asked. For some, white Afrikaners and our associated language, symbolises oppression and racism. For myself, as a white Afrikaner living in post-apartheid South Africa (I am also a born-free) it is what the individual who has this particular identity decides for it to mean to them. I am aware of the violent history of my people; I choose to reject the racist ideology which foregrounded their search for a collective identity, belonging and respect. It is my opinion that South Africans should familiarise themselves with this history in order to come together on a human level. To become empathic listeners to one another's collective and individual experiences of trauma. In dialogue, in conversation through *praat,* through the act of voicing we can acknowledge one another's pain, we must listen with empathy and together; on this true human level, may we work through our hurt together.

PRAAT 2

Forming whiteness as habit: the entanglement of biomythography and practice



I lived in an ugly, old, pink, thatched roof house, in the old suburb of Bailey's Muckleneuk, Pretoria.

At some point the structure must have been well-constructed but almost 50-years-old at the time, the building had seen many renovations and add-ons, contributing to the overall garishness of its aesthetic. It was a quiet, well-maintained suburb situated on a hill within walking distance to Magnolia Dal, a local park with a small pond, Loftus versfeld[171] and my high school, Afrikaanse Hoër Meisieskool Pretoria or affies, as we called it. I was fifteen, and I lived with my father in that ugly, pink, thatched roof house.

Writing about my childhood home has made me want to access it in a more tangible way but for now I will have to settle for visual, digital access to the property and its building. As I type in the old address into Google Earth, 487 Walter Lanham Street, I am taken aback.

I do not recognise the house. It is no longer garish. It is no longer pink. It no longer has a thatch roof. Yet I am kept at a distance, I cannot see my childhood home properly as it is obscured by large trees. This experience is in a way a melancholic nostalgia. I simultaneously appease my own disheartenment as I

[17] Rugby Stadium

realise that the foundations of this structure are still the same as they were when I was a young girl.

As I scratch deeper, as I pine for access to times past I wonder about the school I went to, Afrikaanse Hoër Meisieskool Pretoria. An all-girls school which has been around for one hundred and four years. I used to walk to this legacy school from 487 Walter Lanham Street each morning via a shortcut through Magnolia Dal park. The uniform has virtually never been altered, the small little caps worn on Friday's and special occasions have similarly seen little to no modifications. The puff sleeved shirts with the high round collars and top buttons covered up by a royal blue pinafore. None of this has changed, ever. As I scour the school's web page I am taken aback by discoveries I make. The little blue ceremonial cap ... the stewardess' cap as us girls would often tease, feeling that we looked like Britney Spears in her "Toxic" music video of 2003, took its design features from army barrettes. VOMIT.



Fig 4: Afrikaanse Hoër Meisieskool Pretoria archival image, 1964

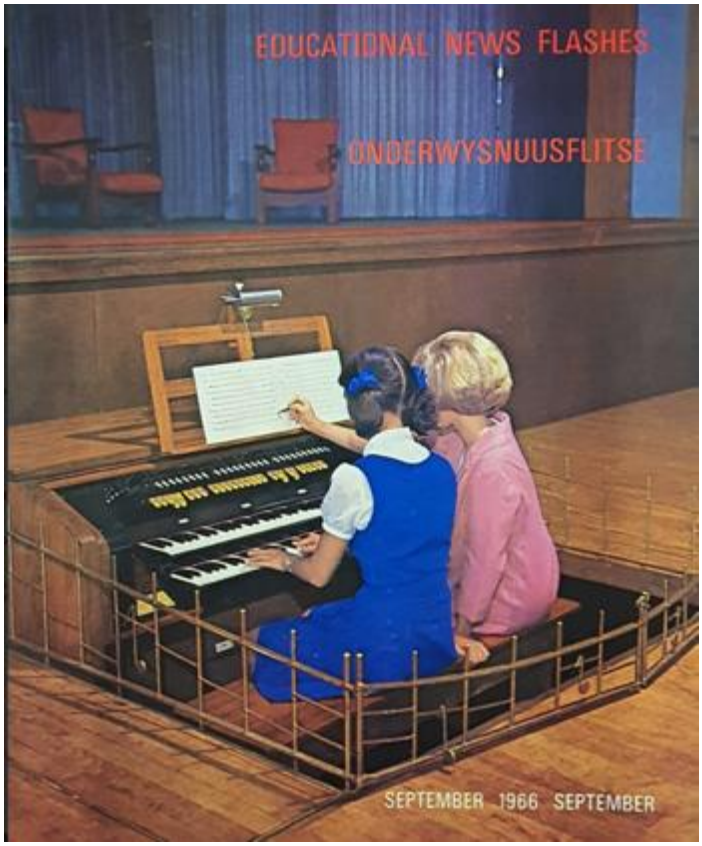


Fig 5:Publication cover image taken from van Rensburg's 'Die Boerevrou 1919 – 1931'

I begin to panic, I feel disgusted, I used to love those little caps with their little noitje[18] on them… I used to love my school pin featuring the crest of this Voortrekker woman's silhouette. Nobody knows who the noitje is based on. The noitje only known as the Noitje van die onderveld.

My legacy high school was deeply connected to ideological practices shaped by the National Party, such as a very clear gendered discourse, divide and gendered roles. This is informed by the fact that Afrikaans dominees who studied abroad in the Netherlands came under the influence of the ultra-conservative, patriarchal theological teaching of Abraham Kuyper. This resulted in backlash and the first women's rights movement (Van Rensburg 2012:74).

For Paul Kruger and other members of the National Party, establishing a gender informed discourse was of critical importance to the shaping of Afrikaner nationalism. The reasons for filtering in gendered discourse into the ideology came from the reasoning that women needed to fulfil the needed function to raise nationalistic orientated offspring. This discourse, normalised through NP ideology gave birth to the *Volksmoeder* archetype and ideal. According to this ideal the Afrikaner woman is meant to put her family above herself and to accept that she will never play a role in the political landscape (Van Rensburg 2012:136). Afrikaner Nationalism supported a movement that assisted in the systemic subjugation of Afrikaner women and forced them into passivity and submission.

Noitje van die onderveld

The cover of the first edition of the Afrikaans women's magazine, Die Boerevrou released on the 25th March 1919 featured a black and white photograph of a statue created by the Dutch sculptor Anton van Wouw (Van Rensburg 2012:239). The statue was a representation of a

[18] Refers to the *Nonnetjie of Die Onderveld*, a small bronze sculpture by Anton van Wouw (hysterically I attended Anton van Wouw primary school named after the scultpor).

young girl in full Voortrekker uniform. This representation on the magazine cover itself was framed with the words, "Ik sien haar win, want haar naam is – Vrouw en Moeder" (I see her win, because her name is – Woman and Mother), taken from a poem by Jan F. E. Celliers titled 'By die Vrouebetoging' (At the Women's Protest).

This Noitje became the emblem of the publication for thirteen years and used the words taken from Celliers' poem as its motto (Van Rensburg 2012:241).

By die Vrouebetoging

Stil! Berei jul hart as ten gebede
en suiwer daaruit weg wat wêrelds is,
om aan te hoor die naam wat ek wil noem – die
eerste hier op aarde na die naam van God
die Skepper, God die Albehoeder –
die naam is … Moeder!
Die grond is heilig waar haar voete gaan – op
kamervloer, in moordkamp, oor die straat, want
haar is Jesus' liefde-taak vertroud,
wat offer bring van eie vlees en bloed.
Ek sien haar swyend gaan op steile pad,
half duisel nog van nagte deurgewaak,
en wankel-tredend, elke tree 'n pyn,
na soveel gaans aan liefdewerk gewy.
Ek sien haar wag, geduldig, sonder woord,
soos sy al honderd jaar gewag het en gely,
ek sien haar wen, deur lye net soos Hy;
ek sien haar wen, vir man en seun en broeder,
want haar naam
is Vrou, en Moeder!

Translation:

At the Women's Protest

Quiet! Prepare your heart as when you pray
and make pure from this what is from this world,
to hear the name that I want to speak – the
first here on earth that is like the name of God
the Creator, God Almighty
this name is… Mother!
the ground is holy where her feet go – on
bedroom floor, in murder camp, or the street, because
her is Jesus' love-language promised,
that brings the sacrifice of own flesh and blood.
I see her swaying as she goes up against a steep path,
half asleep still from staying up for nights on end,
and weak footed, every step pain,
after so much effort given towards her love-work.
I see her wait, patiently, without a word,
like she has been waiting and suffering for one hundred years,
I see her winning; through her pain just like Him,
I see her win, for man and son and brother,
because her name
is Woman, and Mother!

In 1930, Afrikaanse Hoër Meisieskool Pretoria's Biology teacher, miss. Van Gass made the suggestion that the sculpture of the *Noitje van Onderveld* should be utilised as the school's crest. After the *Boerevrou* came to an end in 1931, the head of the school, miss. Verster made a request to Mabel Malherbe to use the emblem and motto of the publication for the school. This decision shows the school's intent to carry the ideologies of the *Boerevrou* forth (Van Rensburg 2012:811).



Fig 7: Cover images of magazine from Jeanette van Rensburg's 'Die Boerevrou 1919 – 1931'



Image by Joy Greyling

An exhibition in partial completion of Joy Greyling's MAFA

The Point of Order
Corner Bertha and Stiemens streets
Braamfontein
Opening on 17 October 2023
17:30 - 20:00
Featuring a once off performance by the artist
Viewing Until 28 October 2023
Open on Tuesdays from 10:00 - 14:00 or by appointment
marciajoyelizabeth@gmail.com

THE WITS SCHOOL OF ARTS

Exhibition text

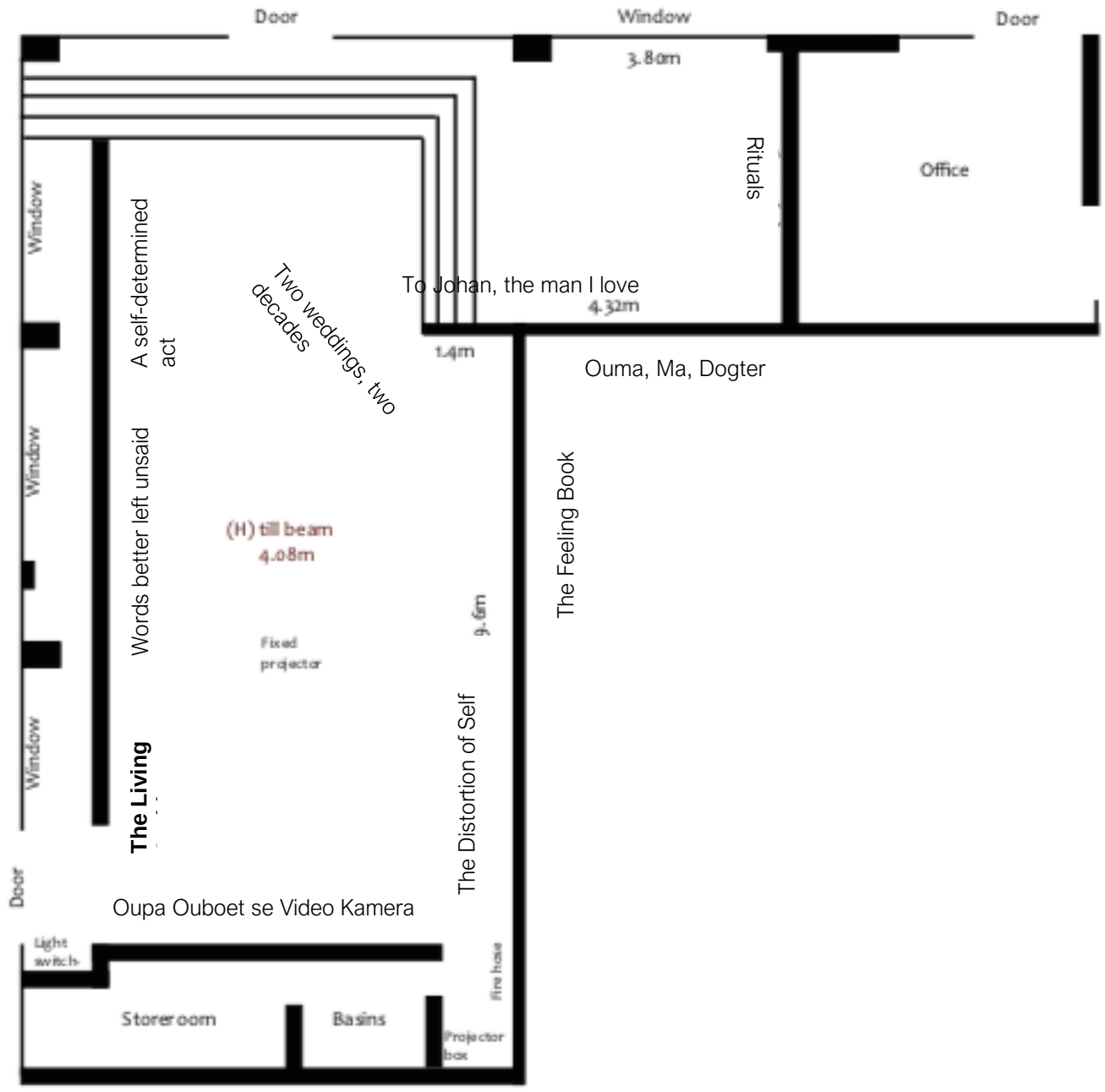
læv.ɪn.dər

The lavender flower symbolises purity, silence, devotion, serenity, grace, and calmness. Its colour is associated with the crown chakra, an energy centre associated with higher purpose and spiritual connectivity.

Seeking joy - everyday rituals of becoming, is interested in the tradition of beautiful writing which it uses as a catalyst to tell biomythographic stories. Part historical, part fact and part fiction it narrates a complex inner monologue of becoming and finding oneself.

* A walk through video of the exhibition is available here.

Though some might view my incorporation of lavender as a focal point in my exhibition and writing kitsch. I both agree as well as disagree. I agree in the sense that I made use of camp aesthetics for my exhibition as informed by Susan Sontag's 'Notes on Camp' (1966). I disagree on this interpretation as both of my grandmothers suffer/d from severe anxiety disorders and had a deep connection to not only lavender as a plant but to the colour itself. My grandmother Joy, for example, painted her bedroom lavender whereas my grandmother Hannetjie keeps lavender essential oil in her home at any given time. Therefore, yes the aesthetic might be kitsch, but I do not believe that it in any way minimises the emotional intent of my work. Lavender then, becomes my inheritance from the women who raised me into the woman I am and am still becoming.



Seeking joy – Everyday Rituals of Becoming

Rituals (2023)

'Rituals' 2023 is a found footage film mostly created from internet memes and clips in response to a sermon widely circulated among Evangelical, Calvinistic Afrikaners in response to yet "another Satanic attack" on the white Afrikaner youth population in the mid 2000s.

This set of sermons labelled "Maak Jou huis Skoon" ruined not only mine but many other young people's ability to access the world of make believe, since well, fairies and dragons were emblems of Satan himself. Geldenhuys continues his ramblings by stating boldly that any culture, religion or language found outside of Western norms, practices and beliefs is "boos" (evil).

And as I watched my favoured fey bedding burst into flames as part of a significant sacrifice of "evil" to a "jealous God". I heard Dominee Tiaan Geldenhuys' warning "jy mag geen ander gode hê nie" (you may not idol worship).



Rituals is a response to growing up as the child of two dominees. It is similarly a response to growing up as the child of white Afrikaners who faced “The End of Whiteness” as Falkof express and a form of moral panic wrapped in the guise of “Satanists”. Displacement becomes relevant when considering whiteness in the South African context. The concept of

displacement was developed by Sigmund Freud and suggests the way in which an emphasis on a notion can be removed and replaced by something else that seems to be originally disconnected from the original idea (Falkof 2016:21). Fear of Satanism was a symptomatic response of repressing the unsettling knowledge (2016:22) that white minority rule had come to an end. Repressed information hardly goes to the back of the mind and instead returns in distorted forms (ibid). Satanic panic had an effect on my experience of growing up and so did notions of displacement as can be read in preceding chapters. Satanic panic was therefore, a response to immense feelings of uncertainty and fear of the future.

Rituals makes use of recordings of my play through of Pokémon Fire Red, as well as direct responses through memes to every questionable notion he makes and shares with his community. I deeply question his methodology and demonisation of everyday objects, figures and especially cultures that fall outside of Western whiteness. *Rituals* includes a secondary element, that of a shrine which was installed in front of the projection of the film. The shrine held objects that Ds. Tiaan would consider evil. All objects came from my home. It is clear



that his ideas are radical when looking into all items considered demonic.



Rituals installation photographed by Rebecca Boulet



'Ouma, Ma, Dogter' 2023, A4 transparent paper, watercolour and ink and archival material
Photography by myself

Ouma, Ma, Dogter (2023)

Ouma, Ma, Dogter is a multimedia piece which consists of a number of watercolour self-portraits based on photographs and applied to tracing paper as well as collaged works of my maternal grandmother's letters written to my mother when she was a child. My mother did not grow up with her as she was given up for adoption. She never responded to my grandmother's letters. In order to protect their vulnerability, the letters were photocopied and other obscuring elements were placed over their writing such as flowers, dried lavender, embroidered daisies as well as runes from my personal spiritual practice. This intervention shows how I relate to their feelings and experiences and acts as a veil of protection.

The lavender speaks to a number of works in the show symbolising calm, tranquillity and a release from anxiety as I, and my paternal grandmother suffer/ed from generalised anxiety disorder. The embroidered flowers speak to femininity and what is considered to be woman's work and relates back to my use of embroidered flowers in my honours practice.

The piece further included a plinth painted garish pink like my childhood home was as well as a box which contained the actual letters discussed. No instructions were left for viewers, leaving them vulnerable to disclosure. However, though audiences did open the box and held the letters in their envelopes, they were not opened and not read.

The letters in the box were pastel pink and yellow, I have mimicked this in the design of this document, relating back to this piece. This piece, speaks in particular to silence and secrecy. As my mother's adoption is a taboo topic within the family. The exact reasons for her adoption have never been made clear, not even to her. This has become a familial trauma that no one quite seems to understand nor bring themselves to access.

Through my practice, I became fascinated with the dominant matriarch that arose in front of my eyes. The woman who ran her household with preen and an iron ladle. The woman who knew both how to change a tire, kill a snake should it be provoking, as well as to cross stitch. And so I found this woman, who was me, who was my mother who was my grandmother. She is the focus of my study of self.

The works on the wall in this piece, the watercolour self-portraits and collaged letters were done on tracing paper to symbolise temporality, the fallible nature of memory and rememory as well as the fragility of emotions and trauma; it makes reference to Gobodo-Madikizela's work on trauma and speaks to the idea that our trauma can inadvertently tear us apart from inside if we do not do the necessary due diligence of working through our trauma with an empathic listener (2007: 1-26). When these works, applied with scotch tape were removed from the gallery walls, some of them did tear and symbolically speaks to the fracturing of self.

Photograph of the day my mother was born, family archives, 1968





‘Ouma, Ma, Dogter’ 2023 installation view

Photography by myself



'Ouma, Ma, Dogter' 2023, A4 transparent paper, watercolour and ink and archival material
Photography by myself

Two weddings, two decades (2023)
Installation piece

Two weddings, two decades is an installation piece made up of two dresses worn by the same person, my mother, at two different weddings. One was worn when she was a flower girl as a child at a family member's wedding. One of the last occasions she would be with her biological mother. The other was worn at her own wedding as the bride. Significantly, my mother as a child at the first wedding as a flower girl was caught on camera and forms a part of another work in the show titled, *Oupa Ouboet se Kamera*. She is shown crying, almost pre-emptively, almost as though she knew she would be losing her mom later on. The dress she wears is a shiny pastel orange again tying into this colour which I have worked with since my Honour's studies. Orange symbolises Afrikaner Nationalism making reference to the Driekleur and or Union Flag or Apartheid flag. Orange is oftentimes associated with Afrikaner Nationalist Propaganda. Please see examples below:



Fig 8 & 9: White supremacist propaganda published by the Vryburgers (The Free Citizens) on their Facebook group

In the installation piece, the white wedding dress my mother would wear when she was twenty one years old stretches out its sleeve, symbolically her arm to the small orange dress which stands in as a metaphor for herself as a young girl. Her older self is thus seeking to make contact with her younger self and to open up a conversation and a space for empathic listening paving the journey towards healing her childhood trauma.

Two weddings, two decades is in conversation with the once off performance piece *Resurrect Me – I'm dying* (2024) performed at the Point of Order as a means of opening my MAFA exhibition. They contrast and complement one another as the former speaks of a wedding while the latter speaks of a funeral procession. My mother's white wedding dress, which would in later years become a symbol of a marriage she grew to resent, stands in a juxtaposed relationship with my black funeral dress worn in *Resurrect Me – I'm dying* (2024). This performance piece took on a deeper significance since the initial submission of this paper as my father passed on, on the 10th June this year. It therefore, has become eerily cathartic as the symbolic death has transcended into a real life loss of a beloved father, friend and companion.



‘Two weddings, two decades’ 2023 installation view close up photographed by Rebecca Boulet



‘Two weddings, two decades’ 2023 installation view photographed by myself

The Feeling Book Interview on Elizabeth's Channel' 2022, filmed performance artwork, 1080 by 1920 pixels

'The Feeling Book Interview on Elizabeth's Channel' is a fictional/performative and therefore temporal podcast and piece in which my alter egos interact with one another in an interview format. Marcia or Elizabeth the arts writer and critic (I am an arts writer and worked as the Editor of the arts publication Bubblegum Club) interviews Joy, still in an act of 'becoming' (used here in reference to Judith Butler's work on gender and sexuality). Butler speaks of becoming as an act of self-determination, and in my view, I see it as a transgression. Here I transgress against the cultural, religious and gendered expectations that have been forced onto Marcia by rebirthing myself as Joy or as possessing (rebellious) joy and I become the embodiment of a kill joy figure (Sara Ahmed).

My alter egos are at war framed within the narrative of an arts interview, this performance relates to identity and notions of the Afrikaans woman and her role as the mother of 'die volk' amongst other ideas. The war between the participants is exceptionally subtle and is only revealed in Joy's clear disinterest and irritation by Marcia's questions and what Joy perceives to be Marcia's sense of superiority.

Marcia or Elizabeth is acted in a matter of fact way. She is clearly trying hard, too hard. Her accent is posh and refined and her reactions are scripted, professional, unemotional and aloof. Joy, still young at this stage (they had just been born) revolts against Marcia's art elitist attitude through indifference, childish displays of judgement and a complete lack of care. Joy is acted differently. She is loud in contrast to Marcia. She wears bold colours and likes standing out. She has a thick Afrikaans accent and she thinks it sounds lekker. This choice was made ironically as, for some reason, the Afrikaans accent on English is considered unattractive, or a point of comedy. This piece is meant to be read as a satire and makes use of the casual selfie-filming technique popularised by TikTok in order to give the authentic feeling of a reel on social media, this method lent itself well to a feeling of familiarity and comfortability. Within the exhibition space the video was projected in the exact same format in the exact same size by blacking out the sides of the projector and placing it close to the wall. This decision forced my viewers to get down, close and very personal with the piece to access it.

This performance piece was created at the early stages of my MAFA project and much has changed for me since this time. I became Joy, I started identifying as non-binary only to, through this project realise that to accept myself I did not have to throw the original blue-print in the trash and attempt to re-write myself in the image of another. I became Joy and I unbecame and I found, I found myself, I found myself in Marcia. Marcia the queer woman. Marcia the strong and fierce and rebellious. I became Mars, the goddess of war and today I fucking love my name, because it is mine. Because it is a gift given to me by my mother who loves me dearly and who had anticipated this wilful nature in me. I came to reflect on myself with compassion and this is where I realised that I ran into Joy as an attempt to run away from Marcia's pain, hurt and trauma. In becoming Marcia, I have begun my journey towards healing my own trauma and by breaking this cycle may I not become a catalyst to the anguish of others, may I find joy in being Mars. In finding Marcia, I move on from Joy and in this act, a sense of temporality is again present which is similarly mimicked in the choice to display this work on a projector, making it less physically tangible.

Script

Elizabeth:

Welcome back to another episode with Elizabeth on Elizabeth's channel. The show that brings you fine arts updates, not just in South Africa and the pop cultural landscape, but in this world at large. Today, we are in conversation with South African artist Joy.

We're so honoured to have you here today, Joy. Thank you so much for joining us. It's really amazing to have you here. We know you're very busy and we appreciate your time. So I'm just gonna jump right into it. Can you give me a brief introduction to who you are?

Joy:

Hi. As you all know, I don't really give many interviews, but Marcia asked. And...

Marcia has interviewed like most of South Africa's big artists. Even international artists, you know, she's interviewed Wolfgang Tillmans, so here I am. Who am I? Joy. My name is Joy. I'm a fine artist. I haven't been around for a very long time. I went through a rebirth recently, you see. So I'm only a few months old. I'm seven months old. I was born in December, 2020… Not the greatest time to be born.

Elizabeth:
What do you do and what is your work about?

Joy:
Yeah (exacerbated). I'm a fine artist doing biomythographic work so I write about myself and you'd think, what could I possibly have to say when I'm only seven months old? But you see, I reflect on my former life and I reflect on the people who made me, my family and how I fit into this world as a non-binary, non-gender conforming person who is a feminist but not a woman. Yeah, so it's all about my experiences. I do paintings, I do drawings, I do photography, I do video work and it's all biomythographic in the same vein as Audrey Lorde who inspires my work greatly.

Elizabeth:
What are you currently working on?

Joy:
What am I currently working on? Currently I am creating a feeling book. My feeling book is the greatest project that I have recently made public. I think, because my feeling book is something that I have been working on since I was born. And I mean that before I became Joy. I mean, my former self as well, has always kept a feeling book because a feeling

book originally is a diary. So it was never really meant to be seen by anyone.

So it's vulnerable, it's honest, because it's supposed to be secret. It's classified much of it, and I think a lot of it is a scripted language as well. Ja, and the thing is, the feeling book is supposed to be in the present. The feeling book is in the present, and it's supposed to catch up with the biomythographical angle of the work. Because it's a holistic timeline where the feeling book is in the present and the biomythographic writing that I'm doing is in the past. And at some point these timelines will converge making for a holistic story which talks about identity crisis, which talks about schizophrenia, which talks about illness as metaphor, Susan Sontag, which talks about… Finding out who you really are and who you are outside of who people want to make you be.

For me, people wanted to make me be a woman, people wanted to make me be an Afrikaans white woman who gets married young, who has a family, who marries a white man. And I have absolutely rejected all of the gender norms as well as cultural norms that have been shoved upon me in my life. Considering myself a disobedient body and a feminist killjoy, as Ama Ata Aidoo has stated.

Elizabeth:
Can you describe your artistic process?

Joy:
My process relies heavily on research, because I see research as methodology. My literature review for my thesis is so long, so long. It's just like a textbook. But I'm nothing without my research because how can I make, if I do not know what is before me? And I learn from stories

as a storyteller myself. And archives, I consider myself an archive cannibal. That's where I fish from. Oh, and popular culture, of course.

Elizabeth:

Where does your influence come from?

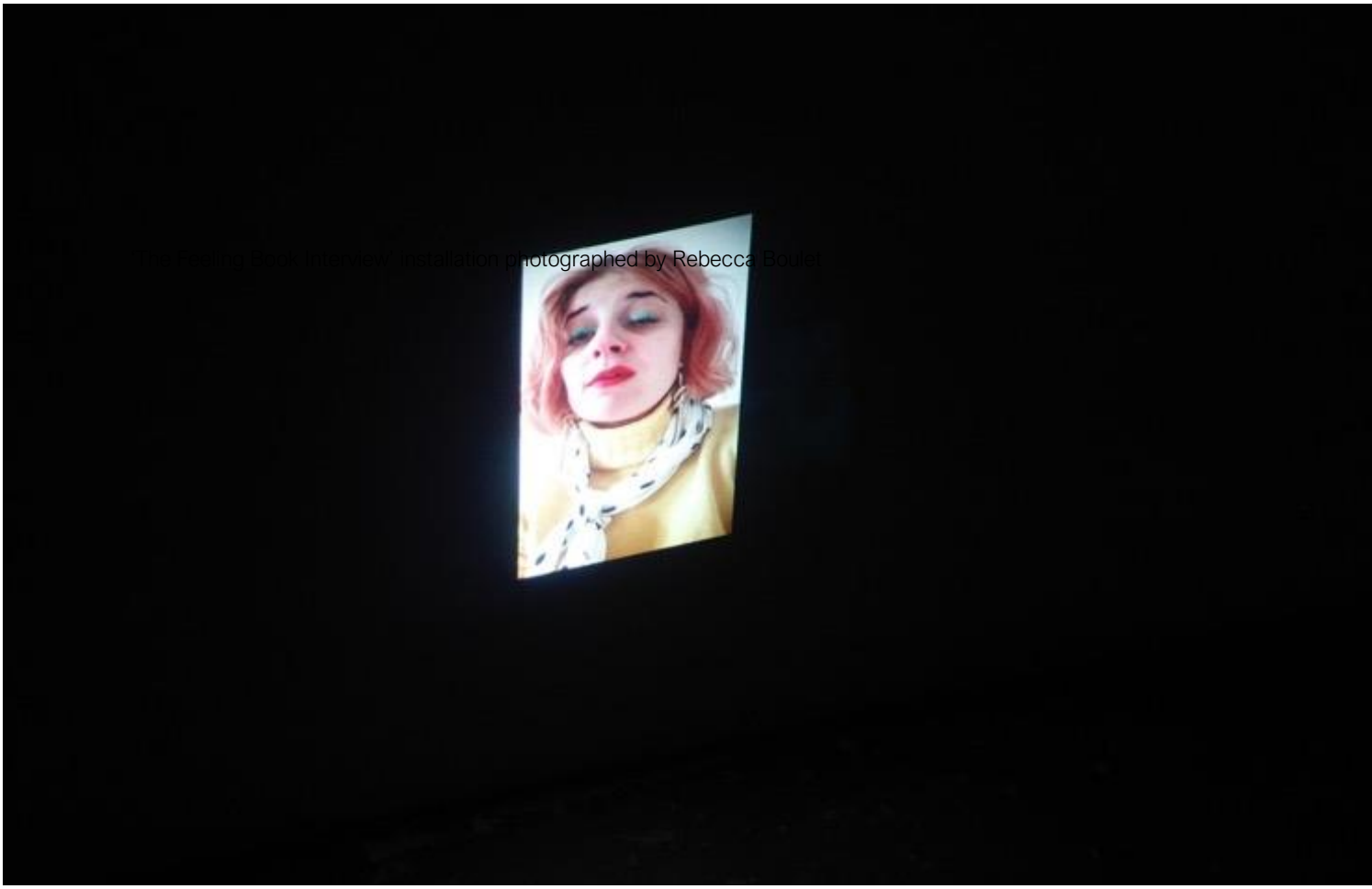
Joy:

And then my big influences, my theorists, Sara Ahmed, Susan Sontag, Audre Lorde, I would be nowhere without Audre Lorde, Golden Dean, Muñoz, these are the people who have helped me, W.E.B. de Bois, Franz Fanon. And in terms of artists, Sophie Calle, Golden Dean. And I'm also like really, really, really moved by people like Helena Uambembe. These are the people that push me.

The video can be accessed on YouTube or on Instagram for a more accurate artist's representation. The interview or conversational element of this piece speaks to the overarching theme of this entire work, to praat (as the chapter titles are named) or to open up a dialogue about issues that are uncomfortable to unpack in open dialogue.

Installation view of 'The Feeling Book Interview on Elizabeth's Channel' photographed by Rebecca Boulet

In *The Feeling Book Interview* (2022) I speak of the influence of Helena Uambembe's work on



'The Feeling Book Interview' installation photographed by Rebecca Boulet

my own albeit this was not teased out. An interdisciplinary artist, her work navigates the difficulty of memory, both the idea of holding on to it as well as activating spatial and generational memory (Allison:2024). My work takes from Uambembe's practice in that I am similarly interested in the preservation of memories both personal and collective and the stories of my ancestors.

Our work speaks to a larger history of war. Mine, the generational trauma I have inherited from my father's involvement in the border war whereas Uambembe focuses her practice on a complicated familial history impacted by the Angolan Civil War. Uambembe grew up in Promfret as her parents fled the country in 1975. Her father then, associated with the 32 Battalion (Allison:2024).

As an interdisciplinary artist Uambembe makes use of photographic work, printmaking and performance as a means of resituating the history of the 32 Battalion. Referring to the infrantry Battalion of the South African Army which founded in 1975. She draws from her personal history in the small town of Promfret where her father was recruited into the 32 Battalion. Promfret, once home to recruits and soldiers of the Battalion has changed to a ghost town, deserted. The 32 Battalion becomes a mouth piece through which Uambembe analyses the past, a means of weaving together notions of identity and home (Moloi: 2018).

In *Those That We Left Behind* (2021) there is a question of who remains. The installation piece brought together aluminium fencing soil and the artist, barefooted sharing stories of border crossing that were collected from other women. The installation became theatrical as she walked in anti-clockwise circular motions signifying the idea of turning back time. Through the performance her work explored notions of belonging and homecoming (Allison:2024). Much like Uambembe's work, my work signifies ideas around belonging, but where we differ is that my work speaks to displacement and a homecoming that does not necessarily take hold.

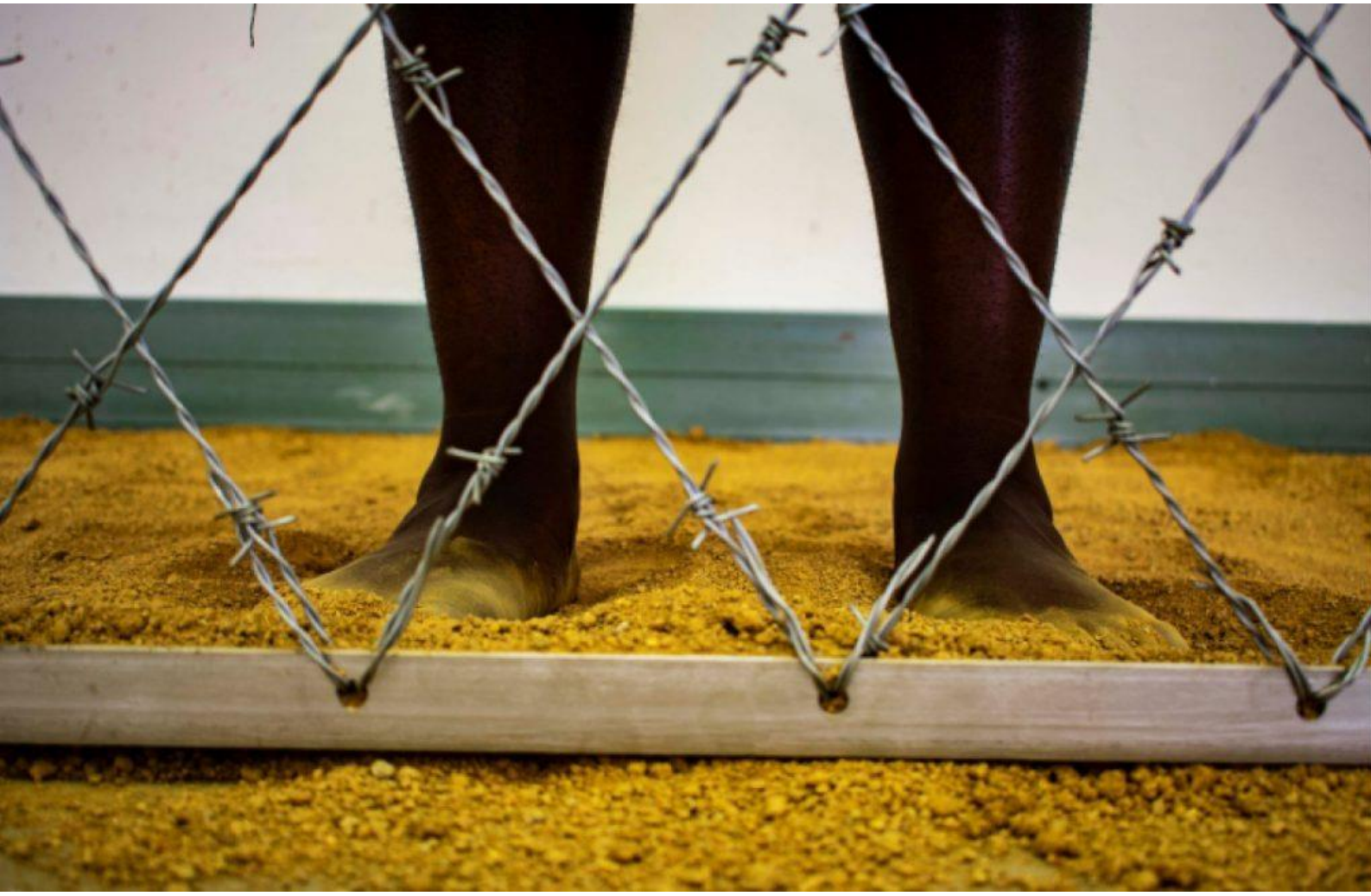


Fig 10: ‘Those That We Left Behind’ (2021) Helena Uambembe

The Feeling Book

(2022 – ongoing)

A5 artist book, fabriano paper, ink, pencil, gauche and watercolour

The Feeling Book Interview is the first piece of a larger body of work and references an artist book named, *The Feeling Book*. It is, a visual and written diary making use of the tradition of beautiful writing in order to work through difficult emotions, its traumatic causes and effects in a poetic written, visual and tactile form. It symbolises a form of therapeutic practice aimed at working through pain. *The Feeling Book* (artist's journal) is an on and off account of experiences, emotions and feelings felt throughout my MAFA studies, vulnerable, honest and raw, it is the words, illustrations and drawings by an artist working through their journey of becoming and taking action through a self-determination to heal through artistic practice and poetic automatic writings.

The Feeling Book, is currently incomplete and will forever remain so as it is a life–long project I am undertaking. It similarly provides a safe space for rants, ravings, fears and anxieties. The



artist's journal makes use of reference images taken from my phone on particular times and at others, are drawn from imagination and or dreams. The act of writing, drawing and then painting was repeated everyday throughout my studies and thus became a part of my everyday rituals practiced in my self-determined act of becoming.

The Feeling Book was placed on the projector cover for the related performance interview video and as the video was installed low and to the ground, this enabled viewers to page through this secret journal whilst watching the performance piece. Witnessing the way in which the audience chose to interact with the book was surprising to me. I had purposefully removed names of relational others as well as gone as far as to temporarily close up sections of the book with paper clips. In other words, audiences could easily have removed the clips. But, they did not do this. Similarly, many of them did not read the daily reflections and or emotional entries upon the realisation that it was my personal journal. This respect for what is kept confidential yet exposed, simply masked by a thin veil (or in this case a paper clip) was a warming account; the respect of my vulnerability and my confidential emotional reflections. *The Feeling Book* journal served and will continue to serve the purpose as a tool utilised on my journey towards selfcare, reflection, working through my trauma as well as act as a space for angry words not meant to be heard publicly. It is my tangible way of being both rebellious joy (as Gabrielle Goliath used to call me) as well as seeking, finding and accepting joy as a part of who I am.

'The Feeling Book', photography by myself


4 July 2021
Today, I brushed my teeth in the shower for the first time ever. I am 28 years old.
This weekend has been hard. This week has been hard. I don't know why I stop writing.
6 July 2021
I feel like I don't know who... I AM anymore... I guess, according to Dr Narcker I never knew, perhaps, never will.. BPD means: no set sense of self. I have no self. No identity to which I cling.. I hate my name. I hate hearing it. I fucking hate it.
I am without.

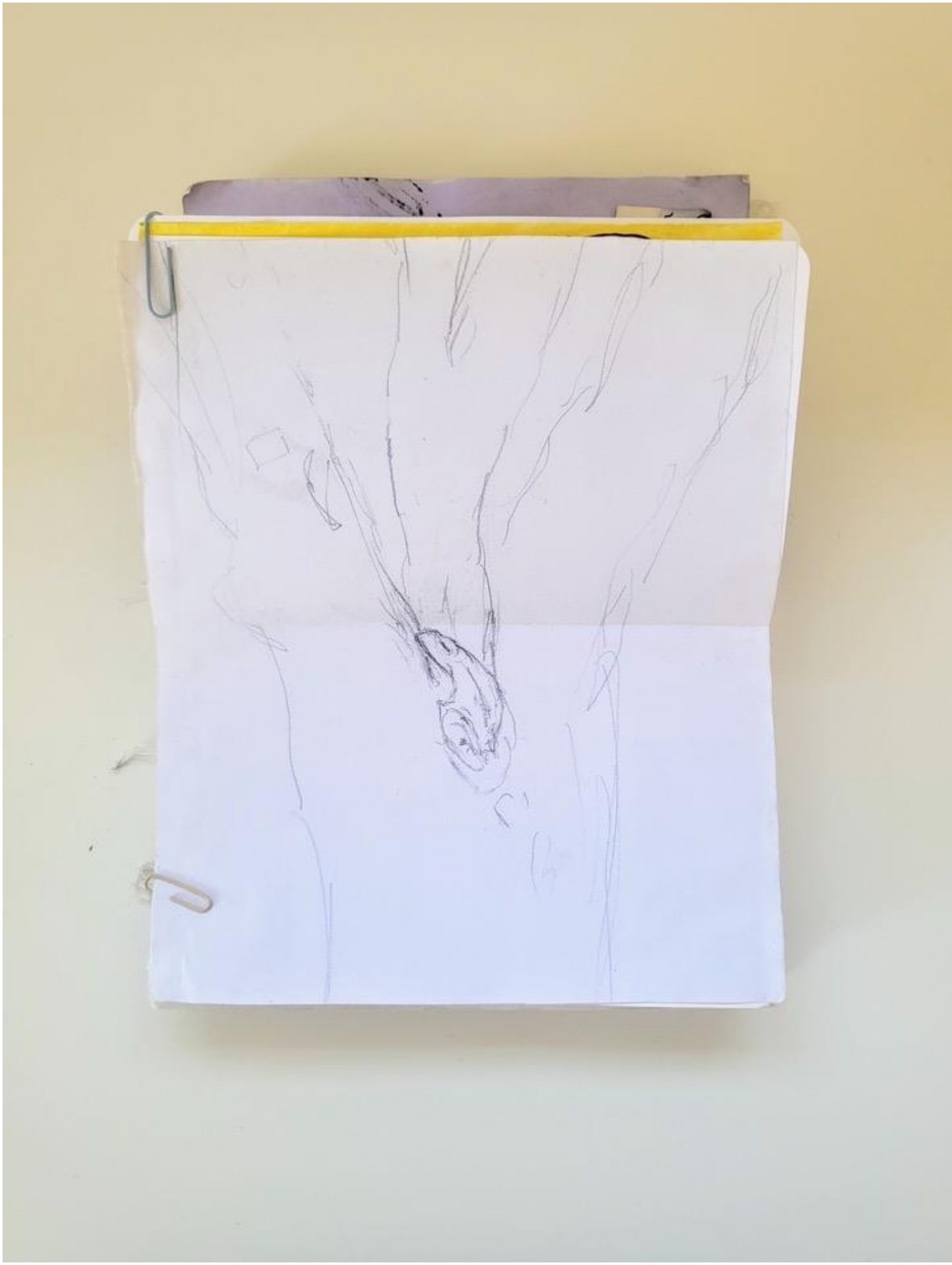


'The Feeling Book', photography by myself

The Feeling Book consists of an A5 notebook covered with cotton printed crème coloured fabric fashioned from an old sack in which my mother had kept *samp*[19], a starch that is rather popular among many South Africans and Afrikaners. The front page of this book is covered with a photograph that speaks to two distinct experiences of two/three different people decades apart. The photograph was taken by my father when he and my mother went on a missionary excursion to the Czech republic when I was a baby. The other experience is etched onto the photograph through rain damage and speaks to a night in my own life. In 2021 I was detained by two police officers in Cape Town during a rainstorm illegally. All of my possessions were damaged, destroyed or lost on this evening. The photograph speaks to Christian conversion as well as to my personal experiences of trauma.

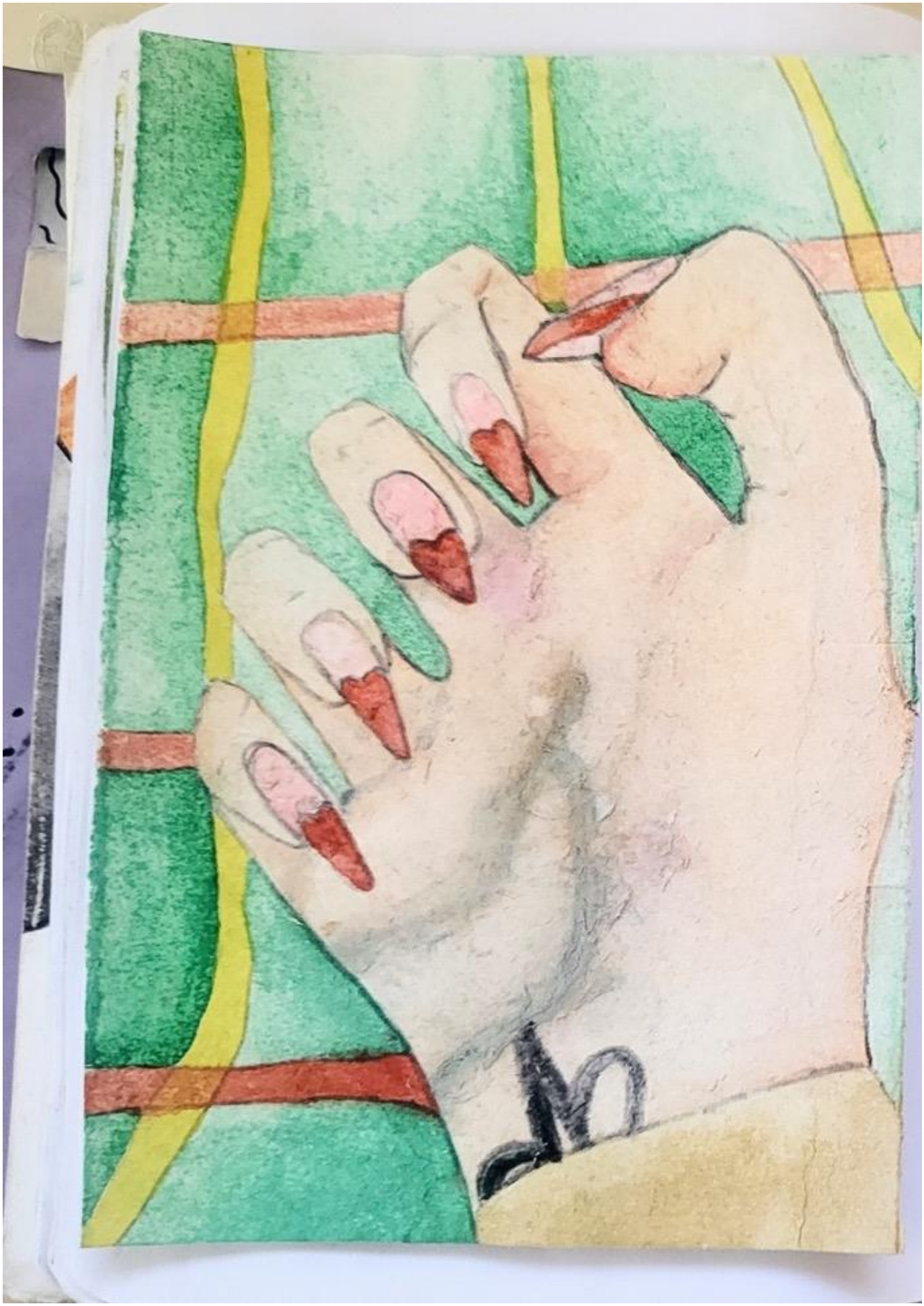
A visual page through of an early iteration of the *Feeling Book* can be viewed here.

[19] Coarsely ground corn.



‘The Feeling Book’, photography by myself

'The Feeling Book', photography by myself



'The Feeling Book', photography by myself

The Distortion of Self 2021 – 2023

A4 cartridge paper, ink, copic markers, pencil, crayon and charcoal

The Distortion of Self is a series of contour drawings or blind drawings I made with my right hand (I am left handed) while looking at myself in a small cosmetic mirror every day for the duration of my MAFA. These drawings consist of only outlines and contained the restriction that I was not to lift my drawing implement at all throughout the making nor to exceed ten minutes per drawing. Forming a part of my every day rituals, there are 1095 of these drawings in total. 100 of them were selected for exhibition purposes. Using cheap paper and exhibiting them using scotch tape ties into the overarching narrative of temporality. Which again presented itself during de-installation as many of the drawings were unintentionally ripped during this process. This for me speaks to trauma and the psychic fracturing it causes within the individual as Madikizela reminds us (2007:25).

These images were exhibited in a symbiotic relationship with self-portraits I had taken throughout this study, images of myself and relational others as well as my pet puppy, Lilith who I see as an extension of the self. I had completed the drawings in the aforementioned way as this method was a metaphor for my own distorted sense of self and the fact that I am unable to see myself in the same way that others do. My contour drawings are grotesque, haphazardly done and the haste with which they were completed is evident. This symbolises my body dysmorphia and in a sense, a fear of meeting myself with compassion and time. The self-portrait photographs placed onto the drawings are an intervention into reality and a reminder of who and what I truly am outside of my own misconceptions. This series works as a grounding force and a measure of beginning to see myself clearly.



‘The Distortion of Self’ 2021 – 2023, photographed by myself



'The Distortion of Self' 2021 – 2023, installation view photographed by myself

Oupa Ouboet se Video Kamera, 16mm archival footage digitised, filmed in 1950 – 1960

Filmed in Bethlehem in the Freestate by my great grandfather Oupa Ouboet as he was affectionally nicknamed by those close to him, this film was extracted from a larger film archive that spans a period of ten years. The film is indicative of the opulence, wealth and general carefree lifestyles available to white South Africans at the time and especially white farmers. This can be seen in the style of dress, men always shown in tailored suits and hats and women in long summer dresses with stiffly fashioned hair. Another obvious pointer to their wealth was that they owned their own film camera, which was not the norm. Other telling factors are their surroundings, always lush, always perfectly green despite the scorching heat of the Freestate and the near impossibility of growing such gardens in the area showing that they could afford help and did not mind using excessive amounts of water to maintain their pristine lawn.



My great grandfather was a successful farmer in this region up to his untimely death in a car collision with a truck when my grandmother was a teenager. Her opinions of him are masked in hero worship and nostalgia from her childhood. Much shines through however, such as when he does appear in the footage he is oftentimes with the children, helping them get onto a slide safely, playing games with them or giving them a ride on his tractor (the most advanced piece of farming technology in the area at the time). His nickname strikes me as appropriate in this sense as it translates to Old Brother. He was a film enthusiast with his skill shining through in elements such as near perfect exposures and camera steadiness which are continuous throughout the archival footage. I have in no way altered this film in order to

prevent my ancestors being fixed in my own view, which is, unfortunately marked with much criticality and scepticism.

Another fascinating detail of this footage is that it is clear that most people at the time were not quite accustomed to the notion of a moving image as when they are filmed, they oftentimes stand in a pose, motionless. A great example of this appears 5 minutes and 49 seconds into the film when a group of children are curated into a militant line, standing still, the young boys on the left wearing kakis as is often the case with white farmers and the young girls on the right in short summer dresses. The division of the children into two marked gendered groups speaks to the way in which gender was constructed within Afrikaner Nationalism, the girls, are shown on the left, markedly less important than the male children.



Still from 'Oupa Ouboet se Video Kamera'

Natural beauty, wildlife, the ocean, vast 'whites only' beaches and swims taken in large dams again speak to the wealth of my ancestors. Footage of a young boy playing with a toy gun reminds me of the psychic violence of this time in South Africa. This is not oftentimes felt throughout the film as most scenes display joviality, play and dress–up sequences. But the film gets darker and the violence becomes overt when the black farm labourers are filmed hard at work, sweating, while the white man in all his privilege passively sits back and films all of their exertion. It becomes even more immensely offensive and threatening during a costumed event in which a young white male is shown in black face. There is a stark contrast between the happiness of the white people and the hard labour of the black people. Images of happy lavish lunches, expensive holidays and play are contrasted by the heavy work of

black people and the immense disrespect that is shown through not assisting them and through “playing black” which is an absolute insensitivity. This footage was shown as a centre piece during the exhibition and forms a part of the show as a means of indicating where I come from, what I must grapple with, own, disown, reject as well as grow from. I must understand those who came before me in my self-determined act of becoming. This footage can be accessed here (please heed that the footage may be triggering to some).





Stills from ‘Oupa Ouboet se Video Kamera’

The Living Archive 2023, Archival photographs and other media

Displayed in a line which bursts out and or open on both sides, this incomplete curated archive features images of various members of my family, from those I know such as my mother, father and grandmothers to my great grandparents' parents. This visual, broken up line is named *The Living Archive* as some members displayed in this curated selection are still alive and or can remember those who have passed, therefore, this archive is incomplete and will continue to grow until such time that either myself or other future members of our family decide not to archive our memories, photographs and stories anymore. The broken line



curation speaks to the insidiousness of an open secret – the adoption of my mother, a fact that she was raised to associate much shame with.

Though my adoptive grandfather is directly related to me, his wife, Maria or Marie, is not. The archive is full of contradictions as Maria's archive clashes with my mother's biological mother's imagery. A similar display is shown in terms of grandfathers. My mother was adopted by her uncle and aunt. I was raised that these people were my grandparents and that my biological grandfather for example was just an *Oom*[20]. My birth names were given to me in tribute of Marie, hers being Maria Elizabeth. As I have never quite gotten on with her, I believe one of the motivations for changing my name came from the fact that I did not want to have hers.

The silence and secrecy around my mother's adoption caused much confusion for me as a young child as I did not understand why I was not permitted to speak of my biological grandparents in front of Maria, who would go into an emotional frenzy should I ever mention my maternal grandmother, Johanna or Hannetjie as we call her. This multi-layered archive is confusing, full of holes and more questions than answers. I display it in this way to keep open the force of this critique and to invite audiences to decipher the images and to reach their own conclusions from what they perceive. The broken style curation similarly references the concept of rememory and the way in which memory changes over time. I cannot truly access the stories of my ancestors, not their thoughts or memories in a completely objective and accurate way, they will always be affected by the subjectivity, forgetting and remembering of those who knew them.

[20] Directly translates to uncle but does not necessarily indicate a family relation. This term is used as a way of showing respect to any man that is at least ten years your senior in Afrikaans culture.



‘The Living Archive’ exhibition display photographed by myself

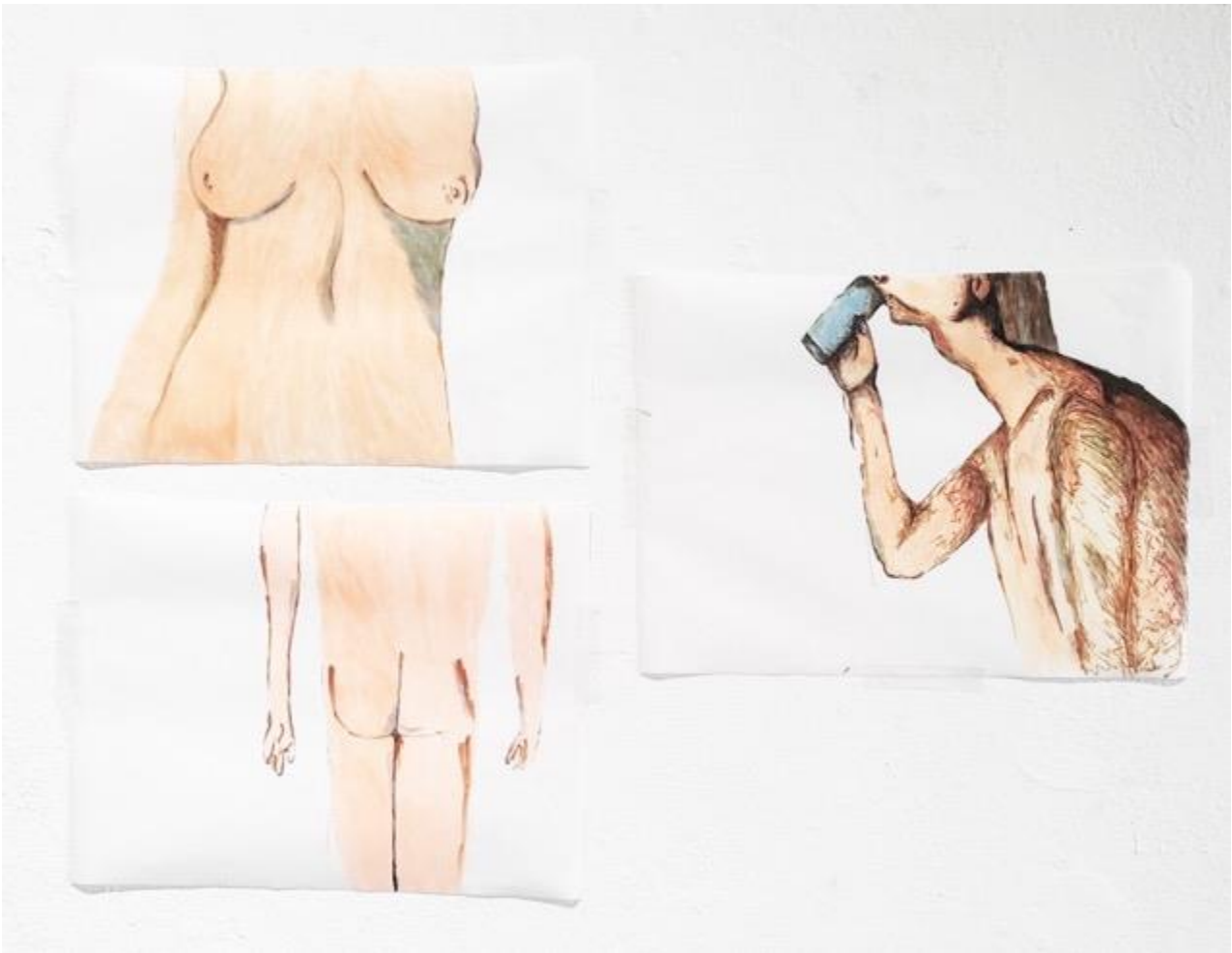
Words better left unsaid 2023, A3 copic paper, copic markers

This series consists of three drawings symbolising different traumas, hurts or pains in my life. Drawn haphazardly with aggressive line work the style evokes the accompanying emotions I associate with each work and or person depicted. The first is a nude study of myself done with the use of a mirror. The image is not accurate to real life and merely a representation of my body, similarly speaking to my disassociation from my physical form and my body dysmorphia. The first image sits in relation with the following two images and speaks to my relationship with the men in my family. The second is a drawing of a man's buttocks. It is the butt of a family member who has done harm to me in my life. I do not reveal who he is or any other identifying characteristics, but I know who he is and what he has done.



'Words better left unsaid' 2023 photographed by myself

The third is a portrait of my late step father with whom I had an immensely strained relationship characterised by much hurt, mistrust and betrayal. In this image he is drinking a glass of water symbolising the need to replenish himself on more than just a physical level but on a spiritual level as well. In another view the water may symbolise purity, a purity which he is consuming from. It may also symbolise a rebirth. The fleshy tones within these works have a very pink undertone referencing the garish pink house of my childhood in Pretoria that was characterised by much emotional, spiritual and physical instability. Through my visual representations of these traumas I begin to work through what hurts and seek to aid in the confidence of the self, the self who grew up with invalidation is now validated. However, a pain remains. I cannot heal from the painful relationship I shared with my stepfather it feels as I was not able to receive the closure I needed to move on healthily before his passing in 2020 as a result of terminal cancer.



'Words better left unsaid' 2023, installation view photographed by myself

Resurrect Me – I'm dying 2023, performance piece

This was a once off performance piece that was done on the opening night of *Seeking joy – Everyday Rituals of Becoming*. This performance was only done once to tie into the theme of temporality and similarly formed a part of a personal ritual of becoming. This performance, which only exists partially in film format as the first quarter of the performance was not captured, links to the fallible nature of remembering as well as to temporality. In other words, you had to be there to have witnessed this performance in its full form. My ritual of becoming here takes the form of performance as I confront generational trauma and work through it using performance and song.

The performance tells the story of my father's trauma which I have inherited. In the performance it is shown on a symbolic level what his trauma has done to me. Another level of the performance relates to the traumatic relationship that I shared with my step father which I mourn throughout the performance as closure cannot be found.



Close–up of the cupcake photographed by Rebecca Boulet, 2023

What was and is my father's trauma that I have inherited? He was born the only male heir to an Afrikaans, nationalist[213] father long believed to be a member of the Afrikaner Broederbond (AB)[224], and a second-generation Irish immigrant mother. My father was his parents' golden boy. At last! Finally! My grandfather Koos had a son. A worthy heir to his name and his legacy as the Financial Manager of Anglo American.[235] My Oupa Koos' employment required him to move around a lot, never leaving his wife and four children behind. They moved from mining town to mining town in the North West and Gauteng's periphery. Never really calling anywhere in particular home. They frequented small towns such as Fochville and nearby Carletonville, where my father would spend most of his childhood. My grandfather, like many "important" white cis gendered men at the time, owned his own farm. On this stretch of land, and in outlying caves that held San Rock Art paintings, my father would disappear from responsibility often playing "camp"– inspired by his membership to the Voortrekkers[246].



[23] A prominent mining company active in South Africa as well as many other parts of the continent and globally.

[24] Die Voortrekkers is an Afrikaans cultural youth movement similar to scouts yet deeply entrenched in Afrikaner doctrine. This movement was born out of Afrikaner nationalism and during apartheid it is speculated that young men were receiving early initiation to their inevitable military careers as a result of their affiliation with this problematic organisation. I was a member of this youth movement till my matric year, receiving one of the highest rewards possible at that level of affiliation. I mention this as it may give validity to some of the claims I make going forward.

I truly believe it to be an early indoctrination machine for nationalistic Afrikaner thought and military training simply as a result of some quick examples: their flag used to be die drie kleur (apartheid state flag) and is now the flag of die republiek van Natalia. A republic founded in 1839, after forcefully taking the territory from the Zulu. They have survival courses modelled after the SAMDF's style of training and if you are successful you are named a "bittereinder".

Die Bittereinders [beter'einders] or the irreconcilables, were a faction of Boer guerrilla fighters resisting the British Imperial forces at the end of the "Second Boer War" or more correctly - the Second South African War (1899 – 1902) as this war was fought by many, not simply Afrikaners, many indigenous people were similarly involved – whether they wanted to be or not.

In a sense this can be regarded as his trauma. The trauma of growing up white, Afrikaans and the child of a Nationalist orientated patriarch during apartheid who placed specific expectations of manhood on him. And then there is his forced participation in the border war. I believe, this is the trauma that I see most evidently in my father who, in my opinion, still suffers greatly on a psychological level from his unwilling participation.

I begin my performance by symbolically lighting a lavender scented candle in a small silver bowl. This act speaks to easing tension and melting away feelings of discomfort. I do this as well as a tribute to my paternal grandmother, Joy who adored lavender and always had not just the colour but the scent on hand. She was my role model and the closest woman to me growing up. I have inherited her generalised anxiety.



In my performance I sat on a chair behind a table and I symbolically ate a cupcake with lavender icing. My father had scared me half to death as a child, telling me never to eat things that he did not check for poison nor to touch the mail as it too, might be poisoned. My father, to this day suffers immense paranoia and or post-traumatic stress and from time to time when I phone him, he becomes anxious over being listened to, saying that he heard a "click" on the line. In the performance I begin to choke and collapse to the floor as I had, stupidly, not had my father check my sweet treat for poison as I had been instructed. I die.

This death is a psychic death and is symbolised by my black long dress and black veil. As I lie on the floor I trace the outline of my body in the same way that bodies are outlined at crime

scenes. And then I rise, I have come back to life yet the trauma of my father makes me deeply anxious, therefore I walk over to a bottle of lavender oil and excessively cover my wrists with the oil in an attempt to calm my nerves. Similarly I try to inhale the lavender scent immitted by the candle before the second act of the performance takes place.

From the candle I walk over to a microphone on the table and begin to sing "Let it Be" by The Beatles, a group my stepfather adored and got me actively listening to as a teenager. The song is often sung at funerals and in this moment the performance is symbolic of his passing and my mourning again symbolised through my black clothing and funeral appropriate veil. But singing "let it be", is similarly a way of letting go, and moving on indicative of my personal journey of working through what is lost, my personal traumas as well as my self–determined act of becoming. Of becoming a self that I am proud of being. I end the performance by blowing out the candle and leaving the gallery referring to growing away from the pain of the generations before me.

On another level, the black clothing of mourning is in stark contrast with the wedding dress installation which overlooks it. This performance was filmed by Reshma Chhiba can be viewed here.



Stills from *Resurrect Me – I'm dying* filmed by Reshma Chhiba

A self-determined act 2021 – 2023, 35mm photographic series displayed on a projector

A photographic body of work containing forty four images, captured on 35mm film, digitised and displayed using a projector. The series takes its influence from Dean Hutton's 'City of Gold' which is self-described as a "growing archive of an obsession with the city of Johannesburg". The images circulated in a loop. They were exhibited in this way to speak to the theme of temporality and access, showing them in their digital form prohibits a form of tangibility however, this curatorial decision aided in giving the images a different life, they were blown up and larger than life becoming near imposing. This body of work chronicles my everyday life, what and who I hold near and dear as well as photographs of experiences as I am living them and or bearing witness to them. It has been photographed since the beginning of this degree in 2021 and speaks to my early motivations for becoming a photographer – to capture the world around me in order to make sense of it and to remember what happened, my memory has never been exceptionally trustworthy as I have purposefully forgotten events that have traumatised me as a survival strategy. In the same vein that twelve year old Marcia picked up a camera in order to understand the world, I turned my lens inward, photographing my relational others, my lived experience and my intimate spaces. This was done as a self–determined strategy towards understanding myself as well as a means of assisting myself in my act of becoming and finding joy.

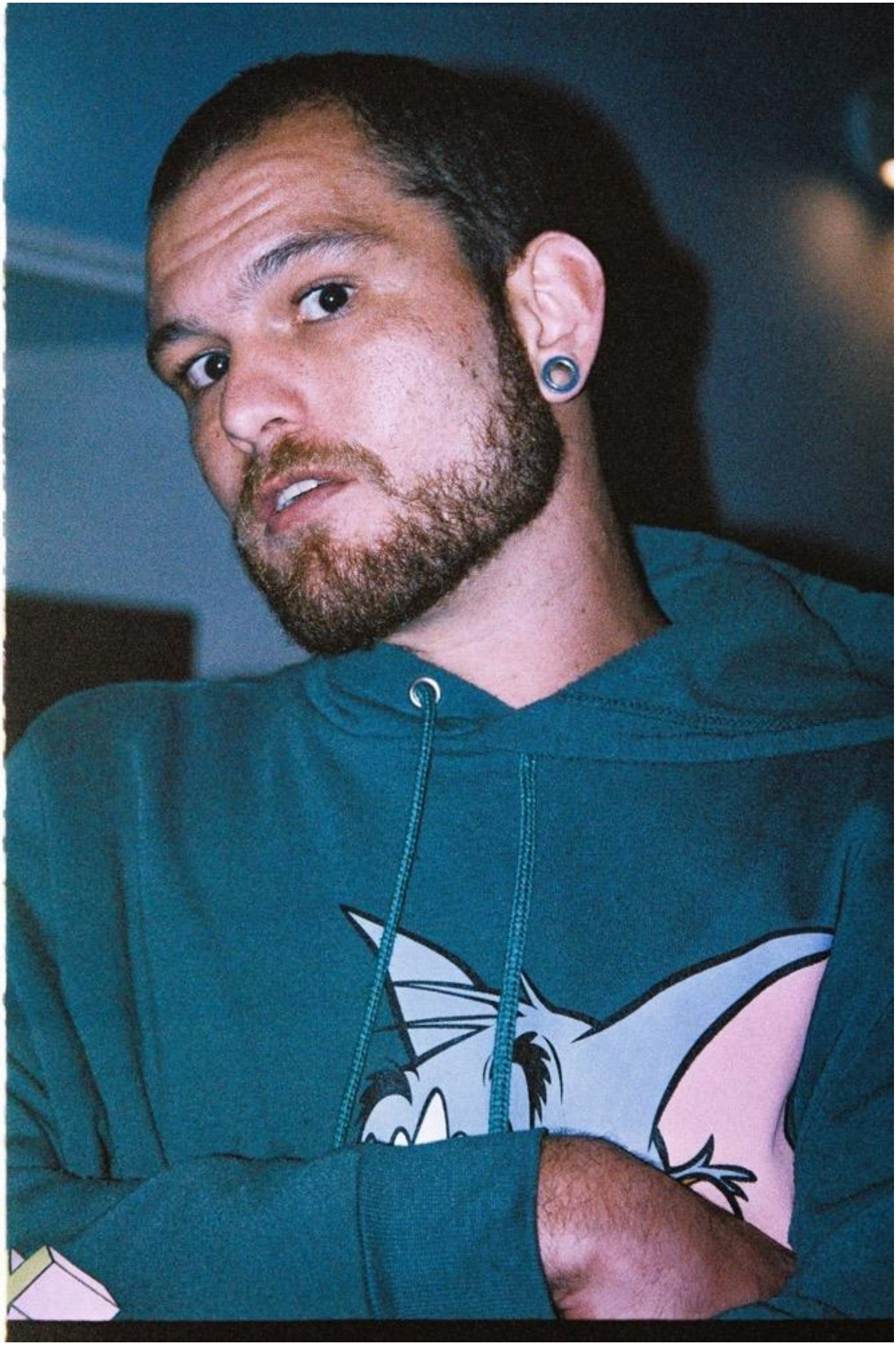

DEAR CUSTOMER,
CAR JAMMING
IS A REALITY
PLEASE MAKE
SURE THAT YOUR
VEHICLE IS LOCKED
BEFORE MOVING
AWAY FROM IT.



















To Johan, the man I love 2023, archival portrait on orange wall with dried lavender installation, three A5 paintings – acrylic and collaged photographic imagery

To Johan, the man I love is an installation piece which stood on the left side of the exhibition space above the steps. It is a portrait that my paternal grandmother had professionally taken for my grandfather Johannes as a gift. Ironically, she had not used his birthname nor his nickname Koos but instead used Johan to refer to him. It is unclear whether this was intentional or a mistake she made as a result of being Irish and having a very rudimentary grasp of Afrikaans.

The framed portrait has been placed on an orange wall that is not consistently covered in paint but instead consists of a number of washes referencing the popularity of this colour orange and the use of washes to indicate refined taste in Pretoria in the early 2000s when I was a young child. The reason for its popularity stems from its association with Italian villas by Afrikaners and many Afrikaans women actively sought out this aesthetic for their homes during this period as a sign of being in touch with modern style sensibilities. One of these women was my mother's adoptive mother Maria, the women I was named after. My grandmothers on both the paternal and maternal side are thus brought into conversation through my memories from childhood. My grandmother Joy, passed away when I was twenty one years old but my mother's adoptive mother, that I was raised to see, regard and name as my grandmother is still alive. In this sense, a memory of a person and a living person are brought into dialogue. Orange is again used to speak to Afrikaner Nationalism and its influence on my immediate family.

In this work in particular its influence can be felt through my knowledge that my grandfather had forced my only English speaking, Irish grandmother to stop speaking her mother tongue and to learn Afrikaans, quickly. She was similarly not permitted to speak English to her children. Her rebellion against this shone through after my grandfather Koos' death when she taught me how to speak English and refused to acknowledge me unless I could articulate my thoughts in polished and grammatically correct English.

An intervention against Afrikaner Nationalism is present through the use of a curated selection of dried lavender which covers the wall and the steps below it. It speaks on two levels, the first relates to grandma Joy's obsessive use and love of lavender which I believe, in all probability related to her anxiety disorder and her attempts at self-remedy. The second is a

personal interpretation. Afrikaner nationalism fills my heart with much negativity, anxiety and shock, I actively attempt to remedy this with the calming qualities of lavender. I attempt to soothe this painful history in a tactile manner.

On the steps were three small A5 landscape paintings. One painting is primed white and has a water damaged photograph stuck to it framed with black scrapbooking corner stickers in order to elevate its status to art. It is difficult to make out what the photograph portrays. This damage refers to psychic damages that cannot necessarily be perceived by the naked eye, the psychic damage of Afrikaner Nationalism, of apartheid, of extremist Afrikaner Calvinistic beliefs. The image is another picture taken during my parents' missionary excursions in the Czech Republic. It is taken from inside a boat, looking out. This for me references the notion of "I'm on the inside, looking out", it is removed, detached, devoid of emotionality. The image was damaged on the night I was unfairly and grossly harassed by police in a city I did not know. The damage of the image and its associated event smothers the work in uncomfortable emotionality and speaks again to secrets and uncomfortable topics of conversation. In this sense, three generations of my family are brought into conversation. The next painting is a water damaged and torn image of my mother which has been framed on the canvas symbolising both a rupture and a rebirth. The third painting is a multi–media piece of collage work and painting. It features a photograph of my mother taken during the missionary excursion which I have intervened in by cutting up the elements, painting onto the photographic paper itself and painting flowers. The flowers are representative of the feminine and the fact that she is very young in this portrayal, she is in the youth of her life or in full bloom. The pink garish background references the ugly pink thatch roof house I had grown up in.

The title of the work, matches the loving message written in my paternal grandmother Joy's handwriting at the back of her black and white portrait, *To Johan, the man I love*. I can only ever access my grandfather through the words of others as well as the few photographs I have found of him, he passed when I was incredibly young and I do not remember him. I was raised by a cohort of matriarchs as the good men in my family passed away when I was a child and the other men, well, they are not worth writing about. This installation was built to honour the strong line of matriarchs I descend from.



To Johan, the man I love 2023, detail shot photographed by myself



To Johan, the man I love 2023, installation view photographed by myself



To Johan, the man I love 2023, close up photographed by myself



Fig 11: 'Ridder Thirst' LP (2016 – 18) with with Stephané E. Conradie, Metode en Tegniek, Athi Mongezeleli Joja, Pierre Fouché, Khanyisile Mbongwa, Rachel Collet, Alida Eloff and Abri de Swardt

My practice is deeply influenced by other Afrikaners working within the same framework as myself. My work relates to Abri de Swardt's concerns relating to decoloniality and the more–than–human as he expresses. He considers this as both critical and reparative, a notion which I worked to convey in my own practice by suggesting a means of working through this difficult and uncomfortable history. The way in which I view my work, as a form of visual narrative and or multi medium collage practice takes its inspiration from de Swardt that considers his

transmedia practice as an expanded form of collage. His collages, similar to mine, are created through photographic representations, film, installation practices (and or sculptures in his case), and the use of costume and performance. In my own practice my collage is in constant dialogue. An example of this is the way in which the installation piece, *Two weddings, two decades* showcasing my mother's white wedding dress, symbolising purity and what is supposed to be the happiest day in a bride's life was placed into a morbid association with the black dress of mourning that I wore in the performance piece, *Resurrect Me, I'm dying*. The black dress in this performance indicated both the angel of death archetype as well as black clothes to be worn at a funeral as I sang "Let it be" for my step father, a symbolic second funeral and my own coming to terms with his death.

Abri's work challenges the ongoing effects of settler colonial whiteness in the same vein that my work rejects, critiques and transgresses the continued effects of Afrikaner nationalism and its associated footing in Afrikaner Calvinistic Christianity and gendered expectations, especially those place on persons gendered as women. It is in this sameness that de Swardt and I challenge and open up the conversation around the very unfinished history of whiteness as articulated by Sara Ahmed.

Similar to de Swardt I make use of auto–ethnography and the fantastical to articulate my practice and writing. The fantastical finding its footing in my performance pieces which employs satire at times and morbid sorrow expressed through song at others. Another connection I make between our work is the implementation of the narrative voice used for its political potential. In my case, I employ my ability as a teller of stories to open up the force of this critique and to begin to work through both individual as well as collective traumas as a method of employing strategies of a reparative coming together.

On the 7th of July 2023 de Swardt sends me an email after a conversation we shared on practice. He leaves me with the following words: "There is a danger that auto-ethnographic work becomes a gauntlet and an echo chamber, that the necessary work of unpacking ourselves does not recognise and engage the interrelations to a broader spectrum of subjectivities and ways of being that exceed the parameters of the self. That by only imagining our effects on others we ventriloquize them, rather than listening to them first…. Reparative work is much more gruelling as it asks you to step outside yourself…. I raise this also as a challenge to how you make your work."

I am deeply moved by his words. Throughout 2023 until the present moment and in all probability, for the rest of my life I will remember these words and the challenge posed by de Swardt. You have deeply inspired me and influenced the way that I think about this reparative work. It has been my distinct intention not to fall into an eco-chamber and to ensure that I do break down the boundaries of self. I have done this through my intention of opening up a conversation, a conversation I would like to encourage all to participate in. This too is a fantasy. Only those with access will be able to participate, it is my deepest desire that we will begin a conversation, and that we will keep talking, and keep talking until everyone can be heard and have access to equal opportunity to do so, lets keep talking even if our voices grow tired. Until whiteness as we know it has come to an end. I put out the desire to step outside myself and to remain this way forever more, thank you Abri, thank you so much for your reparative work and generous time towards my work and understanding.



Fig 12: Installation view INDEX:XY
Visually mapping the archive

In 2019 I would meet a man, an artist and another gay Afrikaner that would affect my perception of my particular identity going forward. Roelof Petrus van Wyk.

As a cultural author, art critic and the Editor of my publication at the time, I had the distinct pleasure of interviewing him on his PhD exhibition in History of Art, *INDEX:XY* displayed at the Origins Centre. His influence on my work, personal convictions and feelings cannot be overestimated. Thank you again for always being kind, exceptionally helpful and supportive, you are an absolute gem and an inspiration. Below is

an extract from that interview taken from Bubblegum Club and published in 2019. The full article can be viewed here.

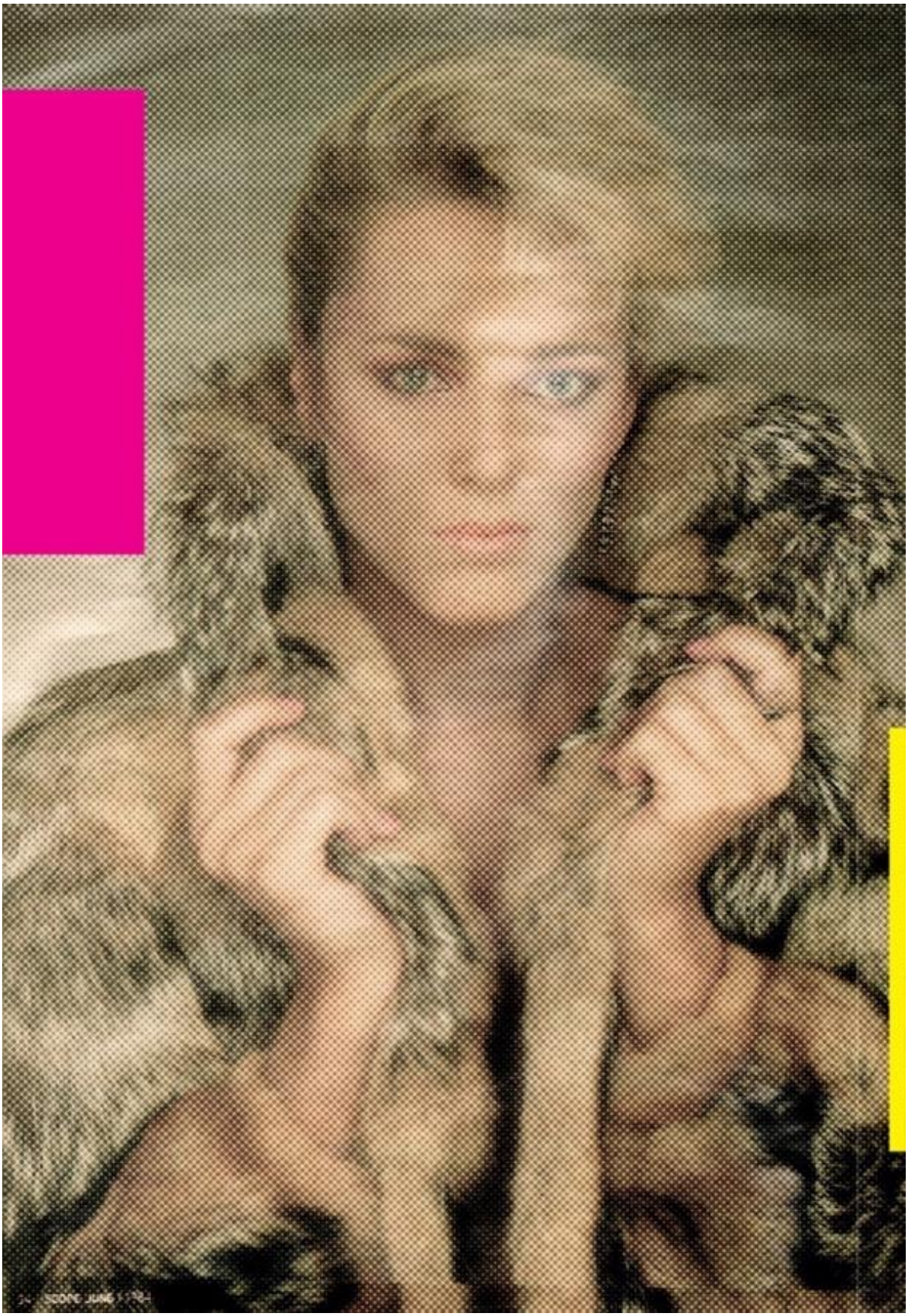


Fig 13: Lauren Shipton print seen at *INDEX:XY* by Roelof Petrus van Wyk, 2019

Queering apartheid | 'I NDEX:XY' by Roelof Petrus van Wyk digs through the archives of Scope magazine

An archive collected and carefully preserved for 10 years. Scope magazine. The tropes of the glamour model. Boobs, it's all about the boobs. The pose drives it. Objectifying 'her' makes you a "man". Printed in high gloss and colour coordinated- red, yellow and shiny. As you enter the first room and take a spatial inventory you see her, Lauren Shipton, a transgender womxn printed on what appears to be a thin cotton sheet. Her image suspended from a photographic studio stand drapes in the shape of a shower curtain. Intimacy steps forward. Queerness in apartheid. BORN A CRIMINAL. Queer in the army. It deepens.

I NDEX:XY breaks the binary in more ways than one. Not your typical exhibition, Roelof Petrus van Wyk uses the display as a mapping exercise extending upon his findings towards the completion of a PhD in History of Art at WITS. Visually his exhibition is a map of archival material that has been coded and does not contain "artworks". Research and archival material are skinned layer for layer and categorized with a colouring/coding system and so the mapping process begins.

What becomes peculiar when investigating each of the 400 copies is that the construct of the white female glamour model on the cover is hardly ever broken, she follows the same aesthetic lines. And then the exceptions come in, Tina Turner, Boy George, Lauren Shipton and finally F.W. Verwoerd. Why is that?

Rooted in phenomenology the pictorial display transfused with textural inserts make use of a milieu that is more than known to the author, he has lived it. Van Wyk's exploration is a visual display of a personal nature and investigates sexuality. Much more than this the visual methodology and coding practice maps how whiteness and all its various constructs work via Scope magazine, border war images and images of where he grew up in black and white, which he explains as a spatial experience. Devoid of humans, his black and white depictions intend to allow the viewer to read themselves into the images, into the small white town of Krinroos, Mpumalanga. But the body of work becomes skewed as the researcher sticks up images taken in other white suburbs and it is then that the realization seeps in that they merge and become one space, one suburb. A space of hegemonic whiteness, heteronormativity and where 'othering' is bred. The most banal images of the show, they are a memory map as well as a spatial remapping. The readers of Scope, they are found within this space/orientation. By doing so, Van Wyk brings space into discussion in his archive.

As a gay man growing up in the heart of apartheid, Van Wyk overperformed hetero'normativity' in order to survive the grueling heterosexual society that was the neutral. Excelling in each way possible such as sports (associated with masculinity) he made his mask full circle by learning the language that the heterosexual male uses to objectify and capitalize from the femme body through Scope magazine. And so Scope protected him, this generic 'her' had become his warrior angel protecting him.

In preparation for this piece Van Wyk took me on an intimate walkabout of the show with fellow PhD scholar Candice Jansen. The below is an altered transcript of our conversation (made shorter). This acts as a textual exploration of the show itself:

My work is phenomenological it means it's my experience: how did I grow up, what was my experience in it and how can you as a white male, fortunately a homo, how can I read it but how can I read it through my sort of alternative homosexuality. What is the constructs that you can create and sort of the models and kind of mappings that gives you another way of looking at apartheid that intersects and overlaps with race, that's really important because, such a dominant way of looking at apartheid is the Immorality Act that prohibited any relationship across what they called the races. And that I think is the key legislators, yes there is the Land Act and a whole lot of other stuff but in terms of the body and in terms of sexuality and gender and then race and how all of those intersect, it sits in that act, it's the key.

The Homosexuality Bill sits inside the Immorality Act it comes from the Dutch-Roman law. There is a genealogical descent of what happens here, racially, sexually. It comes from the Dutch and they brought all that in in various forms until it gets here and it's March '69 in parliament that the Homosexual Bill gets ratified and I was born that month.



Fig 14: From *INDEX:XY*

I NDEX:XY was not about creating, it was about analysis, mapping, categorising, refining and reflecting on an archive. An archive which speaks to van Wyk's particular experiences of being a gay man during the hight of apartheid and therefore the associated shame of, "being born a criminal". The way in which I chose to work with my family archive is deeply influenced by van Wyk's mapping process in *I NDEX:XY*. A mapping process which does not force its viewer into any particular opinion but instead is kind and informative which suggests rather than commands. I had purposefully not transformed my familial archive, but instead, allowed the archive to speak for itself and for my curatorial decisions to reveal the complex and confusing nature of my family narrative and the larger white Afrikaner narrative, mine in particular is shrouded in secrets and shame, *familie skaam*[25] . Again I resonate with van Wyk whom at length speaks to shame, gay shame, self-affirming identities as well as the idea of the shame family in his PhD paper titled*, Shame, a Becoming* (2022).

Even though van Wyk and I have a generational divide, and he is a gay man and I am a gay woman; I believe that we relate on so many similar lived experiences. Though, he has lived traumas I could never grasp, such as having to hide his gayness and having to overcompensate and wear an outward faked masculinity for acceptance. I have had to live for many years in the image of the *Afrikaner vrou, moeder en sister figuur* (women, mother, sister archetype) which comes with its own heavy cross to bear. Not to mention that I was held up as an example to the church going community as a result of being *die dominee se dogter* (daughter of the minister). I was meant to embody virtue and appropriate morals within a conservative and strict micro community. I was never any good at this and deeply resented this supposed responsibility.

I was wilful, outspoken and refused to be pushed into the position of submission to men as is tradition in this community. I spoke, and I refused to stop. I made myself heard. I asked to be treated as all men were within this group, as people and with dignity and respect. However, my feminist liberal leanings quickly made an enemy out of me in the community I grew up in. I was not only a lesbian, but I was a Satanist and I had liberal non–white, non–Afrikaans, non–Christian friends (the last three statements were absolutely true). This made me a threat to their love of tradition, right–wing leanings, chizophrenically accepted racist opinions, general sexism and homophobia all justified through Biblical verse.

[25] Family shame or skaam familie – those we are ashamed of being related to.

In the same way that van Wyk's work is rooted in phenomenology, mine is as well which is, only coincidental as my phenomenological focus has remained tied to whiteness in particular whereas his has spoken to queerness in much more detail and nuance. Van Wyk, similar to myself works from lived experience in particular and his work and writing shows immense personal sensitivity and vulnerability. My work is deeply personal and vulnerable and is done as a ritual and or practice towards overcoming trauma. From my personal analysis I believe that van Wyk, perhaps might be doing the same when considering themes such as queer shame which emerges in his work.

Both van Wyk and I are interested in mapping the way in which whiteness works. I unpick the way in which Afrikaner whiteness manifests, its affects and I transgress that which I cannot accept through interventions with calming lavender, interventions made into evangelical right wing sermons aiming at othering as well as through my performance and my writing practice. Imagery of the border war and lived experiences of fear, alienation and having to live in secret speak through I NDEX:XY. There is a deep trauma here that I relate to my father's unresolved trauma from this senseless war passed on to me as inheritance.

Van Wyk, similar to myself addresses hegemonic whiteness and othering, however, his work is more centred around white male Afrikaner ideals such as being heteronormative and masculine than my work is. I am gay, but queerness is not at the forefront of my study in particular and is much more dominant in his work. My focus is on discrimination, subtle and overt, the insidious nature of whiteness and finding a means of becoming in all of this and transgressing this narrative through a self–determined act as a feminist killjoy and unhappy queer. This transgressive act is meant as a part of my reparative offering towards addressing traumas both individual as well as collective.

Thank you again Roelof.
I will always be Joyous from Joyburg because of you.

Finale Praat

Much like the ugly old pink thatch roof house on Walter Lanham Street that I grew up in has changed, so have I through this exploration of self. I have shaped into Joy in a self–determined act of becoming and in this becoming, I have returned to the parts of myself that should not be discarded. Much like the foundations of my childhood home remain the same, I cannot deny that my past, my upbringing, what I have inherited and rejected as well as my lived experiences have informed the person I am. The foundation is the same and I AM Marcia. I have in a self–determined act become myself unapologetically.

I have used the act of writing about my trauma, familial as well as the trauma of Afrikaner whiteness as a way of addressing and grappling with this pain. The page became my empathetic listener. May my story and process encourage others to speak fearlessly and to address their own pain. I keep this conversation open as I am still becoming and I invite engagement. You may not agree with me, and as time goes by, my own opinion might change. However, this was my act of becoming and encouraging reparative work.



From the series, 'A Self–determined Act'
This porcelain plate was made by my adoptive grandmother in celebration of my birth in 1993 and is labelled with my name, Marcia Elizabeth Greyling after her.

List of Images

Fig 1 (page 23): DE SWARDT, A. (2015) Streams V. Available at: https://www.abrideswardt.com/streams/ (Accessed 27.10.2024).
Fig 2 (page 24): DE SWARDT, A. (2015) Streams III. Available at: https://www.abrideswardt.com/streams/ (Accessed 27.10.2024).
Fig 3 (page 24): DE SWARDT, A. Streams IV. Available at: https://www.abrideswardt.com/streams/ (Accessed 27.10.2024).
Fig 4 (page 55): AHMP (1964) Geskiedenistydlyn. Available at: https://ahmp.co.za/geskiedenis/ (Accessed 20.06.2024).
Fig 5 (page 55): VAN RENSBURG, J. (1966) Educational News Flashes.
Fig 6 (page 56): VAN RENSBURG, J. (2012) Noitje van die Onderveld. University of Pretoria.
Fig 7 (page 58): VAN RENSBURG, J. (2012) Cover images of Die Boerevrou 1919-1931. University of Pretoria.
Fig 8 & 9 (page 70): VRYBURGER BEWEGING. (2024) Facebook group. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/EkBlynBoer/ (Accessed 01.02.2024).
Fig 10 (page 79): UAMBEMBE, H. (2021) Those That We Left Behind. Available at: https://www.moussemagazine.it/magazine/helena-uambembe-mistura-allison-2024/ (Accessed 22.10.2024).
Fig 11 (page 114) DE SWARDT, A. (2016 – 2018) Ridder Thirst LP. Available at: https://www.abrideswardt.com/ridder-thirst/ (Accessed 22.10.2024).
Fig 12 (page 116) VAN WYK. R. (2019) INDEX: XY Installation view. Available at: https://bubblegumclub.co.za/art-and-culture/queering-apartheid-i-ndexxy-by-roelof-petrus-van-wyk-digs-through-the-archives-of-scope-magazine/ (Accessed 22.10.2024).
Fig 13 (page 117) VAN WYK. R. (2019) INDEX: XY Lauren Shipton print. Available at: https://bubblegumclub.co.za/art-and-culture/queering-apartheid-i-ndexxy-by-roelof-petrus-van-wyk-digs-through-the-archives-of-scope-magazine/ (Accessed 22.10.2024).
Fig 14 (page 119) VAN WYK. R. (2019) INDEX: XY Homo Horror. Available at: https://bubblegumclub.co.za/art-and-culture/queering-apartheid-i-ndexxy-by-roelof-petrus-van-wyk-digs-through-the-archives-of-scope-magazine/ (Accessed 22.10.2024).

Bibliography

ABRAHAM, N. & TOROK, M. 1994. The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of psychoanalysis, Vol. 1, 12 – 13.
AHMED, S. 2004. Affective Economies. Social Text, 79 (Volume 22, Number 2) Summer 119, 121, 123.
AHMED, S. 2010. Issue 8.3: Polyphonic Feminisms: Acting in Concert: Feminist Killjoys (And other Willful Subjects 1), Summer 1-11.
AHMED, S. 2010. Happy Objects. The Affect Theory Reader, 29-50.
AHMED, S. 2007. A Phenomenology of Whiteness, Feminist Theory, 149-168.
AHMED, S. 2006. Queer Phenomenology. Orientations, Objects, Others, 1-25; 109-157.
ANGELOU, A. 1986. Life doesn't frighten me. And Still I Rise. 47.
ALLISON, M. (2024) 'Helena Uambembe: What Blooms, Still, Waits' (published online, 30.05) Available at: https://www.moussemagazine.it/magazine/helena-uambembe-mistura-allison-2024/ (Accessed 22.10.2024).
BAL, M. 2002. Travelling Concepts in the Humanities. A Rough Guide. 23-35.
BALIBAR, E.2002. Politics and the Other Scene (Radical Thinkers), 8-9.
BUTLER, J. 2009. Frames of war – when is life grievable, 1-224.
BUTLER, J. 1990. Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, 1-272.
CANE. J. 2019. Civilising Grass: The Art of The Lawn on the South African Highveld, 1-335.
CHIMAMANDA, A. 2014. We Should All Be Feminists, 1-25.
COHEN, J.H. 2004. The Culture of Migration in Southern Mexico, 2.
COETZEE. J.M. White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa, 1-193.
DE SWARDT, A. (2024) ''Streams' Available at: https://www.abrideswardt.com/streams/ (Accessed 27.10.2024).
EDDO-LODGE, R. 2018. Why I'm no longer talking to white people about race, 1-225.
FALKOF. N. 2015. Imagining the end to Whiteness: Satanism and Family Murder in Late apartheid South Africa, 1-234.
FANON. F. 1952. Black Skin, White Masks, 45-181.
FOUCAULT. M. 1988. Technologies of the Self, 27-28.
FRANKENBERG. R. 1997. Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism, 1-368.
GREYLING, A. 2008. Greyling Family, March 21st, 1:1
GOBODO-MADIKIZELA, P. 2007. In Narrating our Healing-Perspectives on working through trauma, 1-26.
HOMI, B. 1983. The Other Question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism, 66-84.
HOOKS. B. 1981. Ain't I a Woman, 1-220.
HOOKS. B. 1990. A Culture of Place, 1-299.
HOOKS. B. 1989. Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black, 1-196.
HUGHEY, M. 2016. The Construction of Whiteness: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Race Formation and the meaning of a white identity. Hegemonic Whiteness: From Structure and Agency to Identity Allegiance, 212-231.
HUTTON, D. 2018. Plan B: A Gathering of Strangers (Or) This is not working, 28-85.
KROG. A. 2003. A change of tongue. 1-633.
KROG. A. 1998. Country of my Skull. 1-286.
LAPADAT, J.C. 2017. Ethics in autoethnography and collaborative autoethnography. Qualitative Inquiry, 23(8), 589-603.
LEVI, P. 1985. If Not Now, When? 9.
LORDE, A. 1984. Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference. Sister Outsider, 114-123.

LORDE, A. 1984. The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House, Sister Outsider. 16-21.
LORDE, A. 1984. Poetry is Not Luxury. Sister Outsider. 36-39.
LORDE, A. 1984. Scratching the Surface; Some Notes on Barriers to Women and Loving. Sister Outsider, 45-52.
LORDE, A. 1984. The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action. Sister Outsider, 40-44.
LORDE, A. 1984. Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power. Sister Outsider, 43-49.
LORDE, A. 1982. Zami: A New Spelling of my Name, 1-391.
MBEMBE. A. 2001. On the postcolony, 24-211, 235-244.
MIDDLETON, S. 2016. The Construction of Whiteness: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Race Formation and the meaning of a white identity, 1-262.
MIGNOLO. W. 2011. The Darker Side of Western Modernity, 1-26.
MIGNOLO. W. & VAZQUES. 2019. Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings. Social Text, 1-18.
MNGOMEZULU. N. 2021. S03ish E06: South Africa Special Feature Pt. 1, American Anthropologist interview by Sara Rendell on 30th September 2021. Podcast.
MNGOMEZULU. N. 2020. Patriarchal violence: A systemic war on our bodies on interview by Fezokuhle Mthonti on 3rd July 2020. The Forge. YouTube.
MOLOI, M. (2018). 'Artist Helena Uambembe Confronts a painful past and compresses time' Available at: https://bubblegumclub.co.za/art-and-culture/artist-helena-uambembe-confronts-a-painful-past-and-compresses-time/ (Accessed 27.10. 2024).
MUNOZ. J. 2009. Cruising Utopia The Then and There of Queer Futurity. 1-280.
MORRISON. T. 1970. The Bluest Eye, 1-224.
MORRISON. T. 2017. The Origin of Others, 1-114.
NUTTALL. S. 2001. Subjectivities of whiteness, African Studies Review, 115-140.
PAINTER. N. 2010. The History of White People, 1-512.
POTTS, A. 2001. Chapter on Sign, 20-34.
SHIFTY RECORDS. 2024. 'Johannes Kerkorrel en die Gereformeerde Blues Band' Available at: https://shifty.co.za/records/johannes-kerkorrel/ (Accessed 27.10.2024).
SMITH, D.W. 2003. Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Mar 6th, 1:1.
SONTAG, S. 1978. Illness as Metaphor, 1-87.
SONTAG, S. 1966. Notes on Camp, 1-55.
STIELAU, A. 2021. From the Bottom of Cohen's Heart: A Review of Magog. Artthrob, October 18th 1:1.
THOMPSON, L. 1985. The Political Mythology of Apartheid, 25-31, 46-68.
TULLIS, J.A. 2014. Self and others. In: S. Holman Jones, T. Adams and C. Ellis (Eds.), The Handbook of autoethnography, 244-259.
WEHELIYE. A. G. 2014. Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human. 1-17, 34-73, 113-138.
VALE, B. 2022. Karoo Sanatorium: A Speculative Fiction Based on Many True Stories, Anthropology and Humanism, Vol. 0 (Issue 0), 1-14.
VAN RENSBURG, J. 2012. Die Boere Vrou 1919-1931 'n Kultuur historiese studie oor die eerste Afrikaanse Vrourtydskrif, University of Pretoria, 74, 136, 239, 241, 811.
VRYBURGER BEWEGING. 2024. Facebook group Available at: https://www.facebook.com/EkBlynBoer/ (Accessed 01.02.2024).
WEKKER. G. 2016. White Innocence - Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race,1-107.
ZYLINSKA, J. 2018. The End of Man: A Feminist Counterapocolypse. 56-61.