

REPOSITIONING THE PROBLEMATIC GENDER FORMATION OF A
GENERATION OF WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN MEN THROUGH
PERFORMANCE ART

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that *Repositioning the problematic gender formation of a generation of white South African men through performance art* is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or any part thereof, for examination by the University of South Africa or any other institution of higher learning.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "APSwanepoel". The letters are cursive and connected, with a prominent 'A' and 'S'.

ANDREW PETER SWANEPOEL

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my mother, Patsy.

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ABSTRACT

An overview of global statistics on violence, country to country and worldwide, indicates that men are the main perpetrators of violence in our societies. Furthermore, the behavioural traits of risk-taking and self-harm are also associated with men. It is my contention that the formative processes involved in gender identity are at the root of these dysfunctions.

In an attempt to present a positive alternative, I focus on a group I name the X-Men: white South African Generation X males. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of performativity and its allowance for agency and resistance, I argue that they are not necessarily trapped by how their gender identities were formed through Apartheid's gendered institutions. These included schools, sport and the military.

I posit that within the institution of art, self-aware artists may present visual representations of resistance and transformation. Acknowledging art as signifying text, the X-Men situate signs differently in an effort to accomplish a social and intersubjective raising-of-awareness. Additionally, this new identity and its associated positive performance have the potential to undermine certain stereotypical perceptions harboured by the broader society as a result of problematic behaviour associated with men.

KEYWORDS

Aesthetics; Apartheid; auto-ethnography; Baby Boomer generation; being; *Dasein*; deconstruction; ethnography; existentialism; feminism; Generation X; ideology; intersubjectivity; intertextuality; *langue*; *lichtung*; masculinities; militarisation; *parole*; performance ethnography; performativity; phallic; phallogocentrism; phenomenology; reflexive; whiteness.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CNE - Christian National Education

ECC – End Conscription Campaign

Gen X - Generation X

G1KI - Gesondheid (health), Klimaatsaanwending (climate application)

KKNK - Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunsfees

NP - National Party

SABC - South African Broadcasting Company

SADF - South African Defence Force

SANDF - South African National Defence Force

SAPF - South African Police Force

SAPS - South African Police Service

SWATF - South West African Territorial Forces

3SAI – Third South African Infantry Battalion

TRC - Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Unisa – University of South Africa

USA – United States of America

USSR - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WiSER - Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research

WHO – World Health Organisation

WWI – World War One

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

An overview of global statistics on violence, country to country and worldwide, indicates that men are the main perpetrators of violence in our societies. Furthermore, also associated with men are the behavioural traits of risk-taking and self-harm. It is my contention that the formative processes involved in gender identity are at the root of these dysfunctions. I propose that these processes result in *toxic masculinities*, and that these are a source of numerous societal ills. The formative processes are evidenced by hegemonic practices of domination, subjugation, marginalisation and discrimination. *Difference* and how it relates to access to power would appear to be the factor around which these practices are constructed, enforced, enacted, imitated, re-enforced and re-enacted. These differences are based on gender, race, ethnicity and class, and even physical and mental prowess, and determine access to power and privilege.

Toxic behaviour such as bullying, misogyny and homophobia are a reflection of the often violent socialisation of boys. As a consequence of this adverse behaviour, negative essentialist perceptions of men are formed and reinforced, in part by cultural expectations of masculinity. Some perceptions hold that men are inherently aggressive, competitive, self-reliant and unemotional. My study aims to contribute to a deconstruction of these notions.

This introductory chapter presents a background to the problems I have identified, and outlines the aims and objectives of my research. It provides a summary of key theories and concepts, underscored by a review of recent scholarship. The chapter explicates the selected methodology and concludes with a brief description of the chapters.

1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

My research study specifically focuses on white South African men born between 1951 and 1981; Generation X and the Baby Boomer generations¹. These men have ended up on the *wrong side* of history. They are forever implicitly linked to the Apartheid regime in South Africa: as her soldiers, her rugby players and supporters, as white men, and as recipients of the dividends of whiteness and patriarchal power. It is to this group that I belong. I name this group *the X-Men*.

I use a study of the focus group to interrogate the often stereotypical perceptions of men and masculinities, and suggest that these perceptions are as a consequence of toxic masculine behaviour and societal/cultural expectations. It is plausible that men are considered problematic due to their violent behaviour. However, not all men display the negative traits associated with masculinity. Many men are themselves victims of toxic masculinities, and many more resist hegemonic practices. This study aims to contribute towards a reversal of gender prejudices predicated on stereotypical perceptions. My study argues that we X-Men are not necessarily stuck in the past, trapped by the manner in which our gender identities were formed. The focus group's problematic gender formation processes are identified and analysed to provide empirical evidence to support my contention.

I suggest that preconceived perceptions of X-Men can be altered through gender performativity and the praxis of performance art. As such, Judith Butler's (1988, 1990, 1993, 2004) theory on gender performativity is critical to this study. She proposes that gender is a role designated by society based on our body-type, a role that we learn to enact. Within this context, I believe that performance art provides a potent critical tool for gender analysis.

My dissertation argues that the artist is able to contribute to the deconstruction of stereotypical perceptions by working through old perceptions and by then situating gender markers differently. I envisage a consciousness-raising as a

¹ These are nicknames given to social generations who experience the same significant events within a period of time and as such are regarded collectively. Baby boomers are the generation following the Second World War, named after the quite literal *baby boom*. Generation X followed the Boomers and are said to be named after the title of the 1965 book on youth culture by British journalists Jane Deverson and Charles Hamblett.

result of this new awareness of masculinities and their construction. In turn, this should initiate a positive, transformative reaction. This project promotes a subjective, journey of catharsis for me and the other X-Men; furthering a heightened, intersubjective social awareness.

The dissertation is not merely a critique of patriarchy and hegemony because it offers a viable alternative. As an artist, I firmly believe in art's ability to provoke social change.

The objectives related to this endeavour are as follows:

- a) An analysis of the problematic formative processes involved in the focus group's gender identity formation. The premise is that enlightenment not only fosters empathy and tolerance but also encourages a willingness to change.
- b) I interrogate and promote critical shifts in thinking as pertains to theories of masculinity, performance and the avant-garde. Acquired knowledge is translated into art making, that, in turn, is translated into performance. The research conclusions are performed through practice-led research rather than being reduced to writing only.
- c) I endeavour to engender new knowledge with its own set of meanings derived from the reciprocity between theory and practice, and between performance ethnography and performance art. Consequently, I enact, embody and realise the conclusions of this research.
- d) I undertake a subjective, cathartic journey, the presentation of which may increase social awareness and empathy.

1.2 BACKGROUND

From their earliest years, boys are frequently subjected to a harsh socialisation process that teaches them to perform a male identity which fears domination, anticipates violence and disparages anything feminine. Since this identity is constantly under threat, it is in perpetual offensive or defensive mode.

Fundamental to the perception of what a *real* man is, is the re-emergent fear, that must be continually mastered, to affirm one's masculinity. As a result, masculinity

is in a constant state of crisis. It appears that the psychological dislocation identified by numerous theorists, including Melissa Steyn (2001) and Robert Morrell (2001), in certain white, male South Africans is typical of such a crisis.

The notion of a worldwide crisis of masculinity has contributed in no small part towards the rise in academic scholarship concerning masculinities and men. Consciousness-raising is fundamental to this study and I contend that the crisis in masculinity may be viewed as evidence of positive change as men transform their gender practices as a result of a growing awareness of those practices. My own encounter with feminist theories led to a personal raising-of-consciousness regarding gender. The recognition of my gender identity as a social construct led to the idea of an auto-ethnographic investigation of my lived experience and personal masculinity. Motivated by personal angst and a sense of dislocation, I wish to better understand my position as a white man in a changed and transforming South Africa.

Despite the fact that white South African masculinities have been displaced from the top rungs of the social and political power hierarchy, we are seemingly unable to escape our problematic, *offender* masculine image. Our skin colour, gender and generation register us as hegemonic, capitalist, racist, patriarchal sexists, albeit masculinities are unique and individually formed. . As concerns the hegemonic masculinity usurped more than twenty years ago, my generation are still generally judged complicit, irrespective of our views or actions. However, I stress that in no way whatsoever, do I claim victimhood for the X-Men or myself. I acknowledge that patriarchy and white privilege remain pervasive in our society. Instead I draw attention to the stereotypical perceptions of men who were socialised to conform to very specific gender roles.

1.3 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND RATIONALE

The horrific statistics concerning violence perpetrated by men against children, women and other men in South Africa highlight the urgent need for change. These figures provide ample justification for this study.

The reality of the harm perpetrated by men on others and themselves, has led to the identification of the research problem: the problematic formative processes

involved in the construction of masculine gender identity. Research indicates a causal link between the formative processes of masculinities and its subsequent performance. These processes often result in toxic masculinities, gender stereotyping and gender prejudice. In South Africa, these maladies are evidenced by a frightening level of violence in society – a society that I belong to.

Increasingly, studies and reports highlight the enormity of gender based violence in South Africa. A joint study by the South African Medical Research Council, the World Health Organization and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine reports that 45.6% of women in Africa have experienced physical and sexual violence (WHO 2013:20). This is largely attributed to gender inequality and dominant masculinity. The statistics on man-on-man violence are even worse. Lisa Vetten and Kopano Ratele's article entitled *Men and violence* (2013), states that while South Africa's female homicide rate was six times the global average in 1999, South African male homicide is approximately seven to eight times higher (Vetten 2013:4-5).

Vetten is an expert on violence against women with more than 20 years' experience and is a research associate at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WiSER). In a radio interview, Vetten attributes the high levels of sexual violence in South Africa to a patriarchal history that both encourages and tolerates violence (Capetalk 567am:2017). She explains that, masculinity that encourages violence in men is largely to blame. According to Vetten (2017):

Men are clearly in need of a great deal of protection from violence – yet current gender ideologies do not admit of this, the role of a defenceless victim being an exclusively female one. Yet there is now an ample body of research in existence pointing a close and complex relationship between men's victimisation and their involvement in violence. The lesson to be drawn from this literature is that men's violence both towards women, as well as each other, cannot be addressed in isolation of their victimisation.

Notably, men are usually stereotyped as perpetrators while women are presented as their victims. This essentialism is a counterproductive double-negative that further entrenches problematic gender constructs. The reality is far more complex: it is possible for men to be victims themselves, and even both victim and perpetrator, as supported by statistical evidence (WHO 2013). Albeit that *not all men* fall into this category, it is evident that men are by far the chief agents of

violence, a problem requiring urgent action. My research aims to contribute towards a resolution, proposing a possible way forward.

This study commences with an investigation of the South African institutions the X-Men were required to be initiated into in order to gain entrance into their society. Since these institutions are identified as the source of problematic masculine behaviour, I posit a methodology that may allow for a holistic transformation of this behaviour.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions addressed by this study concern the problematic formative processes involved in the development of specific gender identities and the harm engendered by these enforced identities: in this case, white South African Generation X men.

The questions related to the problematic formative processes are as follows:

- a) Do white South African Generation X men conform to the rigid and well-defined gender identities that their traditional gender programming promotes; namely, a combination of biological essentialism and social constructionism? Further, are they capable of resisting the socio-cultural constraints or the *gender trap* imposed by these same identities?
- b) Does the reciprocity between the concept of gender performativity (in theory) and real-life art performance (in practice) have the potential to realise an unforeseeable, cathartic gender identity for these men? Can this new identity undermine the stereotypical perceptions harboured by broader society?

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of current scholarship on the subject, including theoretical and methodological contributions, indicates a prevalence of empirical ethnographic studies of men's lives. This finding supports the selection of a phenomenological study from a first-person perspective as a suitable tool for my research questions.

As a point of departure, I study individual life stories to understand the relationship between the individual and society. This situates the identified problem within an historical and theoretical perspective.

As a multi-disciplinary study, the focus concerns masculinities, aesthetic tradition and art practice. The notion of cultural construction provides a valuable link between the theoretical and practical components. I contend that, just as gender is culturally constructed, so is aesthetic experience. Equally there is also a parallel between the two and their shared shift from being ontologically fixed to an understanding of their cultural construction. A further link between theory and practice concerns the concept of gender performativity (in theory) and body art performance (in practice). These contentions will be addressed in greater detail in the following chapter. The review highlights a number of omissions in the body of knowledge pertaining to masculinities.

The theories and findings identified by the review are briefly introduced below since they are discussed in greater depth in the following chapter.

1.5.1 Gender as conceptual category

My research commences with the concept of gender and its related theories. As an essential element of the feminist movement, gender serves as an analytic and conceptual tool to historicise women, primarily identifying persistent power inequalities in relation to men (Scott 2008:1427). Joan Scott's seminal article, *Gender: a useful category of historical analysis* (1986) is a critical text that establishes gender as a unit of study suited to historical research. Gender is not constant, it is specific to a certain time and place. Scott contends that gender is inherently historical, whereby context and location are central to the formation of gender identities. For the purposes of this study, these are limited to Apartheid South Africa during the 1967-1993 era of military conscription.

This notion of gender as historically and geographically contingent is key to my study, since the X-Men's origins are socially specific to time and place. The application of gender theory allows for conceptual thinking, and the interrogation of their masculinity rather than merely a consideration of their sex and the often essentialist attributes designated to it. Masculinities are not equivalent to men:

they concern the position of men within a gender order. Perceptions of the body can be interrogated through gender, facilitating a critical investigation of how meanings associated with these sexed bodies are produced, deployed and changed, according to place and time (Scott 2008:1423). Gender facilitates a consideration of the culturally and socially constructed nature of gender identities, as a social group and within broader society. Far from being perennial, masculinities are historically mutable.

1.5.2 Masculinities: plural, fluid and hierarchal

This study, focusing on masculinities, is significantly influenced by Raewyn Connell's² ethnographic work. I refer to *Masculinities* (1995), *The men and the boys* (2001) and Connell's numerous articles on hegemony and gender sociology.

Citing the rise of the feminist women's movements that affected assumptions about gender, Connell (2000:1) concludes: "what affects the social position of women and girls must also affect the social position of men and boys". This position is substantiated by extensive critical masculinities studies that emerged from the 70s feminist movement and the subsequent formulation, categorisation and study of gender.

The focus of this study is refined by Connell's theory on masculinities; as influenced by feminism and Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemonic class relations in a capitalist society. Gramsci's work is based on two significant elements within power relations, coercion and consensus: like-minded agreement (consensus) and persuasion to achieve agreement (coercion). Hegemonic rule within a society is characterised by a predominance of consensus over coercion, largely achieved through the use of institutions (Cammett 1967:204). Connell and colleagues identify similar power relations within masculinity. Referring to hegemony, she states that "fundamental to the theory is the combination of the plurality of masculinities and the hierarchy of masculinities" (Connell 2005:846).

² Raewyn Connell was born Robert William Connell in 1944, and lived a large part of her life as a man. She is now a transwoman, having completed her gender transition. Some of her research therefore would appear under Robert Connell. I reference Connell exclusively under her preferred gender pronoun.

Hegemonic masculinity is established, reinforced, and agreed upon through the use of *institutions* - a critical contention with regards my research. Numerous and varied masculine identities are stacked according to their access to power and privilege, the accrued benefit to men is referred to as the patriarchal dividend. A detailed discussion of institutions and their role in the establishment of hegemonic masculinity appears in Chapter Two.

In response to the feminist vanguard, Connell's work is indicative of the burgeoning interest in men, masculinities and their supposed state of crisis. Self-conscious, introspective study leads to an awareness of how ideas of masculinity were constructed and even invented. The resultant self-awareness engenders questions by men about the essentialist nature of their *manliness*. This can be understood as an attempt to understand, define and locate it, to affect a positive and healthy transformation, an endeavour replicated in my study of the X-Men.

1.5.3 Performativity and resistance

Crucial to this study is the post-structural/postmodern thinking concerning gender as performance; specifically Judith Butler's theories on performativity. Butler's key works are referenced, including her seminal essay, "Performative acts and gender constitution" (1988) and her books, *Gender trouble* (1990) and *Undoing gender* (2004). As a constitutive act, gender performativity forms the foundation of Butler's work. Gender is a *doing*, a verb rather than a noun with a fixed set of attributes. One of the originators of queer theory, Butler questions early feminist notions of gender, drawing attention to their habitual heteronormative stance and resultant essentialism. Her inquiry into the embodied-performative aspect of gender underscores the potential for resistance to hegemonic practices. I align myself and my focus group with this notion of resistance.

I submit that, within the institution of art, self-aware artists may present visual representations of resistance. Acknowledging art as a signifying text, the X-Men may situate their signs differently in an effort to accomplish societal, intersubjective awareness-raising (Derrida 1998:208). According to Jacques Derrida (1998:205), as soon as a signifier is no longer imitative, the "threat of perversion becomes acute". My study tests the hypothesis that resistance to hegemonic practices leads to transformation.

1.5.4 South African masculinities and whitenesses

I support feminist gender theorist, Lynne Segal (1999:163), who argues that the origins and fundamental problems of masculine crisis stem from the moulding of masculinities. Segal (1999:170) encourages men to accept their own multiple, conflicted identities, and to question and complicate the notion of masculinity itself. One such conflicted identity concerns whiteness, and its criterial definition. As white Generation X South Africans, my contemporaries and I are products of an Apartheid history, a past which is inextricably linked to our race, gender and lived experience (Macleod 2007:5).

As pertains to whiteness and masculinities within the South African context, I consult the work of Melissa Steyn and Robert Morrell. During 2001, they both presented investigations into constructions of whiteness in colonial, Apartheid South Africa. Both were ethnographic studies of specific groups of white South Africans. Morrell's *From boys to gentlemen: settler masculinity in colonial Natal 1880-1920* (2001) focuses largely on gender, whereas Steyn's "*Whiteness just isn't what it used to be*": *white identity in a changing South Africa* (2001) concerns race.

This study traverses from gender to gender-specific (masculinity) to race-specific (whiteness). My focus is further restricted to the location of masculinity and whiteness within a specific time and place. I employ Butler's hypothesis on performativity, designing a protocol to determine its validity.

1.5.5 Institutions of masculinity

Since this dissertation deals with the formative processes of gender identity, it is particularly concerned with institutions. Schools, sport and the military were integral to the formation of white masculinities during the Apartheid era. This approach is substantiated by an analysis of Connell's research. Referring to institutional constructions of masculinity, she states: "understanding institutions is vital for understanding masculinities" (Connell 2008:237). This statement is based on the belief that all institutions comprise layered internal gender regimes that function in the wider context of gender relations within societies. Institutions

have a social purpose and mediate the rules which govern behaviour within a society. An investigation of Apartheid-era institutions enables an understanding of the X-Men, the construction of their identities and their behaviour.

The institution of sport is a prime example. Varda Burstyn uses sport as an analytical tool to investigate the idealisation of manhood and the construction of masculinity. She investigates how sport socialises boys into men through rituals of conquest and aggression (Burstyn 1999:64). Sport tends to reify certain notions of masculinity, specifically hegemonic masculinity, presenting these as the norm. Burstyn (1999:5) argues that “contemporary sport provides a school for ideologies for males” and is where the rehearsal and regeneration of masculinity and masculinism take place. The Apartheid government’s support and promotion of a sport culture both at school-level and in the military facilitated the imposition of patriarchal values on young white males. A correlation between sport and masculinity determined that although “not all boys would be good at rugby ... all would play it” in schools (Morrell 2001:97). This imposition was even more stringently applied through military conscription: all white males would serve. This is indicative of how the Apartheid government consciously used institutions for ideological indoctrination.

1.5.6 Aesthetics and the Post-Avant-Garde

This study is informed by postmodernism, centred by language, its structure and conventions. In its simplest form, it concerns the belief that the mind interprets reality, and reality or human experience is mediated by signs of which language is exemplary. Language enables us to process and describe our experience of the world: it is how thinking is expressed. The foundations of postmodernism originate in structuralism, the importance of which is comprehensively discussed in Chapter Three.

I suggest that the reflexivity associated with postmodern thinking engenders a critical consciousness. It is this consciousness that makes us aware that identity is a *construct*, not a fixed reality. In a similar manner, a self-aware artist is conscious of art as a construct, and its role in society. The avant-garde reflects this awareness of both self, the world and its construction, precisely because it creates art that challenges and disrupts the status quo. I link this observation to

Martin Heidegger's³ theory of *being*, both authentic and inauthentic, in Chapter Three.

I propose that this knowledge of language, and the fusion of art and gender places the performance artist in a powerful position. I believe that unforeseeable gender identities can be constructed or *arted*, a hypothesis that is tested and substantiated in this study.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Intrinsic to my research methodology and structure is the notion of complexity as a counterpoint to reductive essentialism. My research challenges and disrupts the stereotypical social and cultural perceptions of white Generation X men in South Africa through this *complexity*. Albeit informed by feminism, this research concerns men and is written from a masculine perspective. I identify theory that validates this complexity and use it as the foundation for my study. The study's methodological framework contributes not only to the understanding of masculinities but also the visual arts, since reciprocity is established between my theory and art making.

I draw on Martin Heidegger's inquiries into consciousness as the bridge between my theory and my making. In the essay, *Origin of the work of art* (1935-1936), he presents an exercise in phenomenology. In it he considers three different artworks, guiding readers through a subjective (phenomenological) encounter with art. Heidegger is concerned with aesthetics and how we experience art. The essay appears in a collection entitled, *Holzwege* (1950). A recent English translation, *Off the beaten path* (2002), includes a foreword by the editors:

"Wood" is an old name for forest. In the wood there are paths, mostly overgrown, that come to an abrupt stop where the wood is untrodden. They are called *Holzwege*. Each goes its separate way, though within the same forest. It often appears as if one is identical to another. But it only appears so (Heidegger 2002:v).

These paths would often lead to what Heidegger refers to as *lichtungs*, clearings or dead-ends, depending on one's perception. It is in these clearings that

³ I am aware of Heidegger's problem with subjectivity, but despite this, I have found him inspirational in understanding my personal, subjective quest. I specifically focus on his concept regarding the possibility of being.

awareness may occur as things are uncovered or revealed in the illuminated space. The metaphor refers to the illuminated space of language. Perceptions of what things are, or who or what we are, may be transformed in these clearings.

Heidegger's metaphor for questions of existence and being, equally serve the aims of my research: to create an epiphanic moment for both viewer/reader and researcher/artist. Pivotal is the performativity of gender and how the performance artist can not only initiate a societal, intersubjective awareness-raising but simultaneously embark on a personal, cathartic journey through performance. This study presents specific masculinities as an exercise in transparency: to visualise ways in which to address and transform those processes of the socio-cultural and political systems that foster toxic masculinities.

To avoid an overt emphasis on the autobiographical element of my research, I include a discussion of other gender-performative artists and their praxes. Consequently, the ethnographic interrogation of my own practice owes a debt to those of my contemporaries, fellow members of *the tribe*, if you will. I analyse selected works of four artists in an ethnographic case study grounded in artistic practice. The artists are Paul Emmanuel, Willem Boshoff, Peter van Heerden and Peet Pienaar, respectively born in 1969, 1951, 1973 and 1971. I underscore my commonalities with these artists to support my proposed practice.

Aligned with the focus of the study, the methodology allows for a self-reflexive, heuristic process whereby knowledge emerges from experience, a process that enables one to learn for oneself. It facilitates a possibility for transformation on the part of the performance artist and the audience. This relates to Heidegger's metaphor of the path and the clearing, and the rise of authentic language. My methodology concerns how to aesthetically interrogate and integrate complex gender issues, and, in so doing, suggest possible solutions to the previously identified problems. A process of introspective self-analysis concerning the formation of masculine identity forms a substantial part of the practical component.

Appropriate methodological tools are selected through a comprehensive study of current scholarship on masculinities. I deem ethnography, and its tributaries, auto-ethnography and performance ethnography, as eminently suited to this project. I undertake a critical analysis of the processes and theoretical

underpinnings of the selected artists to outline their influence on my work, how practice informs research, and in turn, how research informs practice.

1.7 CREATIVE WORK

From an academic perspective, this study is concerned with knowledge gained through art, and how change can be effected through art. Although this dissertation is not conventionally reliant on empirical evidence, it maintains an academic focus and structure. It transfers an art-based enquiry into a broader social context. The study is mediated by my concerns and praxes and those of the selected artists, as articulated in a creative performance of the research conclusions. In this instance, *creative performance* refers to the performance of moments of learning to an audience not restricted to academia. A performance specifically constructed around this notion is discussed in Chapter Five.

I stress that my focus is not limited to theory and practice, since it includes an activist aspect.

1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The contentions in this paper comprise three main sections:

- The problem: the problematic formation of the gender identity of white South African Generation X men.
- The solution (theory): performativity as a form of resistance.
- The solution (praxis): performance art as a form of activism.

The chapter outline is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction (field, methodology and structure).

Chapter 2: The problem of white Generation X men in South Africa (review of literature).

Chapter 3: Performativity as solution (theoretical leg).

Chapter 4: Performance art as solution (artists' praxes)

Chapter 5: Performance art as solution (practical component)

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This introductory chapter contextualises and describes the study. It commences with an explication of the Apartheid socialisation experienced by white South African boys and the subsequent crises in their masculinities. It explains the personal significance of the topic and elucidates the rationale, while prominent theorists establish currency within a wider context. The chapter concludes with an explanation of how, through practice-led methodologies, I *perform* the conclusions of the study.

The chapter presents the central hypothesis of the dissertation: the possibility that the X-Men artists may realise a new, unforeseeable, cathartic gender identity by means of their praxes. This is made possible when art is acknowledged as a signifying text and which uses differently situated signs to achieve societal, intersubjective raising-of-awareness. As a result, the X-Men artists are able to contribute towards a reversal of gender prejudices predicated on stereotypical perceptions, and initiate positive change and transformation.

CHAPTER 2: **The problem of white South African Generation X men**

In the theoretical component of the dissertation, I introduce the problem the study addresses: the processes involved in the formation of the gender identities of a specific generation of white South African men. I propose *complexity* as counterpoint to the reductive simplicity of essentialism. The problem, situated within a global discourse and informed by recent scholarship, is contextualised according to geography, history, politics, race, culture and gender.

I declare from the outset that I am not an Apartheid apologist. The fact that I am implicated in the regime's policies through my participation in its military conscription programme, shames and troubles me. I do, however, identify with the plight of individuals maligned and suppressed by a totalising, authoritarian hegemonic system. Further, I stress the fact that I am in no way attempting to claim the role of victim for the X-Men but rather I emphasise circumstances.

By elucidating the origins of the X-Men, I aim to foster tolerance and understanding. Additionally, I hope to present these men and myself with a scenario where we may acknowledge our culpability whilst affecting cathartic resolution within our lives.

2.1 PROBLEMATISING MEN

For the purposes of this study, whiteness, masculinity, South African, and Generation X are identifiers, qualifiers and locators. I am a white South African male, and, despite my Afrikaans surname, I am English-speaking. Although I perform various roles within contemporary South African society, two (the academic and the artist) are integral to my identity. When interrogating the invention of the white South African Generation X male, it is necessary to consider the societal origins of the group, including the political and economic environment. The fact that very rigid concepts of manhood were enforced was not arbitrary. However, no matter how entrenched these concepts are, I believe they can and will change, since the evolution of culture is inevitably aligned with social adaptation. The present patriarchal status and the associated patriarchal dividend will inevitably transform over time. South Africa is a perfect example of

social adaptation, since it is adjusting to new conditions: a post-colonial, post-Apartheid era. By problematising men, not only are their practices challenged, but also the formative processes involved in their gender identities. The normative, that is white, heterosexual men, is exposed, interrogated and decentred. I submit that rather than an excuse to claim victimisation this should be viewed as an opportunity for reflexive transformation.

This study utilises gender to ask not only how the body is thought of and experienced by others, but *how it experiences itself*. For the purposes of this study, the body belongs to a specifically identified category, presented as a conceptual category rather than an enduring object (Scott 2008:1426). Masculinities are not equivalent to men: instead they concern the position of men within a specific gender order. These masculinities are temporal because they change over time. The study demonstrates the fluidity of gender and how it might resist social restrictions. Gender refers to the socio-cultural processes that determine the construction of identity at specific times and locations, within specific ethnicities. Its origins can be traced to the feminist movement's interrogation of the male/female relationship within certain historical and geographical contexts (Scott 1986:1066). Feminist theorists use these findings to emphasise the hierarchical gender social order and its associated power inequalities. By Scott's (1986:1069) definition, gender is aligned with the signification of power in relationships. This proposition establishes gender within a system of relationships that include sex, class and race, whereby gender identifies the powerful within these relationships. As such, the interlinked elements of gender construct the perceived differences between the sexes in any context (Segal 1999:42). This research emphasises the contextual importance of geography, politics and history to the study of gender.

Theories concerning masculinity and its privileged position within the gender system evolved from the work of Scott and other feminist theorists. A feminist case was made by playing it against maleness and emphasising the subjugation of women within society by men. This had the adverse effect of further essentialising the masculine and attributing essential or inherent characteristics to all men. In a seminal text in men's studies, Tim Carrigan, Bob (Raewyn) Connell and John Lee's *Toward a new sociology of masculinity* (1985), state: "For a powerful current in feminism, focusing on sexual exploitation and violence,

sees masculinity as more or less unrelieved villainy and all men as agents of patriarchy in more or less the same degree” (1985:552). This type of thinking can result in the stereotyping, or lampooning, of men. Masculinity and men’s studies emerged as a consequence, simulating the rise of feminine consciousness and its interrogation of, and resistance to, socially prescribed roles.

A number of pivotal concerns are identified through the literature review. Key to this study are hegemony; the problem of masculinities and men; institutions; performance, performativity and performance ethnography; and activism and the re-invention of the avant-garde. In addition, I identify some omissions in current scholarship, particularly the dearth of studies concerning white masculinities in postcolonial regions. There is a distinct lack of reflexive interrogations of methodologies in studies concerning masculinities, and similarly, in approaches from a masculinist point-of-view rather than a feminist one.

Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985:551) identify three problem areas in literature on masculinity: empirical discoveries, political assumptions /implications and a theoretical framework. The authors contend that, although the studies concern men, they do not focus on masculinity and its relationship with power or the psychological effects on men (1985: 551-552). Researchers that do focus on the issue of socio-cultural power tend to hold to feminist insights about men, and their propensity for violence and sexual exploitation.

As concerns studies of men and masculinities, Barbara Pini and Bob Pease (2013) similarly identify a lack of any authentic interrogation of associated epistemologies and methodologies. This weakness is glaringly evident when these studies are compared with feminist scholarship and its methodologies concerning the study of women. Associated with this problem is a lack of attention to methodological issues in undertaking feminist-informed empirical research of men. This study, as a result of this awareness, questions the appropriateness of using feminist methodologies when studying men. In stating this I most certainly do not negate the importance of feminist ideals nor the necessity for the transformation of our societies and the destruction of its hegemonic, patriarchal structures. In that this dissertation remains pro-feminist, however it does call for men to raise awareness of masculinities in order to initiate change within men, for men and by men.

Although it is not the central aim of this study to resolve the above-mentioned conflicts, it acknowledges these tensions and the diversity of practices. By doing this and implementing a considered structure and methodology this study aims to avoid the noted problematic weaknesses.

2.2 THE PROBLEM WITH MASCULINITIES AND MEN

Kenneth Clatterbaugh (1998:41) asks, “Why use the terms masculinity and masculinities if talking about men seems to be what we want to do?” He theorises that talking about masculinities simply imposes a very confusing layer between ourselves and the social reality we wish to discuss (Clatterbaugh 1998:41). This social reality, one of the key areas of contention, is the violence associated with men. Based on his ethnographic research on the topic, Jeff Hearn (2012) concludes that we should be examining the hegemony of men rather than the hegemony of masculinity. He makes the point that hegemony, like patriarchy, is implicitly linked to men. Connell, following Scott’s feminist proposition on gender, instead advocates the study of historically specific masculinities rather than studying men as a homogenous group (Wedgwood 2009:332). Connell proposes the concept of hegemony as a starting point, since the subjugation of women is not the inevitable practice of all men (Wedgwood 2009:332).

In response to calls for the abolishment of the use of the term *masculinities*, I justify my choice of *masculinities* as an analytical tool. If men are discussed and studied as a specific category, it presupposes the existence of a number of critical factors and essentialist attributes. Presupposition, the belief in the veracity of an unproven fact, is the antithesis of academic research. The use of gender, and in this case, masculinities, as an analytical unit refutes the essentialist presupposition conferred on men and women, the biological *truths* associated with their bodies. From the perspective of inter-relations between men and women, and between men and men, gender neutralises physical differences and predetermined assumptions. Connell puts it succinctly:

To speak of masculinities is to speak about gender relations. Masculinities are not equivalent to men; they concern the position of men in a gender order. They can be defined as the patterns of practice by which people (both men and women, though

predominantly men) engage that position
(http://www.raewynconnell.net/p/masculinities_20.html).

Gender favours a poststructuralist view of identities. Poststructuralism challenges the notion of fixed categories, deconstructing the very structures that impose these categories. This perspective moderates the physical differences between the sexes, eschewing their role in identity construction over a focus on societal construction. The notion of fixity/normativity associated with the term *men* is precisely what this study challenges and disrupts. Men cannot change the fact that they are men; it is a biological marker. They can, however, change their behaviour, and to an extent, their masculinity and the performance thereof. According to John MacInnes (1998:46) in *The end of masculinity*: “if masculinity, rather than maleness, explained men’s privilege, men could be challenged to reform or abolish their masculinity in the name of equal rights, in a way that they could not be asked to change or abolish their sex”.

Since the concept of masculinity, via gender, is historically rooted in the feminist movement, I disagree with MacInnes’s assertion that masculinity is a concept created by men in an attempt to retain and preserve patriarchy (1998:59).

According to Michael Messner in *Politics of masculinities: men in movements* (2000), it is critically important to raise awareness of gender and the construction of masculinities. I agree with his contention that this raising-of-awareness will positively impact consciousness, in a similar way to preceding feminist, gay and black liberation movements. I believe that transformation is instigated through awareness and understanding. In this regard, masculinity (as a conceptual tool) is vitally important.

The abovementioned text substantiates my use of *masculinity* to study a specific group of men in relation to problematic formative processes of gender identity. Key to theorising about men and masculinities is the notion of hegemony and therefore warrants investigation (Hearn 2012:3).

2.3 HEGEMONY – COERCION AND CONSENT

Connell (1995:68) submits that masculinity does not exist except in contrast with femininity. This contrast (difference) forms the basis of most gender power

relations (Connell 1995:74-75). The main gender power relationship concerns masculinity over femininity, the dominance of men over women. As a consequence, the majority of men benefit from the *patriarchal dividend*⁴ gained from the overall subordination of women, even though all men do not meet the normative standards of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995:79).

Researchers, Connell included, draw attention to the power relations that exist within masculinity. Using Gramsci's theory concerning the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life, she proposes that:

Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell 1995:77).

Hegemonic masculinity refers to the socially dominant construction of masculinity in a hierarchal gender order, an ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions and persuasion (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005:832). By convincing society of the legitimacy and logic of their ascendancy, men maintain dominance through consent and support. This male domination is achieved through the control of institutions. In the South African context, due to the lack of majority support and consent, the Apartheid regime resorted to coercive measures to maintain power. The apparatuses of control consisted of the State's judiciary system, and its military and police forces. A critical coercive tool was the national conscription system which provided the ruling government with a controlling force, enabling it to institutionalise and disseminate its ideologies. This impacted on the formation of the X-Men's gender identities.

Hegemonic masculinity in Apartheid South Africa was determined by Afrikaner ideology as a white, heterosexual Afrikaans-speaking male who played rugby, had defended his country in the South African Defence Force (SADF) or South African Police Force (SAPF)⁵, and had preferably been raised on a farm. This brand of masculinity was culturally exalted above all others. Due to the

⁴ Attributed to Raewyn Connell (2009:149), the term refers to the advantages, benefits, and other such positives given to men in society such as authority, access to institutional power and higher salaries. This advantage to men as a group is gained from an unequal gender order.

⁵ With the advent of democracy in South Africa the names of these armed institutions were changed to the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and the South African Police Service (SAPS).

demographic realities of South Africa, this hegemonic masculinity sought consent and support from white South African English-speaking men and women to coerce the rest of society. The established gender practice attempted to legitimise the dominant position of the white Afrikaans man and the various positions of other genders, races and classes within a hierarchal order. This policy was supported by South African institutions and enforced by the very real threat of violence in the face of resistance or objection.

The Apartheid hegemonic project verifies that masculinities are historical and mobile, specific and temporal. The South African context evidences how the dominance of one group of men (white) has been challenged and successfully replaced by a new hegemony (black). As with the previous order, the new order's successful claim to authority is legitimised and underpinned by institutional power. Connell (1995:81) states that our ability to recognise gender as a product and producer of history, means that we are also able to recognise it as a *social pattern with agency*.

The Apartheid hegemonic project raises the issue of complicity and the benefit South African white men enjoyed as a result of its ascendancy. Although all Generation X men may not have practised or subscribed to the Apartheid-era hegemony, all benefitted from it. This fact problematises whiteness, men, and therefore all those things that were once considered universal and natural.

2.4 THE PROBLEM OF THE WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN MALE

Context is crucial to the study of gender and to the conclusions of this research. Reflecting on what it is to be white in South Africa, Samantha Vice (2010) asks how one lives in this strange place? Vice contends that South Africa is a place where the (white) self is saturated by its histories of oppression and privilege. She intimates that the problem of being white is exacerbated because the whiteness here is specifically South African (Vice 2010:323). I believe that the South African context provides an opportunity for an unique case study predicated on whiteness and gender. More than twenty years after the fall of Apartheid and the advent of a democratic South Africa, we are witness to a postcolonial whiteness struggling to come into being (Lopez 2005:6). Within this postcolonial whiteness is a displaced and disgraced fallen hegemonic

masculinity. In the process of transformation, these disgraced white South African masculinities are often deemed problematic. This study aims to expose the complexities of the quandary faced by the X-Men.

The first complexity concerns whiteness itself, since it alludes to both racial identity and racial privilege, biology and ideology. Historically constructed as the dominant cultural norm, this whiteness claims a hegemonic position against all that is perceived as non-white or *what whiteness is not*. Much like masculinity, whiteness defines itself by distinguishing itself from what it is not. This whiteness is constructed via social meanings that are ascribed to certain bodies and their biological characteristics. When linked with European Imperialism (and currently American Globalism) the power of whiteness as a social construct is evident; politically, economically and culturally. Global norms were once set by the dominant white culture. However, in recent times white supremacy has been challenged and decentred through postmodern and postcolonial discourses. This mirrors the challenge to masculinity and patriarchy by feminist movements.

Located in a South African context, this study determines that, like masculinities, there are multiple whitenesses. These are fluid, and context-specific in time and place. It is as important to acknowledge the many whitenesses subsumed beneath the structure and ideology of whiteness as it parallels the numerous masculinities within masculinity. Mirroring the argument made for gender, white men can reject the manner in which their whiteness has been constructed in an attempt to reform or transform their identities. However, just as they are unable to reject their sex, they are also unable to reject the fact that they are white.

A new awareness has men grappling with what it means to be a man, and specifically, what it means to be a white man. This position is symptomatic of a global crisis concerning masculinity. Noteworthy in a local context, this state of crisis is attributed to the transitional democracy and affects all South African men. The new Constitution of 1997 legislated in support of liberal sexuality and gender equality. As a consequence, all South African men are unsettled and unsure of their place in the new order (Morrell 2001:21). I regard this crisis optimistically as it indicates that the traditional forms of patriarchy and masculinity, as well as whiteness, are under threat. These traditional forms are under pressure to transform or *unbecome*.

Noting that the locus of this study is confined to the set parameters of white South African masculinities and the hegemonies particular to those masculinities, I introduce the two major groups of South African whitenesses; the Afrikaner and the English. I concur with Melissa Steyn's (2004:114) contention that it is imperative to differentiate between these two groups. These are proof of multiple whitenesses, and how they became through their construction during Apartheid, and how they are being reconstructed in post-Apartheid South Africa (Steyn 2004:114). Steyn (2001:27) posits that this whiteness has been reluctantly shared by two major groups of Europeans, "each of which has always considered the other group an unworthy custodian of the entitlement". The difference between these two groups is indicative of the inaccuracy of an essentialist view of whiteness. Whiteness, like masculinity, is contested and fluid, as evidenced by English and Afrikaans speakers who did not wish to be white in the same way (Steyn 2001:26).

Steyn's book, *Whiteness just isn't what it used to be: white identity in a changing South Africa* (2001) is indicative of a growing field: whiteness studies. She researches white South African identities and how these are changing from their colonial origins to a post-Apartheid scenario. Eschewing efforts to recentre whiteness, her book evidences the social constructs and ideological structures of the white identity. Morrell, on the other hand, focuses on a specific masculinity within an historical context to research the construction of masculinities. Both researchers use ethnographic techniques to extract past histories. One might question the relevance of this historical perspective for a study that is focused on the present. I argue that it is necessary to understand the past and the present in order to influence our future. *Awareness* is critical to this study as we gain agency by achieving it. Each one of us is a living history, formed by our immediate and distant pasts: not only are we made of history but we are also makers of history. The bulk of white South African history concerns the colonisation of Africa and the Apartheid State. These two events are inextricably linked to the ideology of whiteness and its concepts of hierarchal, patriarchal, binary differences and white supremacy: white/other and masculine/feminine. Awareness teaches us who we were, who we are and are not, and who we can be.

The current South African scenario affords a particularly relevant and unique opportunity to study a whiteness that is neither invisible nor in ascendancy. It is my belief that a critical factor in the formation of the white South African identity is the influence of its existence as a demographic minority. Morrell (2001:5) cites Dane Kennedy, who wrote of “small islands of white in a huge black ocean”, referring to the demographically outnumbered settler identity and its behaviour. White South Africans are acutely aware of their whiteness and its performance. Although the other former colonies, New Zealand and Australia have similar European origins, they cannot be considered postcolonial or white in the same way. South Africa’s historical experience and the manner in which its fictions of *race* were created and disseminated are geographically and demographically specific (Garner 2007:1). In the *white nations* of America, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, whiteness identifies one as the unmarked norm. Steyn (2001:xvii) calls this a “normative invisibility”. These countries are centres of whiteness, from which South African whiteness gained, and to an extent still gains legitimisation. Whiteness has commanded a global hegemonic position, culturally and ideologically, for the past 500 years. As Steyn (2001:xvii) notes, this reflects the centrality of Western ideological constructs in the modern world as we experience it, and importantly, the way white people think of themselves. These norms are now being questioned and decentred by contemporary discourses.

Morrell references the above in his study of settler masculinity albeit through the additional lens of gender. His book, *From boys to gentlemen: settler masculinity in colonial Natal, 1880-1920* (2001) affords an explanation of white South African gender identity and masculinities through an ethnographic study of a particular group. From an historical perspective, Morrell outlines an excellent exemplar of gender as a conceptual tool. A certain historical period and location are precisely defined. He applies the concept of settler masculinity to capture the colonial, character class of a particular white masculinity in turn-of-the-century Natal (Morrell 2001:13). He argues that the procedure whereby one masculinity usurps and subjugates others must be viewed as an historical process (Morrell 2001:12). Morrell notes that, as a masculinity becomes hegemonic, it is expressed and maintained by its own institutions. After the creation and perpetuation of this dominant masculinity, its ethos is disseminated and preserved by these same institutions. This notion underscores my research concerning the gendered

aspects of organisations and institutions, and how they relate to the problematic formation of white South African masculinities.

The preceding discussion outlines the complexity of the *problem* of white South African masculinity, and the origins of the X-Men. After the initial jostling between English and Afrikaans masculinities for dominance, very little changed once the settler masculinity was established. This is indicative of the success of those gendered institutions and the power vested in them. This masculinity was further entrenched after the National Party's rise to power in 1948 and its implementation of Apartheid policies, enduring until the commencement of the dismantlement of those same policies in the 1990s. White South African masculinity was a monolithic, dominant presence maintained, reaffirmed and perpetuated by State and private institutions.

The following section explains some of the institutions most closely identified with men: namely the military, sport, and boys' schools. The context is specific to my focus group, the X-Men.

2.5 THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS

An investigation of institutions of power as instruments of masculine identity formation, is important to my argument. Identity is affirmed by repetitive, institutionalised social acts, structured in terms of overt and covert rules (Hodgson 2006:2). These constraints enable people to identify themselves with, and as part of, a specific ethnicity, class and gender (Morrell 2001:17). Connell (2008:237), building on this premise, stresses the link between understanding institutions and understanding masculinities. The concept *institution* originates from the social sciences and the studies of societies. As systems of established social rules, institutions are a form of self-organisation and self-regulation, characteristic of societies. These rules structure social interactions by both constraining and enabling behaviour (Hodgson 2006:2). Conventions or customs, being *the way things are normally done*, are particular examples of institutional rules. These may be as simple as the custom of bowing or shaking a person's hand in greeting, or as complex as a minister pronouncing a couple, 'man and wife'. These ideologically stipulated rules of conduct are consensual, and embraced by individuals and groups.

The term *organisations* is a simile for institutions or organised groups of people with specific purposes. Organisations are producers of intentional human behaviour, including the unconscious, implicit or tacit. The notion of the intentional and the unconscious may appear contradictory. However, as a consequence of the repetition of behaviour enforced by established organisational rules, it becomes embedded within the organisation's members and their behaviour. These behaviours become automatic responses, appropriate to specific social situations. If one accepts the link between expectation and experience, then the more frequently something is experienced (and learned), the easier it is to determine the outcome. According to Siri Hustvedt (2016:19-20), once something is learned well, it generally becomes an unconscious action/reaction. Repetition is key, and it is this repetition that is inculcated by institutions and organisations.

Both Hearn (1992) and Connell (2008) confirm the link between men and masculinities (identities) and organisational culture (producer/reproducer). Connell (2008:238) determines a connection between particular versions of masculinity and particular organisational settings. Hearn (1992) concurs, stating that hegemonic masculinities are created within public, single-sex institutions. Morrell's work on the Natal settlers, in turn, corroborates Hearn's theory. These studies rely on masculinity and hegemonic masculinity as conceptual tools to establish the way in which men position themselves in relation to hegemonic versions of masculinity (Morrell 2013:10). These hegemonic ideals are appropriated (or in rare cases, opposed), as a central mechanism for an acceptable identity (Morrell 2013:10). Boys and men are also positioned within a gendered hierarchy according to their perceived relation to this hegemonic ideal. This positioning is affected by other boys, men, girls and women. Consequently these masculinities may be viewed as powerful, successful, envied and desirable, or alternatively, marginalised, stigmatised and lacking in social status (Morrell 2013:10). Of course, the nuclear family, regarded as a private institution, plays a pivotal role in the positioning of boys and men within this hierarchy, and in the construction of children's gender roles. Morrell asserts that the family is in fact "the most important institution", and the "building block" of personal identity and sense of community (Morrell 2001:269). The children, in turn, take these constructs and perceptions of masculinity and femininity into the public space

and its institutions. Whilst I acknowledge the key role the family plays, my study is confined to the impact of public institutions.

Hearn (1992) refers to public institutions as “public patriarchies”, commenting on their gendered nature. He believes that they convert the power of the male head of the family/household into a social and cultural form (Hearn 1992). This entails the transfer of patriarchy from the private sphere into a public sphere. On a macro-level, the State polices these institutions. Connell (1990:514) contends that the State is implicated in both class and patriarchal systems. As an institutionalised power structure, the Apartheid State organised and policed the hierarchies of gender, class, race and ethnic relations in South Africa. Further, despite a progressive Bill of Rights, post-Apartheid South Africa remains patriarchal. Connell (1990:535) describes this position as, “patriarchal as a matter of concrete social practices”. Logic supports the connection between South African institutions and the particular versions of South African masculinities.

These assertions are foundational to this study’s contention concerning the problematic formative processes of white South African Generation X-Men. I focus on three influential institutions: schools, sport and the military.

2.5.1 Schools

In recent ethnographic studies, Connell (2000:150) investigates the role of schools in educating boys. She concludes that children bring their preconceived gender conceptions, formed as a result of the emotional dynamics of the nuclear family and the ubiquitous influence of media to school, where these are further moulded and reinforced (Connell 2000:151). The Christian National Education (CNE) Policy is an example of a state-instituted tool created for just that purpose. Implemented in 1948, soon after the National Party came to political power in South Africa, it comprised an ideological triumvirate of religion⁶, masculinity and Afrikanerdom. Critically, education was segregated by the divisions of race and ethnicity, with the aim of preserving and promoting Afrikaner nationalism and identity.

⁶ The Church was an instrument utilised by the Nationalist Government to legitimate its political views in South Africa. I suggest that the aim of education came to be associated with God’s ordained purpose.

CNE was the Dutch Calvinist version of *Muscular Christianity*, an ideology that emerged in Britain during the mid-1900s. Based on the formative power of athletic competition and manly effort, Muscular Christians believed that athletic exertion would instil values aligned with their religious convictions. Vigorously implemented in boys' public schools during the Victorian Empire, the main purpose was to produce the warriors necessary to maintain the Empire. This is something that the Apartheid State would emulate within its educational policies. The ethos of Muscular Christianity was instilled in South Africa whilst it was a British colony. Despite its enmity with the British, the emerging Afrikaner nation appropriated not only these ideals, but in particular the Empire's ideological tool of rugby football.

Christian National Education condoned corporal punishment as a God-given edict to instil discipline (*The Holy Bible*, Proverbs 13:24). The text cautions against "sparing the rod and spoiling the child". As Morrell (1998a:221) believes, corporal punishment should be considered one of the most troubling and enduring features of the Apartheid education system. The use of corporal punishment was varied, ranging from excessive to liberal, from liberal to limited, depending on the gender of the offender and the type of school (Morrell 2001a:292). Supportive of the Apartheid system, it schooled children to become obedient citizens, and as white men, obedient warriors.

In white boys' schools, in line with the tenets of Muscular Christianity, boys were beaten to toughen them (Morrell 2001b:59). As such, South African schools defined and enforced what a *suitable* masculinity was. Schools also rigidly enforced gender regimes and specifically *masculinity-making devices* (Connell 2000:155). Sex-specific dress codes were implemented in the form of compulsory school uniforms: one for girls and another for boys. The school uniforms were literal manifestations of a society that defined masculinity by contrasting it with femininity. The enforced dress codes, as well as the disciplinary practices of South African schools were a set of masculinising practices governed by the gender regime of each particular school (Connell 2000:155). These gender regimes reflected the broader political, social and cultural forces as prescribed by the State. Peer pressure and the behaviour of teachers contributed significantly to the establishment of a hegemonic masculinity. Accompanied by misogyny and homophobia, this masculinity

advocated a compulsory heterosexuality. Anything perceived as feminine was devalued and negated.

Schools used sport in particular as a potent masculinity-making device. Sport in general, and most especially rugby, was South African society's *key device* for defining a white hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2000:159).

2.5.2 Sport

Referring to how boys learn to perform maleness, Connell (1987:84) states: "the physical sense of maleness grows through a personal history of social practice". Performed within a social context, this is learnt behaviour, guided by repetitive actions and the responses to these actions. In this case, the social context concerns sport. Sport enables boys to measure themselves both literally and figuratively against standards of masculinity and against other males (Morrell 2001:79). These physical evaluations have a far wider relevance than the sport in question (Connell 1987:85). In *The rites of men: manhood, politics, and the culture of sport*, Burstyn (1999:xi) argues that sport has become the "great masculine secular religion" of our era. Her study centres on the gendering processes of boys and men, and their socialisation into a gender-ordered masculinity. In South Africa, rugby continues to perform this task for white English and Afrikaans speaking boys.

The Afrikaner appropriated rugby despite its origins in the British upper and middle classes, and despite the Afrikaner's opposition to the hegemonic English of colonial South Africa. The game was central to gentrified, upper class British Muscular Christianity (Morrell 2001:80). Rugby's progress throughout the British Empire was regarded to be a victory over working-class sport, namely football (soccer), and therefore over working-class masculinity (Morrell 2001:82). In racially segregated South Africa, rugby football became associated with whites, particularly the Afrikaner, whereas football became associated with blacks. As in Britain, it was seen as a victory over working-class sport, as well as working-class masculinity (Morrell 2001:82). In post-Apartheid South Africa, perhaps indicative of rugby's alignment with the middle-class and its ideals, there is a burgeoning black middle-class and an exponential increase in black rugby players.

Initially South Africans regarded rugby as a way of promoting understanding between white Afrikaans and English speakers, fostering the nation of a white *South Africanism* (Grundlingh 2013:60). This recalls the 1995 Rugby World Cup scenario, where rugby was tasked with bringing together black and white South Africans. However, for the post-1948 evolving self-image of Afrikaner nationalism, rugby proved an ideal fit for the physical, psychological and ideological needs of the emerging Afrikaner nation (Grundlingh 2013:62). Rugby enabled a demonstration of the Afrikaner qualities of ruggedness, endurance, forcefulness and determination (Grundlingh 2013:63). As an important constituent of white Afrikaner nation-building, rugby promoted ethnic self-esteem.

Rugby became the embodiment of the dominant race, its culture and ideologies. Apartheid South Africa coupled rugby symbolism with Afrikaner nationalism, ethnic nationalism and anti-Imperialism (Grundlingh 2013:91). In this way, rugby was associated with white pride and dominance, a stigma it still struggles to discard. Rugby was considered the pre-eminent man's game, something that is still true of all rugby-playing countries. These nations socialise boys from a very young age into a world where rugby is an important element in the construction of male identity (Grundlingh 2013:82). The situation was no different in South Africa, albeit that the context was unique: there were two white ethnicities with separate education streams. Generally English schools followed the British, single-sex model whilst Afrikaans schools were co-educational. In English schools, sports activities were aligned with Muscular Christianity and values such as tradition, sportsmanship, fairness and gentlemanly conduct. In Afrikaans schools, sporting prowess, especially rugby, allowed the boys to demonstrate their manliness to admiring female spectators and older men, and to assert their masculine dominance. Matches between Afrikaans and English schools, universities and clubs represented ongoing battles for hegemony and an ideological superiority. These matches "gave lie to the cliché that rugby was 'only a game'" (Grundlingh 2013:64). However, despite the enmity between the English and Afrikaans players, the masculinity associated with rugby was embraced by both.

Whether English or Afrikaans, rugby imparted behaviour appropriate for white Christian heterosexual males. The rituals and ceremonies associated with rugby supported and perpetuated the South African hegemonic masculinity of the time - and continue to do so. The link between rugby and Afrikanerdom supports

Burstyn's (1999:128) contention that sport mounts as spectacle a symbolic representation of the existent masculinist system and its fundamental principles. Grundlingh (2013:21) concurs, stating that although sport may include only a small part of society as active participants, largely, but not exclusively young males, it does affect the whole. This may be ascribed to the particular mythology sport perpetuates and celebrates (Burstyn 2013:23). As Burstyn (2013:23) argues: "sport is a religion of domination and aggression around a male godhead". In South Africa, that *male godhead* was white, heterosexual, Afrikaans and Christian, the totem of which was the Springbok rugby player. Despite the changes in the country since the fall of Apartheid and the fluctuating success of the national Springbok team, the sport remains a constant. It remains a locator for the white South African male in a society where the requirements of being a man are perceived to be increasingly difficult to identify. As noted previously, the game and its masculinity are increasingly being taken up by black men, and female players. Perhaps this is indicative of a transforming society.

2.5.3 The military

As quoted by Daniel Conway (2008:77), in 1981 the South African Broadcasting Company (SABC), announced:

As over the weekend, South Africans rejoiced at the splendid victory of the Springboks in New Zealand, other of the country's representatives were returning from the battlefield in Angola. Their mission, too, was splendidly accomplished. There is good cause for pride in the performance of our men in New Zealand and Angola.

The SABC report underscores the masculine traits implicit in the construction of the white South African man during the Apartheid era. These had been tested and validated on the rugby field in New Zealand, and on the Angolan⁷ battlefield. Evidence of this white male godhead was then presented to the white South African nation, as an example to be adored, mythologised, emulated and perpetuated. It is not by mere happenstance that these two institutions, sport and the military, were commandeered by the Apartheid State's national media

⁷ From 1966-1989 South Africa was involved in a conflict known as the Border War. This war was over control of the South West Africa (Namibia), which was effectively a South African colony, and Angola. An escalation of the struggle for independence in the southern region resulted in a standoff between the SADF and Angolan and Namibian liberation forces, and notably, Cuban armed forces. The growing threat of conventional warfare drove the SADF back within South African borders and the Apartheid State to the negotiating table (Baines & Vale:2008).

organisation. The link between masculinity and the military is something that is constructed, maintained and reinforced.

In order to investigate this process, Maya Eichler (2014:81) uses an ethnographic study of militarised masculinities in post-Soviet Russia, submitting that a link is constructed and maintained for the purposes of war. Crucial to this construct is the militarisation of the male specifically as a result of the gendered policy of male conscription (Eichler 2014:84). As Eichler (2014:83) proposes: “when masculinity is successfully militarised - that is, when what it means to be a man in a particular time and place becomes closely tied to the military - militarism and masculinism reinforce each other”.

Insook Kwon’s (2000:42) analysis of military conscription as a social phenomenon determines that there are three sub-categories: pre-conscription socialisation; military service; and the post-conscription interpretation of said military experience. Like Kwan, Annette Seegers similarly divides the areas of analysis into pre-conscription, conscription and post-conscription (TRC 1998:225). This was part of a process involving the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)⁸ in post-Apartheid South Africa. The TRC was a state-sanctioned process of post-conscription interpretation and analysis. Seegers drew the attention of the Commission to a number of questions which, in her view, still need to be explained if the *socially pervasive influence* of the national service system in the white community is to be fully understood (TRC 1998:225). She emphasises that for an extended period of their lives, white men remained involved in the military (TRC 1998:225). White males registered for military service aged sixteen via their schools, and were required to render two years of national service in the full-time military force. Subsequently, they were enlisted in the part-time citizen force for 12 years, and were required to serve 720 days in annual camps of up to 90 days. Upon completion, they became part of the active citizen force reserve for 5 years, requiring that the former soldiers serve 12 days per annum in a local commando unit. Finally, they graduated to the national reserve until the age of 65 years - a process spanning virtually their entire adult lives (TRC 1998:225).

⁸ The TRC operated as tool for cathartic conflict resolution in post-Apartheid South Africa. It was conceived to offer restorative rather than retributive justice (Allais 2012).

The most common question asked of these white men in post-Apartheid South Africa is: why would they submit to this system of conscription, willingly or unwillingly? According to Trudy de Ridder, a psychologist at the Trauma Centre for the Victims of Violence and Torture, who testified at the TRC:

[T]he national education system consistently presented military training as a given part of the rites of white men and the moral duty of anyone concerned with defending order and morality (Christianity) against the forces of evil and chaos (Soviet-inspired Communism) ... They could not have had the tools or information to challenge this view - especially at the age of seventeen or eighteen (TRC 1998:226).

Conscription was implicated as both institution and practice as concerned constructions of citizenry, manhood, masculinity, femininity, fatherhood and motherhood, binding all to the concept of the nation-state (Kwan 2000:28). Military service was the rite of passage for white boys, facilitating their transition to manhood. Daniel Conway (2012:22), author of *Masculinities, militarisation and the ECC: war resistance in Apartheid South Africa* posits that, although military service was a subjective, bodily process, it was also a shared experience that was communally acknowledged. Conway shares Judith Butler's view of masculinity as a performance, theorising conscription as a performance. Accordingly this performance of masculinity and citizenship was premised on the belief in an essential masculinity within every man; a masculinity that depended on military service for its attainment (Conway 2012:65).

The entire military service experience, from induction to completion, was designed and constructed to engender a sense of the performance as a rite of passage (Conway 2012:61). As such, a number of ritualised stages had to be passed in order to claim manhood, commencing at school-level with rugby and cadet service. State discourse presented the military experience as a transformative rite of passage for white South African boys (Conway 2012:60). This gendered social and political process became embedded in everyday white South African life, acknowledged as both natural and acceptable.

2.6 INSTITUTIONAL GENDERING

White South African Generation X men cannot be discussed without speaking of gendered institutions. Their formative processes consisted of exaggerated notions of masculinity, enforced and instilled through rites of

passage and strict behavioural codes within institutional settings. Gender-stereotyped roles, the edicts of which were compulsory heterosexuality and the rejection of anything perceived to be feminine, evidence the importance of institutions in the construction of masculine identity.

White South African boys encountered the reality of the State in their schools, and covertly through organised sport. The State became a material presence that intensified with military conscription and mandatory military duties for the remainder of X-Men's lives. In both institutions, schools and the military, sport served an additional ideological purpose. As Michael Kimmel (2008: 128) puts it: "Guys like sports because it's the easiest way to choose 'guy' over 'gay' – and make sure everyone gets the right idea about them". Inherent in sport is its hierarchical, competitive structure, and what is true for men in sport is true for them in most organisations (Connell 1995:35-36).

White South African Generation X men's progression through rites of passage and ritual initiations was accompanied by a strong sense of entitlement and white male superiority. During Apartheid, this perception was reinforced by the State, and white society in general. Through organised rites of passage these boys, later men, attained membership of powerful institutions. These institutions prove that, although masculinity refers to male bodies, it is not determined by male biology. As Connell posits: "we can speak of a specific kind of masculinity being embedded in the gender regime of an institution such as an army, corporation or a school" (Connell 2000:29).

South Africa's white X-Men were and remain a product of this *specific kind of masculinity*. At the root of this masculinity are the problematic formative processes of gendered institutions. The following section proposes the *unbecoming* of the white South African Generation X men through performativity.

CHAPTER 3: **Performativity as solution**

In the previous chapter, gender is used as a unit for analysis of the problematic formative processes associated with the gender identities of South African X-Men. I propose that these gender-specific masculinities originate in Apartheid institutions, namely schools, sport and military conscription whereby “acceptable” social behaviours were inculcated. These were enforced through rituals and initiations, prerequisites for admission into that society. The initiation rituals acted as mechanisms that cemented their manhood as praxis. The two most significant rites of passage into white South African manhood were rugby football and military conscription; both indicative of a mandatory, overtly masculine heterosexuality.

This chapter discusses a possible way forward with regards the toxic masculinities previously evidenced. I use Saussurean structuralism, the concept of structures within society, to expose the underlying structures of Apartheid South Africa through an interpretive discussion of its institutions, the gender identities of the X-Men, and their art praxes. In particular I use structural linguistics. Informed by language theories, and by Jacques Derrida's⁹ (1967) decentring of signs and signification, I posit that performance artists may reposition gender markers. Through acts of resistance and transformation, they deconstruct and expose as cultural constructs sustained by systems of ideology, that which appears to be given or natural. This submission is in the main based upon performance studies and theories, specifically Judith Butler's (1988) theory of performativity.

3.1 IN THE HOUSE OF LANGUAGE

Butler's poststructuralist theory of performativity interrogates gender, deconstructing it through critical readings of related discourses. Poststructuralism can be negatively interpreted since it rejects the concept of a definitive closure of meaning. Conversely, it can be interpreted positively, as it implies a never-ending process whereby new meanings are created (Potgieter 2006:38). Butler is concerned with the concept of a variable, contradictory subject effected by

⁹ Derrida was the founder of deconstruction theory which was a method of analysing and critiquing texts as well as institutions (Derrida1998).

countless discourses: as a consequence, the subject's identity is always contingent and precarious, unable to be fixed within a closed system of differences (Mouffe 1992:372). This refutes Ferdinand de Saussure's (1959) theory of language as a structure founded on a closed system of differences.

According to Saussure (1959:112): "without language, thought is a vague, uncharted nebula". There are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language (Saussure 1959:112). As the title *structuralism* intimates, the theory proposes that societies and cultures and their workings are based upon and supported by underlying structures. These structures are constructed and not natural. In linguistic structuralism, meaning is constructed through and by the structure/system of language. This concept is fundamental to structuralism and how language functions as a system.

Saussure differentiates between language as a structure, and how it is used. He names these separate entities *langue* and *parole*. In order to make the study of language manageable, he focuses only on *langue* (Potgieter 2006:38). *Langue* encompasses the entire system of language that precedes speech and makes it possible: "it is both a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty" (Saussure 1959:9-10). *Parole* concerns the actual use of the language system by means of physical utterances. It may be considered the manifestation of *langue* and as such relates to performativity. This relation to performativity will become evident when I discuss Butler's theory. As a structuralist, Saussure is more interested in studying the system rather than its instances of use. By separating language from speaking, he claims we are separating what is social from what is individual (Saussure 1959:14).

Poststructuralists critique this theory, holding that because language is strongly affected by social context one cannot separate the two. For them there cannot be a closed system such as Saussure proposes. Poststructuralism has no problem with structures themselves, but says that even structures are labile (Potgieter 2008:26). They decentre his thinking, which entails in essence, thinking outside of the closed system. Saussure's notion of human reality and comprehension by means of the system of language is important to this study.

The linguistic system Saussure (1959:16) refers to concerns a system of signs that express ideas whereby each sign comprises two parts: the signifier and the

signified. The signifier carries the meaning (the visual component) whilst the signified (the conceptual concept) is that to which it refers. Signification is the process linking the two, and the creating of the sign. For instance, the word *cat* operates as a *signifier*, whereas the actual animal is the *signified*. The association between the two is a consensual meaning achieved by a social group. Reality, mediated by language, may therefore be considered an arbitrary social construct, communicated through institutions such as the nuclear family and schools. As Saussure argues: “every means of expression used in society is based, in principle, on collective behaviour or - what amounts to the same thing - on convention” (Saussure 1959:68).

The idea of a language-based reality is further problematized by Saussure himself. Conceiving of a binary model for the language system, he concludes that there are only differences in language. The meaning of a sign is determined by its difference from other signs in the system, for example, male/female, boy/girl, man/woman, masculine/feminine, white/black (Saussure 1959:120). In this instance, since there are no positive terms or one-to-one correlation, Saussure rejects and deconstructs his own signifier/signified distinction. Poststructuralism and postmodernism use socio-linguistic constructs and shared conventions to draw attention to the shifting, unstable nature of text and language itself: the things we use to convey our reality. Eschewing essentialism, this thinking disrupts notions of rationality and linear progress. It therefore requires of us to be far more circumspect before drawing conclusions.

Consider how, influenced by this thinking, the theories on the biological intractability of sex have been deconstructed by the theories on gender, and further, how these theories themselves have been deconstructed by Butler and performativity.

3.2 ORIGIN STORIES

Influenced by her origins in Continental philosophy, Butler draws on the theories of Saussure, Georg Hegel and Martin Heidegger¹⁰. During 1987, a book based on her PhD critique of Hegel entitled *Subjects of desire: Hegelian reflections in twentieth-century France*, was published. Heidegger too critiqued Hegel's phenomenology: a philosophy of subjectivity and consciousness of the structure of reality which attempts to reconcile the self with the modern world. Hegel traces the development of consciousness from the unreflective to a philosophical consciousness, able to reflect on its own origins. Of course Heidegger and Butler reinterpret Hegel's philosophy to suit their own purposes, but there is an area of shared interest, namely: what is *being*? This question is foundational to my study, because it concerns what *comprises* being (what is it made up of) and what does it *constitute* (what does it add up to, or form part of)? As pertains to the X-men, their origins, lived experience and interactions within the whole (society) are questioned. A question of origins must inevitably scrutinise the consensual standards that regulate our lives – and one's place within that society.

For Heidegger (1998:239) the truth of being resides in language: "Language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home". Language is a departure into being (Steiner 1978:52). In fact, Heidegger determines that *language* and *being* are one and the same. He employs this notion to complicate and interrogate our ideas pertaining to existence and self. Butler was substantially influenced by Heidegger's method of linguistic experimentation as a tool to discover new ways of conceiving the world and our place in it (Olson & Worsham 2000:728). I submit that Butler's concept of gender and performativity has its basis in language theory and Jacques Derrida's notions of deconstruction.

Butler acknowledges these origins in the preface to the 1999 edition of her seminal work, *Gender Trouble* (1990):

I originally took my clue on how to read the performativity of gender from Jacques Derrida's reading of Kafka's "Before the Law." There the one who waits for the law, sits

¹⁰ I am aware that Heidegger was a member of the Nazi Party. I do not agree with his politics of National Socialism or those of the Apartheid government. Nevertheless, Heidegger is one of the most influential philosophers of our times, whose theories have influenced other great thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. As artists do, I appropriate sections of his work aligned with my objectives.

before the door of the law, attributes a certain force to the law for which one waits. The anticipation of an authoritative disclosure of meaning is the means by which that authority is attributed and installed: the anticipation conjures its object (Butler 1990:xiv).

She believes that language and discourse *do* gender, whereby gender is an act that brings into being what it names (Salih 2007:56). As with Heidegger and Derrida, Butler questions language, the ways that we structure the world through it, and how our lived experience is determined by it (Olson & Worsham 2000:732). She draws attention to Derrida's practice of using texts, such as Kafka's (above) and Heidegger's *The origin of the work of art* (1935:7) to critique language, its sign structure and their relationship to the construction of meaning.

An analysis of language facilitates an interrogation of our perceived reality. This is achieved when the inherent instability of language, along with the arbitrariness of meaning attached to the signifiers within it, is recognised. However, both Butler and Heidegger acknowledge Saussure's (1959:74) insight that meaning can be valid within a certain frame of time and place:

But to say that language is a product of social forces does not suffice to show clearly that it is unfree; remembering that it is always the heritage of the preceding period, we must add that these social forces are linked with time. Language is checked not only by the weight of the collectivity but also by time. These two are inseparable.

Consider that our gender identities are similarly bound by society (collectivity) and time (history). That there are multiple interpretations as a result of different contexts or understandings now becomes evident. Key is the not only breaking down of the system of binaries placed in hierarchal opposition to each other in language, but also their extending through identifying further differences. This approach therefore acknowledges Saussure's belief that all signs exist in chains that connect them to all other signs within the system (Potgieter 2008:25). The complexity of the interconnectivity and interrelationship of existence (and language) is something my study champions.

It is a complexity which is evidenced by Derrida's (1982:69) proposal that, within the system, there is a structure of thought, speech and writing that centres the phallus, or "a notion of male firstness": phallogocentrism. Communicated through language, it expresses male attitudes and reinforces male dominance within societal structures. In the Apartheid-era South Africa, class, ethnicity and the supremacy of race are included in this structure. This research relies on Butler's

deconstruction of these heteronormative hierarchal assertions and signs through language theory. Accordingly, the *reality* and naturalised knowledge of gender is put into crisis: unstable and open to revision (Butler 1990:xxiii). This theory is suited to an interrogation of the language used to construct the X-Men's identities. Similarly, it may be deconstructed and situated differently, impacting on normative gender perceptions.

Butler (1990:16) questions the extent to which *identity* is a normative ideal rather than an evocation of experience. Butler theorises that gender identity is something we *do* rather than *have*. The origins of this concept may be found in the word, *Dasein*. Heidegger uses *Dasein* (German) as a verb rather than a noun, whereby *being* is an activity. Hubert Dreyfus's analysis of Heidegger's *Being and time* (1927), explicates that *Dasein* is a way of acting: "*Dasein* then is always in the world by way of being in a situation – dealing with something specific in a context of things and people, directed toward some specific end, doing what it does for the sake of being *Dasein* in some specific way" (Dreyfus 1991:163). This requires a *being-aware-of* and *being-involved-with* the world as we experience it. According to George Steiner, *being* has "a history and a meaning, a dependence on man and dimensions transcending humanity" (Steiner 1978:44).

Dasein is central to Heidegger's ontology, favouring a practical engagement with one's environment without losing sight of one's individuality as distinct from that same environment and other individuals. Heidegger's focus is on intersubjectivity rather subjectivity. According to Heidegger, *self* and *world* belong together as a single entity. He terms this *being-in-the-world* or *Dasein*, rejecting the longstanding metaphysical separation between *I* and the *world*. Eschewing a spiritual origin, Heidegger theorises that we are worldly and surrounded by the world (Steiner 1978:83). This is not an abstract notion of human existentialism: according to Heidegger, what we are becoming is far more important than what or why we are. There is a sense of intentionality and even the possibility of teleological progress. What we become then, is achieved through a dynamic process that forms our personal history, a process of self-creation, in which time and the finite nature of our existence are crucial. Heidegger's contention of the *being-in-the-world* is also the *being-in-time* with a past, a present and a series of

possible futures. We are shaped by an existence in time and within a specific environment; historical and temporal. Importantly, we have a *potential-for-being*.

This thinking informs Butler's theory of performativity as there is a parallel with gender and *Dasein* as the conceptual tools for locating identity within time and therefore within specific histories. Secondly, there is the notion of agency implicit in Heidegger's emphasis on the individual's relationship with whatever is outside of him or her. The most important consideration is the acknowledgement of individual identity: the authentic self. This refers not only to a consciousness of self but a self-awareness of that awareness. This possibility of self-awareness and agency offers a solution to the problematic formative processes of the X-Men and their subsequent masculinities. Crucially, white middle-aged South African men are not necessarily trapped in the past or by their previously assigned gender identities.

Butler's work on performativity is further influenced by the French phenomenological philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theories concerning the constitution of meaning in human experience (Butler 1988). He determined that the body is a historical idea with a set of possibilities to be continually realised (Butler 1988:521). Butler's reliance on a phenomenological approach avoids determinism, suggesting the potential for subversive variations on compulsory repetitions of prescribed normative acts (Allen 1998:460). This theory emphasises the ability of the X-Men to *unbecome* and transform.

Butler (1988: 520) references Merleau-Ponty and his claim that "the body is 'an historical idea' rather than 'a natural species'", building an argument that there is no natural gender. How we perceive the world, and importantly, how we express ourselves to that same world is determined by our *bodily situation*. This is an ongoing physical and historical process, moment-to-moment, situation-to-situation within time, unique and specific to each individual. Merleau-Ponty's notion of the body as an historical idea determines that it gains meaning through a concrete, historically mediated expression in the world. According to Butler (1988:521), since the body is a set of possibilities, this signifies that its appearance in the world is not predetermined by some manner of interior essence or spirit/soul. Its concrete expression in the world must be understood as the taking up and rendering specific of a set of historical possibilities. *Agency* is the process that renders such possibilities determinate.

Butler's concept is relevant to this study as it acknowledges an agent and agency. As argued it allows for the potential to initiate transformation on an individual level and social level (Butler 1990:33-34).

3.3 TROUBLING GENDER

Butler's theory on performativity offers a way forward for the X-Men. She uses Heidegger's concepts of being and time, poststructuralism and language theory, Derrida's deconstruction theory, and the development of theatre and performance studies to critique the gender concept envisioned by "certain forms of feminism" (Butler 1990:vi). The foundation of Butler's theory of performativity is language where a performative utterance produces an effect rather than merely naming or acting as a statement. The act of repetition implicit in the theory of performativity introduces the concept of ritual and ritualistic reproduction. Simply put, this means the *saying* and the *doing* create a gendered identity, which is reinforced and perpetuated through repetition. Importantly, social norms and constraints are enforced on performativity by the consequences of any resistance. Gender is therefore not an unconstrained, freely selected performance whereby individuals choose a gender identity and perform it. Butler argues that: "what is called gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo" (Butler 1988:520).

Influenced by language theory and feminism, Butler (1990:142) uses three points to argue that the *doer* is variably constructed in, and through, the deed or action. Firstly, according to Butler, gender is always identified in terms of a binary, which she collectively names, *binary genders* (Butler 1988:524). Secondly, this binary relationship is also hierarchal with regards power and benefit. The masculine is placed above the feminine within this structure. Finally, these binary genders are positioned within a heterosexual contract exemplified by the institution of marriage and social accepted heterosexuality (Butler 1988:524). This essentialist forced heterosexuality underpins Butler's theory regarding the performativity of gender identity. This formulation presupposes and enforces the restrictions of gender within the binary of masculine and feminine. Consequently, one is one's gender to the extent that one is not the other gender: either masculine not feminine, or feminine not masculine. Performative masculinity and femininity are

defined through the perceived norm of heterosexual sexuality. Other identities and behaviours are marginalised or pressured into conformity.

In *Gender Trouble* (1990), referring to the notion of social sanction, Butler argues that gender identity is a result of regulatory discursive practices, namely a compulsory heterosexuality. This is determined by the dominant conventions of a particular time and place within a particular socio-cultural context. In the case of Generation X white South African men, these conventions were constructed and regulated by the Apartheid State through sport and military institutions such as rugby and National Service. Awareness is key to the potential of the X-Men to *unbecome*. As Butler (1988:530) puts it:

[A] critical genealogy needs to be supplemented by a politics of performative gender acts, one which both re-describes existing gender identities and offers a prescriptive view about the kind of gender reality there ought to be. The re-description needs to expose the reifications that tacitly serve as substantial gender cores or identities, and to elucidate both the act and the strategy of disavowal which at once constitute and conceal gender as we live it.

She suggests alternative descriptions and prescriptions, bodily expanding the cultural field through subversive performances of various kinds (Butler 1988:530-531). Although Butler's 1988 article, "Performative acts and gender constitution" is aimed at feminists, her conclusions and suggestions are equally applicable to men and masculinities. The goal of my ethnographic study of selected X-Men artists is to provide evidence that men are *re-describing* gender identities and transforming them.

3.4 PERFORMATIVITY VS PERFORMANCE

In light of Butler's theory it is important to make the distinction between performativity and performance. She states that performativity does not mean performance as in *acting*. She does not mean, as is often assumed, that gender is a theatrical, freely selected performance. One does not get to freely choose how to perform one's gender as there are constraints imposed by societal norms and roles. For the X-Men there were very real consequences to any resistance or subversion of the masculine gendered performances the State enforced upon them. The consequences ranged from public humiliation and ostracism to real physical harm, legal prosecution, sentencing and incarceration.

There is a very fine line between voluntarism and determinism, as argued in this research and as theorised by Butler. In arguing this, another distinction becomes apparent, that between oppressor and oppressed, and the possibility that one can be both. In the South African scenario, some may regard this position as problematic, and understandably so. I do not imply that my contemporaries or I were deprived of free will and thus cannot be held morally accountable for our actions. However, the circumstances and reasons for those actions, as indefensible as they may appear to be, should be acknowledged. History cannot be judged by using purely current norms. *Context* has to be taken into account. Considering historical context allows for understanding of how individual identity is related to its sociocultural context. Gender may be individually formed and expressed, but it is constrained by a rigid regulatory societal structure. Using theatre as an analogy, Butler (1988:526) explains: “Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directions”.

In conclusion, gender performativity consists of performed actions as societal role-playing. Dress, ritual and mannerisms are included in these performance actions. For the X-Men, Butler’s *already existing* directions were not only those within their civil society but also the enforced regulatory framework of Apartheid South Africa and its institutions such as the military. This is aligned with Heidegger’s concept of an already-existing world into which we are thrown; one that will continue to exist after us (Steiner 1987:87).

Butler’s theory of performativity, as a result of this analogy of gender role-playing, allows for not only gender as a societal construct, but also for the possibilities of resistance and the subversion of that construct. If gender is continually enacted, then it is possible for individuals to alter their performances. Pertinent to my study, it indicates the possibility of a different type of gender performance, one which breaks with or subverts the repetition of the style implemented by institutions and societal constructs (Butler 1988:520). Previous behaviours aligned with problematic formative processes can be transformed.

The above section concerns the theoretical framework within which my research is located. The following section involves an analysis of performance art as a

possible solution through the work of fellow X-Men artists. This analysis authenticates my praxis, the process by which a theory or skill is enacted or embodied.

CHAPTER 4: **The performative artist**

The preceding chapters identify my research problem: the problematic formative processes of the gender identity of the X-Men. I suggest performativity as a possible way forward. Since gender and the body are intimately linked, performance art is eminently suited to an interrogation of the research problem. This chapter affirms the links between gender, the body and its social construction. Some repetition is necessary to validate my choice of performance art because the body serves as method, medium and artwork. This is followed by a critical analysis of X-Men artists and their role in postcolonial South African society. The chapter concludes with a discussion of performance art as an avant-garde movement that challenges the status quo by critiquing both the institution of art and society.

4.1 THE INESCAPABLE BODY - MIRE AND BLOOD

Albeit that my research analysis is gender based, it is essential to investigate the institutions that determined how men's bodies were addressed, defined, disciplined and rewarded by the gender order of Apartheid society (Connell 2000:12). Schools, sport and the military attached social meaning to the X-Men's bodies. Studies by Butler and Connell confirm the link between gender and the body. Commencing with Simone de Beauvoir's¹¹ pronouncement that "one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman", Butler (1988) critiques Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological theories of human embodiment (as discussed in the previous chapter) arguing for the consideration of a gendered body. She asks: "Is there a way to link the question of the materiality of the body to the performativity of gender?" (Butler 1993:1). Butler concludes that gender is the repetition of acts associated with the male or female body. Since these acts are generally situated within, and witnessed by, a society, they are performative in nature. The situated body acquires societal and cultural meaning by performing gender to this social audience. Consequently the body becomes a site for interpretation within a socially constructed system of signs and conventions. Butler (1988:523) concludes that "the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are

¹¹ In *The Second Sex* (1949), one of the seminal feminist texts, Simone de Beauvoir discusses female embodiment and the role society plays in how this is constructed and perceived.

renewed, revised, and consolidated through time". An awareness of this situated body is pivotal to the performance artist's use of the body as medium.

Connell (2000:27) concurs with Butler, emphasising gender as a social practice that refers to bodies and what they do, calling them body-reflexive practices. Connell proposes that "particular versions of masculinity are constituted in their circuits as meaningful bodies and embodied meanings. Through body-reflexive practices, more than individual lives are formed: a social world is formed" (Connell 1995:64). Connell intimates that there are social outcomes to gender practice and its system of regulated mutual responses within society. Society constitutes and perpetuates itself by having these practices repeated. The premise is that society does not exist beyond these social practices, echoing Butler's contention that gender identity does not exist beyond the expressions of gender. She maintains "that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler 1990:25). Essentially, gendered behaviour creates a gendered identity whereby masculinity is embodied in the male body, and femininity in the female body. Society determines how that masculinity or femininity should be performed and what the performative body should look like. Men are expected to act out a socially sanctioned form of masculinity; a gender performance that is normalised as a consequence of its link to the body and its biology.

As a rugby player I rarely matched the body type that South African rugby demands of its masculinity. At 1.76 metres and 86 kilogrammes, I was considered too small, especially since I played in the flank forward or hooker positions. Rugby demands that its forward packs consist of men considerably larger than me. Physically, I failed to meet the demands of the prescribed hegemonic masculinity. In order to be accepted, I was required to overcompensate for my physical shortcomings with a single-minded focus on my performance of a hyper-masculine, rugby-masculinity. I had to be fitter, tougher, harder, more aggressive and more confrontational than both my team mates and the opposing players. This performance had to be repeated in every aspect of the game, including training, matches and post-match celebrations or commiserations. Failure to do so would have resulted in, at the very least, exclusion from the team. Acceptance and approval was contingent on my repeated successful performance of the hegemonic masculinity associated with

the sport. I found this to be true throughout my years 23 years of playing rugby, at all levels, from school rugby to army rugby, and from university rugby to club rugby. The social relations attributed to rugby masculinity were realised and acknowledged through my bodily performances (Connell 1995:54). This affirms that there is a *physical sense* to maleness and masculinity fundamental to the cultural interpretation of gender (Connell 1995:52). I conclude that bodily experience plays a key role in the construction of our gender identities.

I employ personal lived experience to illustrate Butler and Connell's arguments regarding the body's link to masculinity, its construction, and its expression. Sport, the military and schools, are prominent definers of masculinity. As is the case in most sports, the rugby institution determines not only what the body should look like, but also the uniform it should wear, and how it should behave and perform. A specific role is being enacted, one that demands appropriate dress and action. The audience is unsettled and confused if these dictates are not realised. There is a distinct way that the male body is expected to occupy space with its physical presence. These determinants, both social and cultural, are specific to time and place. If we consider men's bodies within an historical context, we are able to understand existing embodiments and the possibilities of future re-embodiments (Connell 2000:206). As pertains to biological and social determination, Connell concludes that the body cannot escape the construction of masculinity (1995:52-56). She qualifies this conclusion, adding that "what is inescapable is not fixed" (Connell 1995:56). Drawing on what she calls the complexities of *mire or blood*, Connell states: "Not only are men's bodies diverse and changing, they can be positively recalcitrant. Ways are proposed for bodies to participate in social life, and the bodies often refuse" (Connell 1995:57).

Central to the performance artist's assault on the institution of art and society is an awareness of the *situated* body and how it acquires socio-cultural meaning through its gender performance before an audience. This is an attack on societal constructions, perceptions and institutions through performativity and the use of the artists' own bodies. If, as Erving Goffman (1971:15) suggests, we all perform in ways that we hope will be favourably regarded by others, then performance artists ask the question, what happens if we perform in ways that are not favourable?

4.2 BODY ART – THE BODY (UN)COMFORTABLE

RoseLee Goldberg (1998:20) states: “Historically, performance art has been a medium that challenges and violates borders between disciplines and genders, between private and public, and between everyday life and art, and that follows no rules”. Albeit expansive, it is indicative of the relationship between performance art, the *avant-garde*, and their interrogation of art conventions. From its origins in Futurism (c.1909-14) and Dada (1916-24) in the early 20th century¹², performance (body) art has become synonymous with postmodernism. This is directly linked to its rejection of the formalist conventions of the art institution, as specifically characterised by Modernism. Performance art subverts the Modernist notion that fixed meanings are derived from the formal structure of the artwork alone (Jones 1998:21). One of the most fundamental attributes of performance art is the commitment to challenging and dismantling traditional norms, explaining its affinity with the *avant-garde* and postmodernism. These characteristics encouraged many artists to use performance to address their social concerns during the politicised social environments of the 1960s and 1970s.

During an era of counterculture and social revolution, performance art became a tool of protest and transformation. Feminist artists chose performance art because, unlike the traditional disciplines of painting and sculpture, it was not part of an exclusionary patriarchal discourse. Secondly, performance art foregrounded lived bodily experience and the personal. Resisting socially prescribed gender roles, the feminists determined that the personal was political. Along with the black and gay liberation movements in Western countries, the feminist movement began to question a social metanarrative that idealised men, particularly white heterosexual men. This interrogative resistance spilled over into the art world, resulting in Linda Nochlin’s pioneering essay: “Why have there been no great female artists?” (1971). Foundational to a critical feminist art history, her article interrogates the historical Western canon and the notion of the artist-genius as white, male and European. Protesting historical and cultural representations of women, feminist artists began reclaiming their bodies from the male gaze, both literally and metaphorically. At the forefront, feminist

¹² Artists in anticipation of, and then in reaction to, war (First World War 1914-1918) began to push at the boundaries of what was considered the norm. Their work was a manifestation of not only changing societies but in particular of the rupture and disillusionment created by the Great War. Art was essentially radicalised by its events (Cork 1994).

performance artists recognised the centrality of the body, its socio-cultural meanings and individual interpretations of the body. Acknowledging lived experience and how their own experiences could be expressed through art, they critiqued the idea of art as detached from society and politics.

Feminist performance artists such as Carolee Schneemann and Hannah Wilke¹³ used their bodies in live performances to challenge historical representations of women, critiquing the institution of art and society. Frequently appearing nude, these feminists vociferously rejected social prescriptions of passive women to be acted upon or displayed for male consumption. Instead, they proclaimed their agency and confronted their audiences with their bodies, forcing them to engage, raising issues on femininity and women in society and its institutions. By making their own bodies *uncomfortable* they caused their viewers, and wider society, a similar discomfort. As such, their bodies were used as metaphors for exploring gender and socio-political issues. Amelia Jones (1998:13) writes of artworks from this period that were labelled *body art* or *body works*. This type of art places the body and self within the realm of the aesthetic (the art institution) as a political domain. It acknowledges Michel Foucault's (1977:148) premise that the body is "the inscribed surface of events", that is the body is imprinted by and with its history within a society. Significantly these bodies, inscribed by their societies and cultures, perpetuate those same societies and cultures.

Viewers' opinions are mediated by personal history, experience and socio-cultural beliefs. The body, and therefore the artwork and artist, becomes a site of intertextuality and intersubjectivity. The subject (the body) derives meaning in relationship to others, and importantly, the source of identity (how it was constructed) is always elsewhere (Jones 1998:14). Foucault's premise of the inscribed body alludes to it as a site of various narratives and discourses. The artist uses the inscribed body to draw the viewer into the work of art as an intersubjective exchange between artist and viewer (Jones 1998:31).

¹³ Throughout her career, Carolee Schneemann has used her body as the "literal site of her work" to examine the role of female sexuality as a creative force and how it might be used for the purposes of political and personal liberation from oppressive social and aesthetic conventions (Schneider 1997: 31-42). Similarly Hannah Wilke addressed issues of female objectification, the male gaze and female agency.

In this way, the artist implicates the viewer, deconstructing the Modernist¹⁴ tenet of disinterested contemplation of an autonomous artwork that stands apart from society.

I believe that performance or body art is inherently *avant-garde* because it “disempowers the divinely endowed artist of his transcendence” (Jones 1998:75). This is achieved by making the male artist’s body not only visible but also vulnerable. It further affects the dematerialisation of the art object through the introduction of the artist’s body as medium and artwork. Finally it addresses feminist concerns by critiquing the male gaze of the female body in art and in broader society. The fundamental features of Modernism, namely the white male genius-artist, artistic ontology and teleology are deconstructed and disrupted through performance art. The introduction of the body, gender and its socio-cultural construction, enables the performance artist to sever the boundaries between artist and viewer, and art and society. These are characteristics of the *avant-garde*.

4.3 THE INCORRIGIBLE DISTURBER

Social critic, James Baldwin, proposes that the artist is a leading recalcitrant body within society. In an essay concerning the creative process, he determines that all societies have to deal with the artist as the incorrigible disturber of peace. He observes: “A society must assume that it is stable, but the artist must know, and he must let us know, that there is nothing stable under heaven “(Baldwin 1962:17).

In order to function effectively, societies strive for stability through organisation, order, cooperation and orderliness. Societies work to achieve a system of

¹⁴ Art critic/theorist, Clement Greenberg championed Modernism, proclaiming Immanuel Kant the first Modernist in his 1960 article: “Modernist Painting”. Based on Kant’s theories, he proposed that objective reason should be utilised to critique modern art. The viewer would assess that which was before him or her only; the flat surface and shape of the canvas, and the properties of the pigment and how they were applied by the artist. His ideal for art was work that was independent, detached, and abstract (http://www.tfreeman.net/Philosophy/330_files/Modernist%20Painting.pdf).

equilibrium and harmony, whereby institutions play a significant organisational role in maximising efficiency. Gender stratification is a characteristic of how our societies are organised. In Apartheid South Africa, race and culture further demarcated one's position within the structure, impacting on one's access to power and resources. Albeit contested, Western societies deem that they function most efficiently when controlled by white men. Baldwin's observation comments on this and introduces the notion of the artist as a leading disturber of societies.

I submit that he selects artists as social disruptors because of their enduring link to the *avant-garde*. Identified as agents of change, artists push at the boundaries of art and society, challenging the traditions of both. Art theorist, Peter Bürger (2010:696) notes that two principles are central to the concept of the *avant-garde*: "the attack on the institution of art and the revolutionizing of life as a whole". In the *Theory of the avant-garde* (1974), Bürger argues that the *avant-garde* makes us aware of art as an institution and its relationship to society, a disruption that transcends the art institution. The historical avant-garde artist of the early 20th Century (1910-1935), motivated by the quest for radical reform, was instrumental in leading social progress, dragging the present into the future (Bürger 1984). As agents of change, these artists reacted to social and cultural crises, in the firm belief that art has a social function. They challenged the art institution through attacks on accepted tradition to initiate a revision of past, accepted practices. Within the X-Men group, gendered performance artists similarly attempt to revise past practices of masculinity through a presentation of their performative bodies.

As established earlier, implicit and overt rules structure human behaviour within societies, with institutions operating as systems of these said rules (Hodgson 2006:2). These rules determine social interactions, and with repetition, become habitual and normalised. The art institution operates in the same way: we are initiated via a socialisation process, whereby the rules, and behaviours are socially embedded. These are the rules governing the *game of art*. The *avant-garde* intentionally disregard the rules in favour of their own, disturbing the peace that societies aspire for. The *avant-garde* artist is a motivator of change.

Bürger (1984:58-59), referring to the avant-gardist intention of returning art to the praxis of life, comments:

The impression might be created that the avant-garde movements have no decisive significance for the further development of art in bourgeois society. The opposite is the case. Although the political intentions of the avant-garde movements (reorganization of the praxis of life through art) were never realized, their impact in the realm of art can hardly be overestimated. Here, the avant-garde does indeed have a revolutionary effect, especially because it destroys the traditional concept of the organic work of art and replaces it by another, which we must now seek to understand.

Despite his notion of a redundant *neo-avant-garde* movement, based on his conception of the historical avant-garde and its failure, this characteristic endures: an artistic narrative which emphasises rupture, change and discontinuity (Bürger 1984). I believe that this characteristic is promoted by the X-Men in the postmodern (or perhaps even post-postmodern) and postcolonial societies within which they function. Certainly, their art practice ensures that they are always located within an institutional system that regulates artistic discourse. Similarly, their genders, and the performances thereof, take place within gendered institutions and are policed by them. Moving beyond the prescriptions of art, their work reveals art as an institution that legitimates what it exhibits as art. Presenting their masculinities, the X-men artists raise awareness of the constructed nature of their gender through social institutions. This is achieved through performance art and the gendered performance of masculinities, attacking tradition and revising past practices within the larger society. These attributes are characteristic of the *avant-garde*¹⁵.

4.4 THE INSCRIBED BODY

Art theorist, Jonah Westerman believes that: “performance is not (and never was) a medium, not something that an artwork can be but rather a set of questions and concerns about how art relates to people and the wider social world” (Westerman 2016). I agree with Westerman’s observations concerning the postmodern characteristics of performance art. In my opinion, like-minded X-Men artists begin to other and decentre themselves, in contrast to Modernist tenets. This not evidences Connell’s recalcitrant bodies but also gendered bodies and all that implies. It makes sense to situate gender markers differently through utilising

¹⁵ Relational aesthetics opposes this theory, presenting the artist as universal and unmarked by sex, race or class (Rickitt 2013:138). Curator Nicolas Bourriaud (2002:39), its originator, criticises the avant-garde, claiming that “any stance that is ‘directly’ critical of society is futile, if based on the illusion of a marginality that is nowadays impossible, not to say regressive”.

performance art because the body, the medium and the artwork of the performance artist, is intimately linked with gender.

Ironically, the concept of gender is often regarded as an attempt to move away from the essentialist attributes of the body, albeit that gender studies undeniably link it, and its social meaning, to the body. Meaning is derived through the semiotics that accompany bodies: the surface signifiers that include the political, ethnographic, cartographic and mythical. The performance artist magnifies and amplifies these signifiers through rituals, artefacts, symbols, sacred spaces and significant gestures during performances. The personal body becomes a metaphor for the larger socio-political body, mediated by the structuralist relationship between sign, object and meaning. In the mind of the viewer, the sign represents the object or action, and is translated into meaning. The artist uses performance to show that, like gender, the apparently fixed body is inherently unstable. From the moment we are identified within the womb as either male or female, and are accordingly named *boy* or *girl*, society begins to construct and police our identities. Our bodies are inscribed by, and constructed through, societal discourses. Sport is an example of one of these discourses which specifically focus on the body, infusing it with meaning. Earlier I utilised the example of my own body in rugby to highlight this. In Apartheid South African society, whiteness, masculinity and Springbok rugby were the key elements of a myth-making process that centred on the divinely-appointed white male. Whiteness, also a modernist construct, reinforces the myth of masculine superiority as perpetuated by the Abrahamic religions (Steyn 2001:150).

The notion of the ideological dominance of the white male was mirrored in art through Clement Greenberg's concept of the artist-genius, as informed by Enlightenment¹⁶ theories and underpinned by Immanuel Kant's writings in particular. White South African male performance artists deconstruct these myths by creating awareness of their constructed nature. During the performance act, the artist asks: *who am I, what am I and how did I become, and where to now?* The performance facilitates an *unbecoming* for both the artist and the observer.

¹⁶ The Enlightenment was an intellectual and philosophical movement advocating rationalism, in Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries. It championed individualism and challenged traditional religious beliefs through science, logic and reason. Immanuel Kant, one of its central figures, describes the requirements of aesthetic judgment in *The Critique of Judgment* (1790). Clement Greenberg was profoundly influenced by Kant (Goldmann 1973).

In this way, the X-Men affirm Butler's concept of performative resignification and attempt to initiate moments of *lichtung* in viewers.

As established, the X-Men masculinities were created within specific historical circumstances. The bodies linked to these masculinities are white and male, and have been contested and displaced by the demise of Apartheid. Due to current socio-political forces, the masculinities are in flux, undergoing a process of transformation. My focus concerns *how* these may be re-imagined and reconstructed. The body, transformed into a vehicle of meaning through enactment and action, promotes a holistic understanding and greater tolerance towards the X-Men. The self-knowledge acquired through subjective experience and research facilitates a personal catharsis. Acquired knowledge and understanding is then to be disseminated through my research dissertation and practical work.

I discuss the methodology selected to facilitate this process in the following section.

4.5 POST-METHODOLOGIES

I have selected performance autoethnography as my academic process of enquiry since it enables a link between my personal, lived experience to its social context. Spry describes it as: "a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self and others in social context" (Spry. 2001:710). Performance artists may problematize this *situatedness* by positioning societal constructs differently.

In terms of post-methodologies, Tami Spry argues that "autoethnography in particular carries important methodological implications for how the body is sited in what constitutes knowledge, evidence and the evidence of knowledge" (Spry 2009:583). She contends that performative auto-ethnography resides in the intersections of knowledge construction and art, making this form of ethnography best suited for the knowledge construction purposes of this study (Spry 2009:583). As Spry (2009:583) postulates, the process begins with a (gendered) body in a specific place and time. Within this particular frame, performative ethnography confronts situations, behaving in a pedagogical fashion. It initiates critical, historical and sociological thought (Denzin 2003b:264).

Renowned sociologist and ethnographer, Norman Denzin (2003a:x), defines performance ethnography as a performance rhetoric that transfers field notes into texts that are performed. He believes that performance-based human disciplines can contribute to radical social change (Denzin 2003c:187). Denzin contends that the challenge is to develop a methodology that allows for the examination of how the private troubles of individuals are connected to public issues and to public responses to these examined troubles (2014:vii). Similarly this research study is faced with the challenge of how the X-Men's problematic gender identities and their connection to Apartheid institutions may be examined, and then analysed in relation to current lived experiences with the hope of cathartic resolution. This is complicated by my intention to visually represent the research findings, and present an embodied performance to initiate social change.

From a research perspective, I am intrigued by the variances of performance I can present, and how these speak to the viewer, as a solution to problematic masculine identities. This informs my concept of performativity as a possible solution to problematic masculine identities. My chosen methodology is supported by Connell (2012:5) who speaks of the ethnographic moment in masculinity research, whereby specific patterns of masculinity are revealed through socio-cultural relations in a particular time and place. As concerns the ethnographic moment of this masculinity research, her findings include multiplicity, collectivity and complexity (Connell 2007:2). These results are an integral characteristic of my investigation of specific members, including myself, in the X-Men group, within a broader social context. Despite its autobiographical nature, my study is analytical and engages beyond the self. It is self-reflexive and self-reflective rather than self-obsessed. These introspective actions facilitate self-awareness, a rising consciousness, and ultimately, change from within.

I utilise Kenneth Burke's¹⁷ (1969) dramatism technique in order to establish a suitable interrogatory format. *Motive* is foundational to this technique: the reasons why people do the things they do. In order to establish motive, five questions must be asked. "[W]hat was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose)" (Burke 1969:xv). I use Burke's pentad to analyse my own works and those of the

¹⁷ Language expert, Kenneth Burke, devised a technique for analysing language as a mode of action rather than as a means of transmitting information (Burke 1969).

selected X-Men artists. Once the agent/artist is named, I describe what took place: the act. The scene and context are defined to locate the agent and the act. Finally agency is determined; the means or instruments used by the artist (Burke 1969:xv). These five questions allow me to identify the motive that compels the X-Men artists to act.

It should be understood that *purpose* and *intent* are different to motive. Purpose is a consequence of motive, as method is as a result of methodology. The law provides a suitable example: one may have a motive but in order to establish criminality, purpose or intent has to be proved. Burke's pentad assists the researcher in clarifying motive and intent. This is important because it establishes the act of self-aware, reflexive performance.

I deem practice-based research as eminently suitable, since theory can be translated into the visual, and the visual can likewise be translated into theory. The framework of art and performance is used to interrogate the relationship between the self and the social, disrupting the traditional academic space, since its organisation and thought systems are problematised. Influenced by Judith Butler and various performance ethnographers and theorists, I construct a poststructural methodology based on the idea that lived experience (written, spoken and visual) may be analysed as text. Further, as the meaning of the text is unfixed, albeit it historically and culturally specific, this approach enables the precepts of academic research to be interrogated and deconstructed. Not only is the institution of art challenged by innovative performances but so are traditional academic structures and practices by critical analyses of those same performances.

4.6. THE X-MEN AND PERFORMANCE

In considering Paul Emmanuel's work fellow South African artist, Johan Thom (2018:2), admits:

I confess that I am interested in how the body is written, or rather, in how the body writes itself. That is to ask the question: Does the body leave a trace of itself in the world, in text, in art and in the objects that surround it? And if so, how may we identify these traces? On the simplest level we all understand that bodies make artworks and that they may be the subject matter of artworks. For me the thing that happens in Emmanuel's work is more complex than that. The body is not only the subject matter of Emmanuel's work. It is also

the medium and the methodology – animating the work and giving it its power (Thom 2018:2).

Thom's words echo the conceptualisation of this research: the body as subject, medium, artwork - and as methodology and research tool. This notion has influenced my selection of specific X-Men artists and their praxes.

4.6.1 Inscribing masculinity: Paul Emmanuel

Thom's (2018:3) essay indicates a desire to engage with Emmanuel's artworks because of the presence of the body within them, of wishing to write his own male body and place it in the works. This is the power of the body, of performance and how Emmanuel utilises them in his work. Many of Emmanuel's more traditional formal works are performative in nature, much in the same way as Jackson Pollock's works are. The sheer physicality of the processes he employs constantly draws attention to his body and how it is affected by these processes.



1. Paul Emmanuel, *Transitions* (2004).

In *Transitions* (2004-2008), for example, Emmanuel creates images by scraping away at photographic print paper with a surgical blade. This gruelling process, as evidence of the artist's hand and body, makes the viewer conscious of a performance of masculinity. The artist attempts to draw the viewer into his

experience through this ritualistic, laborious, exhausting process of mark-making (Emmanuel 2008:25). Emmanuel's images present the viewer with rituals, performances constitutive of a specific culture and society. These rites of passage facilitate acceptance into and progression through a particular culture and society. The works comprise four social markers: infancy and circumcision; youth and military service; adulthood and marriage; old age and a birthday. These reveal the progress of a gendered life, from birth to death, by means of ritual transitions. Emmanuel endeavours to increase consciousness through this performative presentation of masculine ritual and initiation.

Of particular relevance to the X-Men and central to the artist's concept, is the ritual of military head-shaving and its connotations during Apartheid. As pertains to the men who were subjected to conscription, it has a very particular resonance as an enforced rite of initiation into manhood and Apartheid society. In his project statement, Emmanuel indicates that this was in fact his starting point: how the military influenced and perpetuated notions of masculinity in South Africa (Emmanuel 2011:3). This body of work includes a fourteen minute film entitled *3SAI: A Rite Of Passage* (2008). The film documents the head-shaving of new recruits at the Third South African Infantry Battalion (3SAI) in Kimberley. This film provides the source material for his images. These rituals may be regarded as expressions of the sacred and profane in a culture (Bell 2008:115). This alludes to Arnold van Gennep's (1960) notion that a society is understood through the study of its rituals as performance. Influenced by van Gennep's theory, Emmanuel presents white South African masculinity and the processes that construct it. He compels us to consider gender, race and the specific socio-cultural forces involved in its construction. These works effectively undo the ability to perform a specific racialised gender, formed by a specific socialisation process, without awareness. The consciousness imperative for urgent change emerges.

The awareness of the body in Emmanuel's work is intensified in his on-going *The Lost Men Project* (2004-). The *lost men* to whom he refers are the soldiers lost in South African wars, including many Apartheid-era X-Men. The loss is both literal and metaphorical. The metaphor alludes to those soldiers so brutalised and traumatised that they are never able to fully assimilate back into society again.

Emmanuel creates site-specific counter-monuments that interrogate the premise of the monument and the patriarchal ideologies it represents.



2. Paul Emmanuel, *REMNANT 9* (2015).

Referencing Foucault's inscribed body, Emmanuel presses the names of the *lost men* into his flesh, his body literally becoming the canvas. His body, indented with marks in his flesh, is subsequently photographed. These images are printed onto fragile, diaphanous fabrics and erected at public sites specific to conflict and the military. The anti-monuments are ephemeral; exposed to the elements they fade and disintegrate. This contrasts with the notion of a monument as an enduring, imposing edifice that represents a fixed version of history and ideology.



3. Paul Emmanuel, *The Lost Men France II* (2016).

Remember-dismember (2014), a video performance work, shares the conceptual thinking underpinning Emmanuel's anti-monuments. As part of the *Lost Men* series, Emmanuel's body is once again inscribed with the names of those lost in South African wars. He dresses and undresses before the camera, donning nine uniforms worn by South African men between World War I and the present. Wearing the uniform of the X-Men soldiers who were members of the South African Defence Force, Emmanuel recognises and memorialises them. This is ironic, since the present day government refuses to acknowledge them in any capacity. The video shots of the documented performance comprise closely-cropped portions of the body, including his shaven head, torso, hands, buttocks and feet. The male body is revealed as pale, soft and almost hairless. The viewer becomes aware of his conscious effort to make the male body vulnerable, thereby effectively feminising it. The viewer gains an understanding of a brutal

institution at work - and Emmanuel's critique of it - when the performance is observed along with its accompanying rituals, artefacts and signifiers. Emmanuel interrogates and deconstructs the notion of a militarised South African masculinity.

Significantly, Emmanuel's deliberate feminisation of his body in the *Lost Men* series, repositions gender markers and addresses issues pertinent to the X-Men.

4.6.2 The big tough guise: Willem Boshoff

Similar to Emmanuel, Willem Boshoff employs text in his work to a similar end. Emmanuel's use of text in his *Lost Men* (2004-) project is integral to the works as signifier and as indicator of the body's materiality. I propose that, in Boshoff's case, the audience is made more aware of the performative nature of words, that they initiate or activate what they speak of.

In the work, *Bangboek* (1978-1981), Boshoff, addresses the militarised masculinity from lived experience through text. In an interview with Warren Sieberts (2007) he narrates his resistance to the Apartheid government's system of military conscription. He relates how the Afrikaans community of the time hated him for not wanting to serve in the army:

I was ostracised by my family, my church, my community and my peers...[F]aced with so much opposition, I felt I needed to summon up my courage. I developed a coded language months before I received the papers instructing me to report for another military camp, having decided in advance to refuse to serve in the South African Defence Force again. I did this purposefully, so that I could continue to write down my fears and emotions, even if I was sent to jail as a conscientious objector. This secret language was used in a work titled BANGBOEK, because it is literally based on a coded diary about being scared. It made me unafraid of the prospect of prison even if the authorities decided to sentence me to the six years that had been the lot of other conscientious objectors (Boshoff 2007:15-16).

The artwork, consisting of text transcribed into cryptic symbols designed to resist decoding, was a critique of military service (Sieberts 2007:46). Boshoff frequently subverts and mutates Afrikaans, the language of the Apartheid administration and civil society in South Africa, in his work. The title, *Bangboek*, for example, is a pun on the Afrikaans word, *bangbroek*, meaning to be afraid. It translates as *scaredy-pants* and refers not only to his very real fears of the Apartheid

government and the consequences of his subversive beliefs and actions, but also the shame and rejection he would experience socially.

Bangboek is the residue of an X-Men artist's resistance to the Apartheid system of conscription and the hegemonic masculinity it promulgated. Boshoff produced an 86-page document using a military typewriter and official military paper while on duty at a military camp. The work opens with the line: "This is an analysis and account of pressing matters carefully considered while I was in the armed forces..." (Sieberts 2007:46). The document was subversive in nature, critiquing military conscription and ridiculing the SADF. The following year, resolving, as a conscientious objector, to refuse to serve another camp, he began encoding the document. The artist intimates that he was hoping that the painstaking hours this took would steel him for the years of confinement he anticipated (Sieberts 2007:46). Boshoff makes use of performative language in the work. His writing (the written word) reinforces the conviction of his beliefs and initiates physical action or performance. As a consequence, the words must be regarded as performative. Forced into the military institution, he began resisting its codes of behaviour by repositioning or resituating his gender marker through subversive performance. The institution, in response, attempted to regulate his behaviour with threats and humiliation. For example, Boshoff recalls a very public dressing down by his commanding officer in front of his entire unit, consisting of approximately 1000 men (Sieberts 2007:46). A further consequence of his behaviour was being assigned the duty of peeling potatoes. As his obstinacy grew, Boshoff prepared himself for the worst, not only societal and cultural censure but a criminal trial and jail sentence. The creation of a coded language, he envisioned, would enable him to continue his writings undetected in prison.



4. Willem Boshoff, *Prison Sentences* (2003)

In *Prison Sentences* (2003) Boshoff similarly uses coded language to express complex ideas. He draws on performative mark-making to indicate the physical passage of time. In the interview with Sieberts, Boshoff acknowledges that the work is strongly related to *Bangboek* (1978-1981), and his contemplation of life behind bars as a consequence of his civil disobedience (Sieberts 2007:88). Using eight blocks of Zimbabwe black granite to represent the Rivonia trialists, Nelson Mandela amongst them, he indicates the duration of their physical incarceration with marks commonly associated with prison time. Six vertical hacks, diagonally crossed out with a seventh hack, indicating a week. The hack then behaves as a signifier to represent not only the passing of time but of the physical act of *doing time*. *Bangboek* and *Prison Sentences* evidence the performative nature of Boshoff's work. That this is a conscious part of his praxis is supported by his subsequent inclusion of a performing artist persona, the *Big Druid*. He first gave name to this persona in his work, *Big Druid in his Cubicle* (2009), at the Basel Art Fair. The conceptual installation included his presence in the gallery for the

duration of the art fair. As part of his performance, scheduled druid walks were arranged in order that viewers could walk with him.

Boshoff has repeated this performance several times. For example, in 2013 he spent five weeks as the *Big Druid* living in the SMAC Art Gallery in Cape Town. In an interview with reporter, Lucinda Jolly, he remarked: “You are now having a true session with a druid cos I know stuff. I am an academic, I can tell you stuff” (Boshoff 2013). I submit that Boshoff is making a conscious effort to raise the awareness of his audience and to affect transformation.



5. Willem Boshoff, *Big Druid in his Cubicle* (2009).

Drawing on his victory over death (he contracted lead poisoning as a result of sanding lead-based paint off salvaged old wooden doors), the *Big Druid* claims to “do battle with shadows, aesthetic constructs and words” in his cubicle (Boshoff 2010). His druid walks enable him to connect with the essence or spirit of things and places, which in turn, inspire works (Boshoff 2010). By grasping the *genius loci* or spirit of the spaces and environments he inhabits, he believes that he quite literally sees things anew. Upon returning from these walks the *Big Druid* analyses his experiences, creating works to document them. He holds audiences with viewers and visitors, passing on his wisdom and newly-attained insights in the oral tradition of druids and shamans. As artist, Boshoff presents a very specific masculinity, seemingly aligned with the Modernist Greenbergian concept of the divinely-gifted white artistic genius. However, he deconstructs this notion through the inclusion of his physical presence, ready-mades and the performative aspects of his work. His performative installations recall Joseph Beuys’s seminal *Explaining pictures to a dead hare* (1965), in which Beuys disrupts the gallery space with his physical performing presence amongst his works. As with Beuys, Boshoff establishes himself as a diviner and shaman. He remarks in an interview with the Southern African Foundation for Contemporary Art (SAFCA):

The *Druid* [which is a metaphor for the artist himself] is on the side of the loser, the outcast, the person who is unwanted. There is a bit of the Druid in everything that I do. I want to defend the defenceless. I try to save words or plants that are about to become extinct by resuscitating them. If I see people unable to defend themselves, I will try to defend them. In the case of crime, I’ll defend people who have been silenced by murder (Boshoff 2015).

This evidences a performative intentionality: a declared intent to perform the action spoken of. By doing this Boshoff also declares his engagement with the world, that is, an active involvement with it and within it. As espoused by Heidegger and his concept of *Dasein*, he asserts himself as an authentic being. Critically, Boshoff commits to public intervention in the tradition of avant-garde artist.

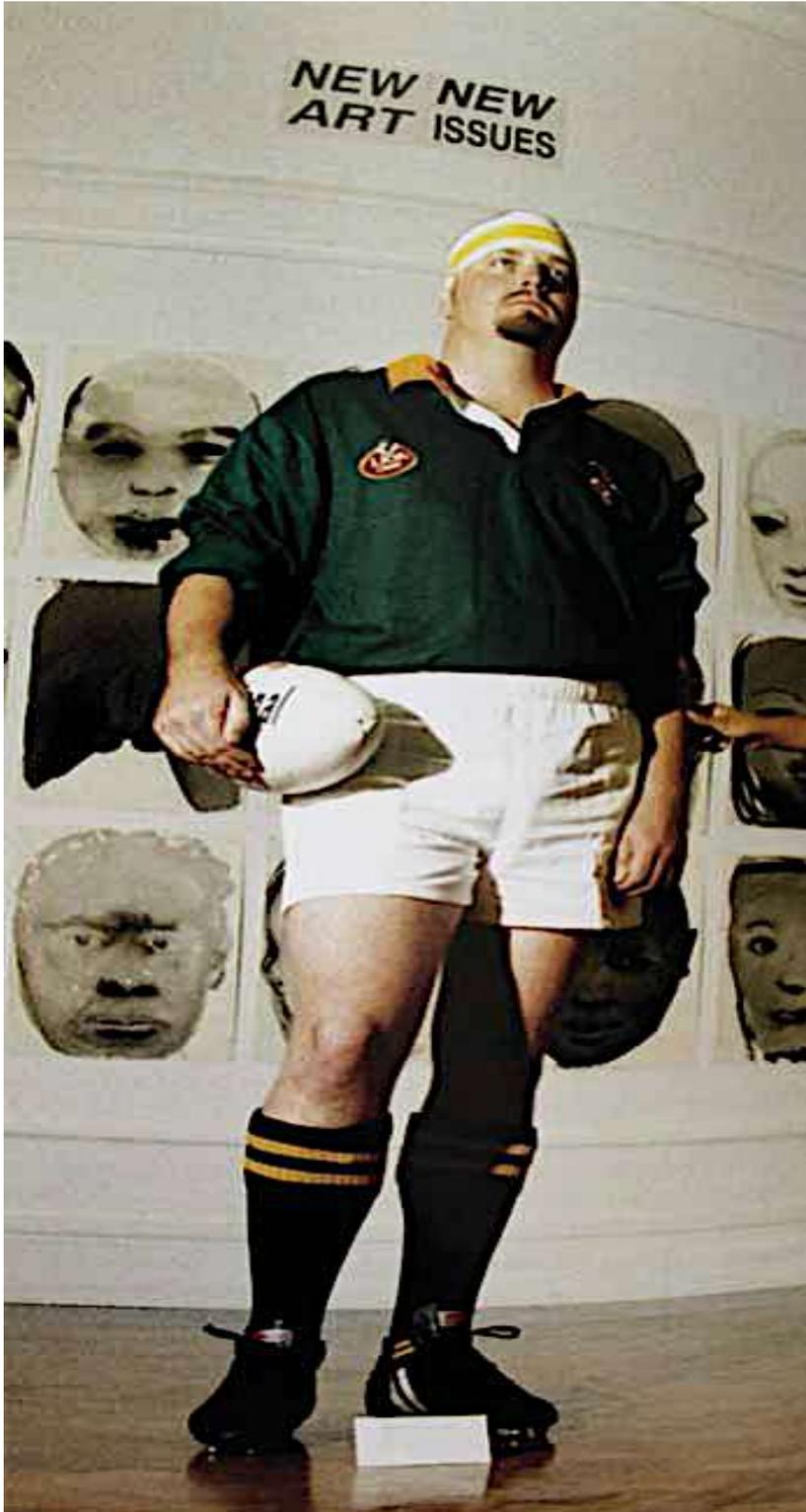
4.6.3 Phallacy: Peet Pienaar

Both Emmanuel and Boshoff problematise the socially accepted notion that boys become men through the military. Societies impose and reinforce this ideology through enduring monuments located in public spaces. These monuments in

marble, bronze and cast iron immortalise the glory of Imperialism, conquest, victory and noble death in battle. Emmanuel deconstructs these ideas by drawing attention to the tragic consequences of war, the fragility of life and memory through his ephemeral anti-monuments. Boshoff's approach is perhaps more subtle, but is nevertheless indicative of his contemplation of monumentalism. He consciously attempts to include the viewer in his monument to the Rivonia trialists. He states that he wanted the panels of *Prison Sentence* to be reflective so that the surface could become "a mirror of the self" (Sieberts 2007:88). These works by Emmanuel and Boshoff exemplify the public interventions I have previously alluded to.

Emmanuel and Boshoff's critique of those ideologies that construct, reinforce and police masculinities are further interrogated by Peet Pienaar. Pienaar links white masculinity and monumentalism. Using his body as a signifier, Pienaar literally becomes a human monument or living statue (Holm 2015:12). During 1996, two years after the fall of Apartheid, he began to insert himself into a transforming public space.

Pienaar's anti- or counter-monuments focus on the social construction of white South African masculinity through sport, specifically rugby football. As a provincial rugby player raised in a conservative farming community during Apartheid, the white Afrikaans-speaking, performance artist would appear to perfectly fit the profile of what was once the masculine ideal in South Africa. However, as a homosexual, he is at odds with heteronormative social notions of masculinity: a masculinity that is complicated by its displacement in the present socio-political environment.



6. Peet Pienaar, *Untitled (Springbok Rugby Player)* (2006).

Referencing this, Pienaar presents himself as a monument to the past hegemonic masculinity, clad in full Springbok rugby kit, holding a rugby ball. The Springboks were once considered a totem of white power in Africa, and remain a contested property in contemporary South Africa (Grundlingh 2013:99). The presentation of this normative masculine ideal by a homosexual artist in public spaces, such as art galleries and shopping centres, informs the viewer of its inherent artifice (Van der Watt 2001:74). With his blatant act of mimesis and the public presentation thereof, he not only highlights the unnaturalness of its construction but initiates a rupture in the viewers' thinking. Liese van der Watt (2001:73-74) believes that by "making whiteness strange", Pienaar questions white masculine identity in post-Apartheid South Africa.

The rupture effected by Pienaar is nowhere more evident than in a very public disagreement involving artist-academic, Thembinkosi Goniwe. The argument was a consequence of Pienaar's *I Want To Tell You Something* (2000) performance piece. Goniwe took exception Pienaar's circumcision by a black woman in a gallery space. He contended that Pienaar had trivialised and commodified the Xhosa circumcision ritual, and further, that the performance was an exercise in white power:

What concerns me is the appropriation of the Xhosa circumcision ritual, reduced to commodity by taking the ritual out of its proper cultural context. What message is sent to those ritual 'originates' [sic] who are sensitively emotional and who hold dear to it, when a white Afrikaans artist - a beneficiary of apartheid - not only raises questions under the problematic term "art" by auctioning his foreskin on the net but also exploits it for financial gain? (Goniwe 2000).

Cobus van Bosch (2000) of *Die Burger* newspaper reports that Goniwe asked, "When are white artists going to make art about being white, and about their own identity?" Responding in a follow up article in *Die Burger*, Pienaar (2000) clarifies:

The work bespeaks far more than a narrowly defined racial interpretation of masculinity: the place of the Afrikaner man in South Africa, financial aspects, power, the body as an artwork and the sale of it, the role of the woman, and surely as many other questions as there are people.

According to Pienaar, the performance concerns the manner in which power and masculinity have been relinquished by the white Afrikaans male in post-Apartheid South Africa. The black female doctor, who wields all the power in the performance, quite literally remodels and transforms the phallus, the locus of patriarchal power. Pienaar acquiesces to the doctor, allowing the operation to be

performed on him as a metaphor for his willingness to transform. The point Pienaar makes is that the performance concerns his white, South African masculine identity as an X-Man artist.

The resultant furore and debates arising from Pienaar's performative masculinity and subsequent circumcision alludes to Baldwin's *incorrigible disturber of the peace*. This is aligned with my contention that the role of the performance artist concerns the new *avant-garde*: an *avant-garde* that initiates rupture, raises awareness and breaks from the past. Pienaar's praxis and conceptual concerns validate his inclusion as an X-Man artist, challenging the *status quo*.

4.6.4 Die beeldestormer: Peter van Heerden

Megan Lewis refers to Peter van Heerden as a *beeldestormer* in an article entitled *Abject Afrikaner, iconoclast trekker: Peter Van Heerden's performance interventions within the laagers of White* (2012). The Afrikaans noun translates into the English, *iconoclast*, a person who attacks or criticizes cherished beliefs or institutions. Both titles, *beeldestormer* and *iconoclast trekker*, I believe, are performative in that they represent a body in action. In my opinion they are also both apt synonyms for the avant-garde.

Like Pienaar, van Heerden deconstructs the myths and icons of white South African masculinity. This is achieved by close scrutiny within the confines of the sacred ritual spaces in performance installations. In these spaces, Van Heerden incorporates metaphor and allegory, compelling audiences to examine how their identities have been constructed and how these may be reconstructed. His performances expose Afrikaner masculine whiteness, and its construction, to scrutiny. Van Heerden studied drama and performing arts, and his conceptual thinking, similar to Butler's, is informed by postmodern theatre theory. As he explains, this is theatre which falls outside of the conventions of formal theatre, and utilises site-specific performance practice to not only enhance the relationship between spectator and performance, but to challenge and implicate the spectator (2004:39-40). This premise proposes that theatre imitates an action in the form of that action, that is, a physical mimesis. It is by the actual doing of what it imitates that theatre represents the action, or performance. As discussed earlier, Butler believes that gender behaves similarly. Our performance of our

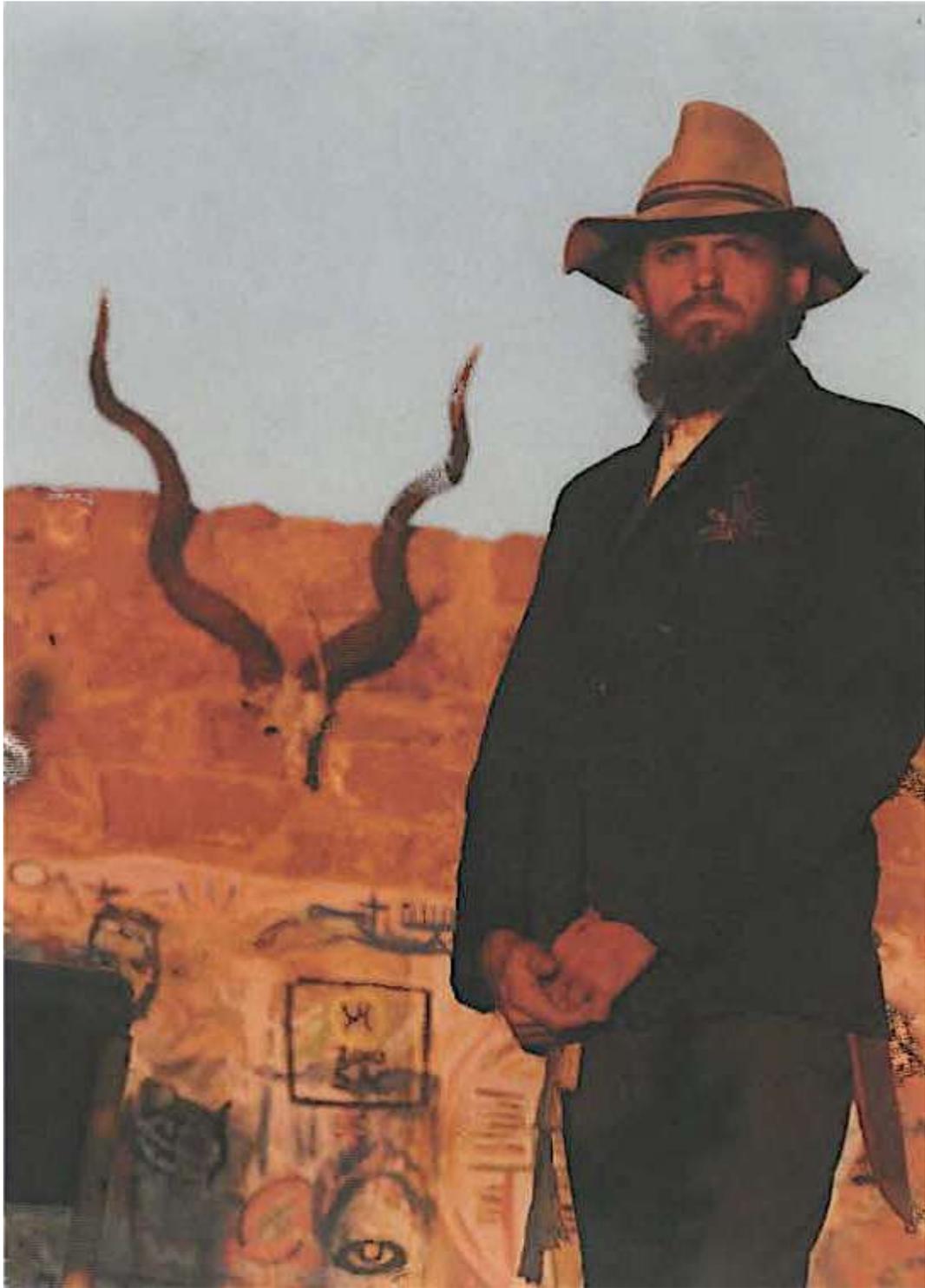
gender in the world is scripted before we are born by our culture and society. *Thrown* into this world, we play the role expected of us. We are expected to conform to the pre-existing, socially prescribed role assigned by sex. When we follow the script, we then affirm and perpetuate these social prescriptions. I argue that performance artists situate their gender differently through subversion of the social script assigned to them. Van Heerden's praxis supports my contention since he is committed to practicing transformative behavioural acts in order to transform (Van Heerden 2004).

The introduction to Van Heerden's Master's dissertation (2004) in theatre and performance, proclaims his commitment to transformative social activism through art:

As a South African artist I am in power to influence some manner of change, through my art, to the structure of national thought and hence national identity. Through my live art installation *TOTANDERKANTUIT*, I offered South Africans the opportunity to engage in the cathartic process of resolution and reconciliation through dialogue (Van Heerden 2004:37).

Van Heerden calls this cathartic process *saamtrekking*, or a coming-together. The coming-together he envisions concerns the X-Man artist and the witnesses to his act of transformative behaviour. By means of his transformative behaviour, he endeavours to open dialogue around identity, particularly white Afrikaans masculine identity and its place in contemporary South Africa (Van Heerden 2004:37). He posits that *saamtrekking* requires acknowledgement in order to be practiced. I believe that acknowledgement indicates awareness, and awareness is imperative to transformation.

Similar to Pienaar, van Heerden inhabits and embodies iconic white South African totems. Pienaar as the iconic Springbok rugby player, and van Heerden as the historical *trekboer*. His use of this signifier is particularly astute because, the mythology of the pioneering *trekboer* was a foundational metaphor of the Afrikaner Nationalist Project and the Apartheid state (Lewis 2012:29).



7. Peter van Heerden, *TOTANDERKANTUIT* (2004).

Having selected a performance identity, van Heerden creates what he calls his *ritualistic habitat* (2004:39). In my practice, I call this a *sacred space*. In this space, van Heerden (2004:39-40) believes that site-specific performance practice might engender an enhanced relationship between spectator, performance and artist. He describes the process as follows: “The resultant interaction of the white man with his habitat, encourages an interaction between spectator and habitat, this interaction forces the spectator to question their social habitat. It is this incursion into the subjectivity of the spectator that results in a dialogue” (Van Heerden 2004:41).

Essentially, van Heerden echoes what I attempt to achieve through my research and performance art: namely an enlightened consciousness or mutual awareness between viewer and artist. This may encourage open dialogue concerning identity in contemporary South Africa, resulting in transformation and acceptance (Van Heerden 2004:37).

Van Heerden uses the *laager* to create his *ritual space*, stationing an ox-wagon facing Fort Selwyn on Monument Hill in Grahamstown. The *laager*, a defensive enclosure created by the *trekboers*, was formed by positioning their wagons in a circle. Lewis (2012:9) describes it as “a symbolic and physical space that delimits what belongs within ... and what must stay out”. This is of particular relevance to South Africa’s Apartheid history. Fort Selwyn, declared a national monument during the 1970s, forms part of 1820 Settler Monument scheme. Van Heerden selected this site for two reasons: its historical relevance and its proximity to the fringe of the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown. The National Arts Festival, the largest on the African continent, is an annual event celebrating the performing arts. It is evident that van Heerden’s conscious location of his performative self is not only within a specific time frame and geographical location but is culturally and institutionally (art) specific. Within these contexts, gender and the body become potent signifiers for analysis because these properties are amplified.



8. Peter van Heerden, *TOTANDERKANTUIT* (2004).

The concept of public pageant, characteristic of Van Heerden's praxis, draws on Apartheid's nation-building strategies, such as the 1820 Settler Monument scheme. Van Heerden's installation is replete with icons of Afrikaner identity, around which he constructs his performative rituals. These allude to *volksfeeste*, celebrations of Afrikaner language and culture associated with its sacred history (Grundlingh 2013:78). The festivals, that included international rugby test matches, were focused on reinforcing the notion of the white Afrikaans man as God's chosen tool of Enlightenment in black Africa. This notion of settler masculinity and its superiority at the centre of these myth-generating events was

of course by no means the sole province of the Afrikaans nation, as is evidenced by Morrell's treatise on the English white South African in the Midlands of Colonial Natal (Morrell 2001). Van Heerden however specifically targets the Afrikaner nation by focusing on the ideological building blocks of the *voortrekker* and the *laager*, and their role in the construction of Afrikaner nationalism. He evokes memories of Afrikaner history and mythology, and then disrupts them through performance interventions, addressing cultural and gender identities, and their construction.

Totanderkantuit (2004), an endurance performance piece, took place over ten days. Each day commenced and concluded with a ritual flag-raising and flag-lowering ceremony. This is a significant gesture that, through repetition over an extended period, amplifies its symbolic meaning. Van Heerden enacts this ritual due to its association with the masculine, the military, conscription and nationalism in Apartheid South Africa. The ritual is enacted within a sacred space, created and designated so by the artist. Van Heerden's encampment, his sacred space, was constructed around an ox-wagon, his *laager*. Within this space he employs flags as signifiers: the South African post-1994 flag, Apartheid-era flags and the *Vierkleur* of the Boer Republics. After the ritual of the evening flag-lowering ceremony, van Heerden's body is abjected in a ritual process he refers to as: *so is 'n os gemaak*. It translates as: this is how an ox is made. Van Heerden describes it as follows: "*So is 'n os gemaak* is my comment on white masculinity in a new political and social dispensation. I enact abjection by utilising icons of South African history and social association attached to them and inscribed onto my physical identity by them" (Van Heerden 2004:11).

Van Heerden endorses Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection and the social taboos relating to the body's materiality, as proposed in *Powers of horror: an essay on abjection* (1982). Kristeva discusses taboos associated with food and bodily emissions, contending that while bodily waste is safely contained within, we can ignore it - and its reminder of our own mortality. In order to survive, it is imperative that the body expels waste (urine, faeces, mucus, tears and pus). Abjection refers to our revulsion at this fact (Lewis 2012:19).

Van Heerden (2004:38) presents a performed abjection of white South African masculinity, his whiteness held up as a condition for its sacrifice rather than for praise or admiration. Lewis (2012:19) identifies van Heerden's approach as

cathartic abjection, since he examines the social body through his own, and instead of ignoring the unpleasant or distasteful elements associated with it, confronts the audience with these¹⁸. His enacted abjection facilitates a metaphoric shedding of the formative processes his gender endured during the Apartheid era. His masculinity and whiteness are exposed and made vulnerable through this shedding: a condition which enables him to construct a transformed identity by entering into a discourse with other inhabitants of his society (Van Heerden 200:36).

This cathartic shedding affords him the opportunity to realign his changing gender identity within a transforming society. Van Heerden associates abjection with transformation; the formulation of a new identity is engineered through a psychological crisis of self, as initiated by a state of physical abjection. Inherent in this process is an acknowledgement of an identity constructed by, and implicated with, the social, cultural and political ideology of Apartheid. A cathartic resolution is achieved through the sacrifice of this past identity and a new strategy of practice (performance) emerges for the redefinition of his identity (van Heerden 2004:47-48). The process and performance is repeated as he revisits the *Totanderkuntuit* performance at selected sites, most notably the *Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunsfees* (KKNK) in 2008. It is further evidence of his *avant-garde* effort at social activism. Van Heerden (2004:41) describes it as follows:

Through performance and installation I hope to infringe on the constructed representations of spectators, through this infringement I intend to break down perceptions, and from the essence of our shared experiences construct and formulate a new strategy of practice to enable communication and interaction with other South Africans in this new cultural dialogue.

4.7 THE POST-AVANT-GARDE

In response to Bürger's theory of the *avant-garde*, Hal Foster (1996) speaks of "the return to the real". His *real* concerns the materiality of bodies as social sites, that is, sexed bodies positioned in a symbolic order. Foster (1996:8-20) argues for the existence of a contemporary *avant-garde*, following Bürger's historical *avant-garde* and *neo-avant-garde*: what he names a *post-avant-garde*. He

¹⁸ In Van Heerden's performance pieces *so is 'n os gemaak* (2004) and *Bok* (2006), he was confined within bags of animal (sheep and cow) blood and innards. (Lewis 2012:30). In *Totanderkantuit* (2006) he was blindfolded and strapped to a cruciform scaffold in the blazing sun with the words 'Wit Kaffir' inscribed in black ink on his chest (Lewis 2012:7).

submits that there is a natural teleological progression of one movement after another: historical *avant-garde* followed by *neo-avant-garde* followed by post-*avant-garde*. He explains that this occurs because, in the case of the *avant-garde*, anti-establishment is destined to become establishment and anti-tradition, tradition (1996).

This is aligned with the goal of X-Men artists, since new ways of performing masculinity will become the old ways of performing masculinity. Although the aim is to break with the past (as is the motive of *avant-garde* artists), it should also be studied in order to gain insight and to learn from it. . I am informed here by Heidegger's notion of Dasein, which intimates that we are born into a world whose history makes us who we are (Dostal 1993: 155). As temporal beings, within our present we find both the past and the future, and therefore agency (Dostal 1993:156). Consequently, time concerns lived experience rather than a mere chronological progression. History should be investigated and excavated to achieve better self-understanding and authentic being.

This approach is exemplified by post-*avant-garde* artists, as evidenced in the praxes of the artists included this discussion. The past is exposed to create an authentic future. An investigation into the lived experiences of my selected X-Men artists and an analysis of their work supports the conclusions of this study. These concern the problematic past formative processes of the masculine gender identity, and its possibility for transformation. I establish that reciprocity between the concept of gender performativity (in theory) and real-life art performance (in practice) has the potential of realizing a new, and likely, cathartic gender identity for the X-Men. This is achieved in part by drawing parallels between the culturally constructed nature of aesthetic experience and gender identity. If artists work through old perceptions to situate gender markers differently, they will write new, unforeseeable realities into consciousness. This responsibility is not confined to the artist-performer, since the audience, and society at large, must immerse themselves in the process.

In conclusion, I deduce that a new white South African masculinity is possible. Having observed artists trying to reinvent their social roles through their praxes, the evolution of a new post-*avant-garde* is not only possible, but likely. This is aligned with Peter Bürger's contention concerning, "the reorganization of the

praxis of life through art; the unbecoming of gender identities and their positive transformation” (1984:59).

Moving from the discussion of the selected X-Men artists, the following chapter concerns an ethnographic analysis of my own work, supplemented by a performance piece evolving from this research.

CHAPTER 5: *Dasein* and the performative artist

This chapter focuses on my practice, identifying commonalities with the X-Men. A critique of the work of my peers, enhances my research and knowledge, because I consider it from various perspectives, albeit that I identify numerous conceptual overlaps. Empirical evidence supports my contention that neither my fellow X-Men artists nor I are restrained by our origins, confirming the relevance and currency of my work.

I use the same ethnographic tools, supplemented by Burke's interrogatory dramatism technique, to analyse my work as previously undertaken with the X-Men artists. The discussion of my work is chronological, comprising three sections:

- 1) Works prior to the dissertation: how these established my praxis and how they influence my current works.
- 2) Performances during the dissertation.
- 3) The conclusions of my research as performance (performance ethnography) at the Unisa Art Gallery, 274 Preller Street, Muckleneuk, Pretoria during October 2018.

This chapter contextualises the practical work from my research study. It involves a brief discussion of preceding work and its conceptual underpinning, followed by a discussion of the research-based work included in this dissertation.

5.1 ART, *DASEIN* AND THE TRUTH OF BEING

According to Heidegger, art is a path to the disclosure of *Being*, and the possibility of authenticity, or *authentic Being*. In his essay, *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1950), he uses Van Gogh's peasant shoes to clarify his point, stating: "The artwork lets us know what shoes are in truth" (2002:15). Heidegger (2002:16) explains: "If there occurs in the work a disclosure of a particular being, disclosing what and how it is, then there is here an occurring, a happening of truth at work. In the work of art the truth of beings has set itself to work".

This argument validates the choice of my fellow X-Men artists and I to use performance art as a tool to present our masculinities and to situate our gender

markers differently. It follows therefore that when considering the X-Men's work it should be understood that there is an attempt to present what each particular artist is in truth rather than merely as products of institutional construction.

This recalls Heidegger's metaphor concerning the forest clearing, illuminated by the moment of *Being*. Art, as the *setting-into-work of truth*, behaves as a force which discloses, acting as a tool for activism (Heidegger 2002:49). He further claims that art, because it is a distinctive way in which truth comes into being, is in its essence a point of beginning. If we allow that "art lets truth originate" (Heidegger 2002:49), then I submit that in the case of the performative artist, the point of origin is the self, the artist's gender identity. Analysing Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Steiner proposes that for the great majority of human beings, the question of being looms "in moments of great despair, when things tend to lose all their weight all meaning becomes obscured" (1978:35). This moment of despair, in my opinion, would certainly fit the description of a crisis in masculinity and particularly that faced by the X Men. I believe that it is this angst that drives the X-Men artists to undergo a cathartic process, striving for an authentic existence.

Dasein refers to two modes of being: authentic and inauthentic. Authentic existence involves the element of choice, whereas inauthentic existence is determined by external forces. Steiner (1978:94) argues: "In inauthentic existence we are constantly afraid (of other men's opinions of what 'they' will decide for us, of not coming up to the standards of material or psychological success, though we ourselves have done nothing to establish or even verify such standards" (Steiner 1978:94).

Fear is part of the banal, prefabricated flux of collective sentiment, whilst angst is what queries our being-in-the-world: "Angst is a mark of authenticity, of the repudiation of 'theyness'" (Steiner 1978:94). Fear results in an inauthentic existence, determined by a pre-designed role whereas angst leads to a dynamic, involved, future-oriented existence. Awareness of the past and the present allows for an imagined possible future, and essentially, an *owning* of one's existence.

Art historian Rosalind Krauss's essay entitled "The originality of the avant-garde" (1981), discusses these ideas of authenticity, originality and origins. Despite postmodernism's disruption of these concepts, she stresses that one constant

remains in the discourse about the *avant-garde* artist - and that is the notion of originality (Krauss 1981:53). She argues that the originality the *avant-garde* claim is as a result of the self as origin (Krauss 1981:54). This transcends merely rejecting the past or revolting against tradition, but is rather a literal origin or birth: "a beginning from ground zero" (Kraus 1981:53-54). This birth affects a disconnection from a "tradition-laden past", a critical distinction when considering the X-Men's case (Krauss 1981:53). She proposes:

The self as origin is safe from contamination by tradition because it possesses a kind of originary naïveté. Hence Brancusi's dictum, 'When we are no longer children, we are already dead.' Or again, the self as origin has the potential for continual acts of regeneration, a perpetuation of self-birth. Hence Malevich's pronouncement, 'Only he is alive who rejects his convictions of yesterday.' The self as origin is the way an absolute distinction can be made between a present experienced *de novo* and a tradition-laden past. The claims of the *avant-garde* are precisely these claims to originality (Krauss 1981:53).

I hoped to find evidence of this act of regeneration through the study of the work of my fellow X-Men artists. As revealed in my analysis, the idea of disconnecting from a tradition-laden past and beginning afresh is characteristic of the performative X-Men's work. I attempt to locate this rebirth in my own work.

5.2 *swany*

As with masculinities studies and men's studies, the investigation of my own masculinity is informed by my engagement with feminism. Raised by my mother, a single parent, I had very few male role models, and consequently gravitated towards strong feminine presences. As a student, I found it perfectly natural to emulate both female and male artists. In fact, I devoted the greater part of my attention to female artists. As developing artist, I was profoundly influenced by the Second Wave feminist performance artists of the 1970s: specifically, Ana Mendieta (1948-1985), Carolee Schneemann (1939), Hannah Wilke (1940-1993), Mary Beth Edelson (1933) and Marina Abramović (1946). These five artists informed the conceptual underpinning of much of my early research and practical work. Significantly, they inspired me to use performance to interrogate gender issues and societal constructs. That these women are of my mother's generation does not escape me.

The development of my artist persona, *swany*, was closely related to an increasing consciousness of gender and its construction, as stimulated by feminist studies. The name, an inherited title, is a derivative of my surname, *Swanepoel*. My father, who died when I was six, was known as 'Swannie', even by my mother. A name traditionally bestowed on all male members of the family, it was inevitably passed on to me. The identification of children by their surnames is of course very gender specific, and is almost exclusively applicable to boys. It is generally implemented at schools by older males: boys, prefects, male teachers and sports coaches. It is an official acknowledgement of one's masculinity as well as an indication of separation from the feminine as represented by the mother-figure. The title was bestowed upon me by the teachers once I entered high school. In an all boys' school the break from my mother and home was emphasized by this use of my surname to address me. My entrance into manhood was further entrenched by the forced participation in rugby, and the bestowing upon me, by my peers and the sports coaches, of my father's personal name, Swannie.

The use of a nickname has a descriptive function, signalling membership of a specific group or institution. A nickname is a title that a group and/or person in power openly designate to a specific person. The name becomes a signifier for that person, indicating how he is regarded within that particular group. The extremely strong patriarchal and masculine connotations are therefore evident. Nicknames carry social meaning about their referents. My surname, and therefore nickname, references my colonial ancestor, Petrus Jansz Swaenepoel (later known as Pieter Swanepoel), who arrived in South Africa in 1699. It is no coincidence that my father's first names were Peter Andrew while mine are Andrew Peter, since Peter is the anglicised version of Petrus.

An act of re-invention rather than subterfuge, my use of the heteronym *swany* indicates my exploration of gender and masculinity as performance. Further, it evidences awareness or knowing, and also a perception of what is known. The metaphor is derived from Heidegger's clearing in the forest, *lichtung*. *Swany* is my point of origin, from which I explore language, being and transformation. I consciously anglicise the nickname and use lower case letters to critique its associated narratives within South African society. These would include those of white male Afrikaners and their Dutch origins, alluding to the nation's colonial

legacy and the implementation of Apartheid. Much like gender is used by feminist theorists as a conceptual tool to investigate hierarchal power structures within society so I utilize the *swany* construct. It is also a signifier within my associated concepts of identity and self-representation. As with gender, it functions both as a noun and verb. It becomes performative, a *doing* or action, not only because of its accompanying social significance but also because of its intimate link to my performances.

The name speaks of a very specific masculinity; white, Afrikaans and South African, and all that is associated with that. It therefore becomes not only a presentation of my masculinity but also of my whiteness, my culture and my society. I am not only saying, 'here is my masculinity', but, more importantly, 'I am not what you think I am.'

5.3 TURNING THE OUTWARD INWARD – GAZE (2012)

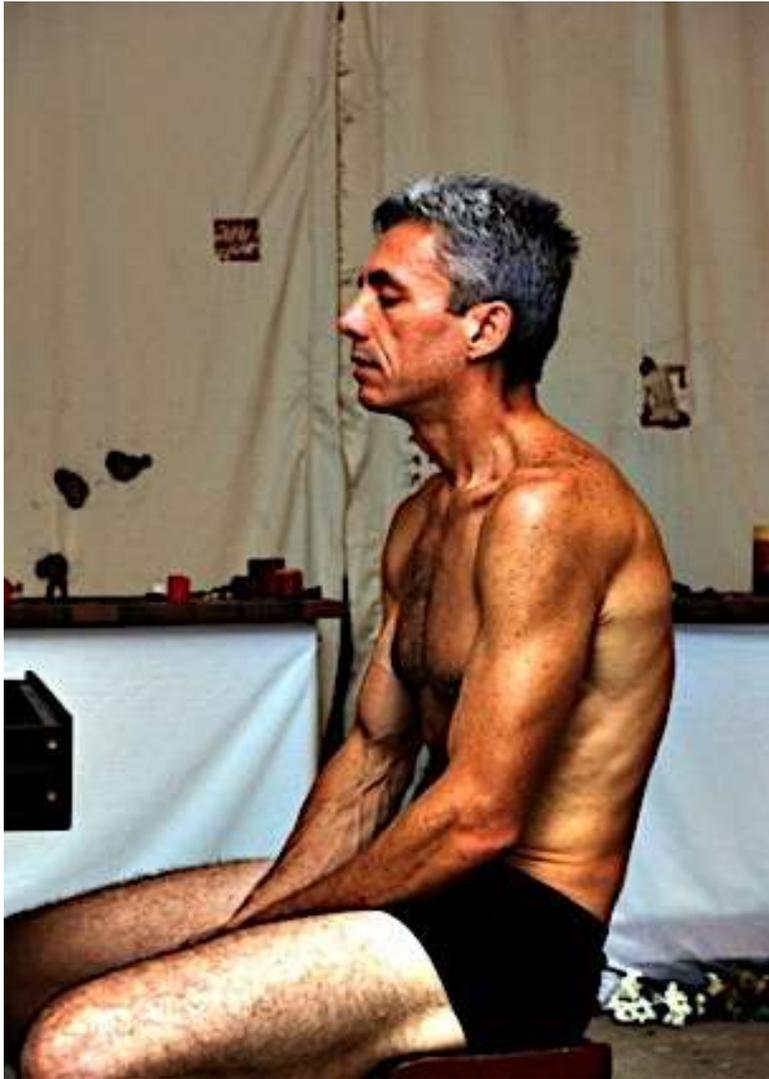
In 2012, I presented a performance and installation piece called *Gaze*. It was a multi-faceted art piece including an installation, visual works, a video documented performance and was informed by the work of five feminist performance artists. The inclusion of my physical presence alluded to an interrogation of my relationship with the feminine. The fundamental issue raised by my investigation (and representation of the female artist and the feminist struggle) is the question of my eye, and how it interprets and colours what I perceive. As a consequence, the work is entitled *Gaze*.

Burke's pentad: act, scene, agent, agency and purpose, clarifies motive and intent. *What was done?* The ritual of hair removal is central to the performance of *Gaze*. Echoing Emmanuel's *Transition* work and recalling my own experiences as a conscript in the South African Defence Force, I shaved my entire body and head before an audience. Implicit to this ritual are notions of purification, supplication, grief and shame, since I shaved myself. This contrasts with the head shaving process in the SADF, where it is a mandatory ritual, undertaken by another.



9. *swany, Gaze (2012).*

Where did it take place? The performance took place in an art gallery, a venue that serves an ideological function, prescribing how the performance should be viewed and understood within the institution of art. However, I transformed the *white cube* or gallery into a personal ritual space, indicating my awareness of its influence on my work and the viewer. Ceiling to floor-length hangings were used to completely obscure the white walls. Embroidered and branded onto the fabric were images from performances done by Mendieta, Schneemann, Wilke, Edelson and Abramović.



10. swany, *Gaze* (2012).

Who did it? The agent or performer was *swany*, loaded with all the associated signifiers the name and its assignation to my artist-persona implies. *How did I perform?* The rituals performed and repeated, largely involved the removal of hair from my body. My agency was challenged by the presence of an audience, and a documenting photographer and videographer. *Why?* What was the purpose of the performance? The concept centres on a rupture of the social construct concerning the male gaze. This relates to the idea of looking as a relationship of power between the active and the passive (Berger 1972, Mulvey 1975). As Laura Mulvey submits, it is the masculine which is the active, and bearer of the gaze,

while the feminine remains passive and is the object (Mulvey 1975:837). The power, of course, is aligned with the active bearer of the gaze. John Berger (1972:74) wrote of the *gaze*:

One might simplify this by saying: men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object - and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.



11. swany, *Gaze* (2012).

As swany, I relinquished power as the gazer, presenting myself instead as an object of the gaze. My introspective investigation involved an un-layering of my various male identities to understand my position at that specific point in my life. This subjective act before an audience alludes to a public shedding of skin. Instead of the stereotypical position as coloniser-gazer, I became the colonised object to be gazed at. This presentation of a vulnerable, (essentially feminising) masculinity is characteristic of performance artists such as Peet Pienaar and Peter van Heerden.

During the performance-act, the artist asks: who am I, what am I and how did I become? This introspective interrogation establishes Krauss's *ground zero* or Heidegger's *point of beginning*, as discussed previously. Through this reflexive process the artist creates the possibility of *unbecoming* or of remaking, not only for himself, but also for the viewer.

5.4 THE LOCATING OF SELF – PROOF OF LIFE (2013)

My introspective self-investigation continued during 2013. Documenting myself for the period of a year, I took daily *proof-of-life* photographs. Normally associated with hostages or kidnap victims, the title plays on this notion of authentication by a newspaper. The purpose of a proof-of-life photograph is to provide proof that the victim is alive as of the newspaper's print date that he or she holds. Since newspapers are region-specific, they are often used for this purpose.

The series of photographs present me at a very specific time and place. The daily ritual act of holding a daily newspaper to face the camera served to locate me within an identified society. Newspapers, as devices of documentation, convey frighteningly important information, juxtaposed with the mundane and trivial. The use of the self-portrait to identify and locate myself enables a simultaneous subversion and deconstruction of the medium. This *comment on myself* critiques the society within which I am located and often at odds with.

For exhibition purposes, the 365 images were printed on wallpaper and applied to the gallery walls. This was intended to evoke the mundane, reflecting something dated and transitory. The newspapers used were neatly stacked in the gallery alongside a large carpet printed with a reworked, painted proof-of-life image. A looped stop-frame video constantly played the 365 images (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esoe8bg3iLI>).



12. swamy, *Proof of Life* installation (2013).

The title, *Proof of Life* (2013), is a commentary on contemporary existential angst. It references the cruel irony of our existence, that in order to quantify, define and position ourselves, we need other people, even if only to compare and contrast ourselves with. On a personal level, it reflects my growing sense of dislocation and alienation as a white South African, and identity crisis as a man. This crisis is indicative of my work and other X-Men performance artists. I regard this in a positive light, because we hold up whiteness and masculinity for examination by others. This is largely a phenomenological act where whiteness and masculinity are presented as lived experiences. As van Heerden states: “As a white South African man I am harnessed to my lived experiences, which I must pull through the present into the future” (Van Heerden 2004).



13. swany, Proof of Life (2013).



14. swany, *Proof of Life* (2013).

An acknowledgement of the past does not negate our ability, or willingness, to rise above our origins as white, Generation X, South African men. Existential angst is a characteristic of this work and as such the work is indicative of an engagement with Heidegger's concept, *Dasein*. I locate myself in the world to question my authenticity in a contemporary South Africa. This body of work may be considered a precursor to my conceptual thinking for this dissertation.

5.5 MASCULINE LANGUAGE - *SOUTY* (2014-2016)

Between 1967 and 1994, approximately 600 000 young white men were conscripted for national service in the South African Defence Force to protect *the borders* of South Africa. These borders included those of South West Africa (now Namibia), which was effectively a colony of the Apartheid State at the time. Most assuredly a conflict designed to maintain the status quo of white minority rule within South Africa, the Border War was also essentially a Cold War conflict between the USA and USSR, with South Africa and Cuba as representatives of each. It is within this historical and geographical context that a large portion of the *origin-stories* of the X-Men may be found.

In an attempt to understand my complicity with Apartheid, specifically through my military service in the SADF, I began a series of works in 2014, both static and performative, which interrogated the institution and my experience thereof. The role my time in the military played in the construction of my masculinity was therefore also explored. As a conscript, I spent 14 months in the South West African Territorial Forces (SWATF) in the mid-1980s. This was just prior to the declaration of a State of Emergency by the government, a consequence of the armed struggle's escalation within the country and on its borders. I referenced this time by spending a similar time period (14 months) collecting army boots. In an extremely labour-intensive process, I deconstructed the boots by soaking them in vats of water. Once the leather had sufficiently softened, I tore the soles off and cut the leather along the existing stitch lines. I then reassembled the pieces as canvases, upon which I etched trace images of dislocation, trauma and melancholy. Much like Paul Emmanuel's works, despite being static, they reflect the performative through their arduous construction. My leather canvases were displayed with sculpted and archived objects in a group exhibition I curated entitled *G1KI* (2014). *G1KI* was a medical designation utilised in the SADF, indicating a soldier's physical fitness and suitability for deployment anywhere and anytime, without a medical facility being nearby.



15. swany, *Soutpiel* (2014).

Central to my investigation of this institution were the designations it utilised such as the GK medical one. The primary military designation however was the allocation of a force number which was done on the X-Men's sixteenth birthday. The extremely effective implementation of this designation by the Apartheid State is evidenced in the fact that some thirty years on I am still able to immediately recall my own: 79431185. The second military designation concerned the conscript's medical classification upon induction into the armed services. In my case, it was the aforementioned *G1K1*. These designations, as well as the shaving of the conscript's head and the donning of a uniform were designed to eradicate all traces of personal identity and civilian life, essentially a process of *defeminisation*. Once successfully processed the conscript was then placed within a strictly regimented and enforced hierarchy of power. Access to power was clearly identified by designated position rankings within the armed force

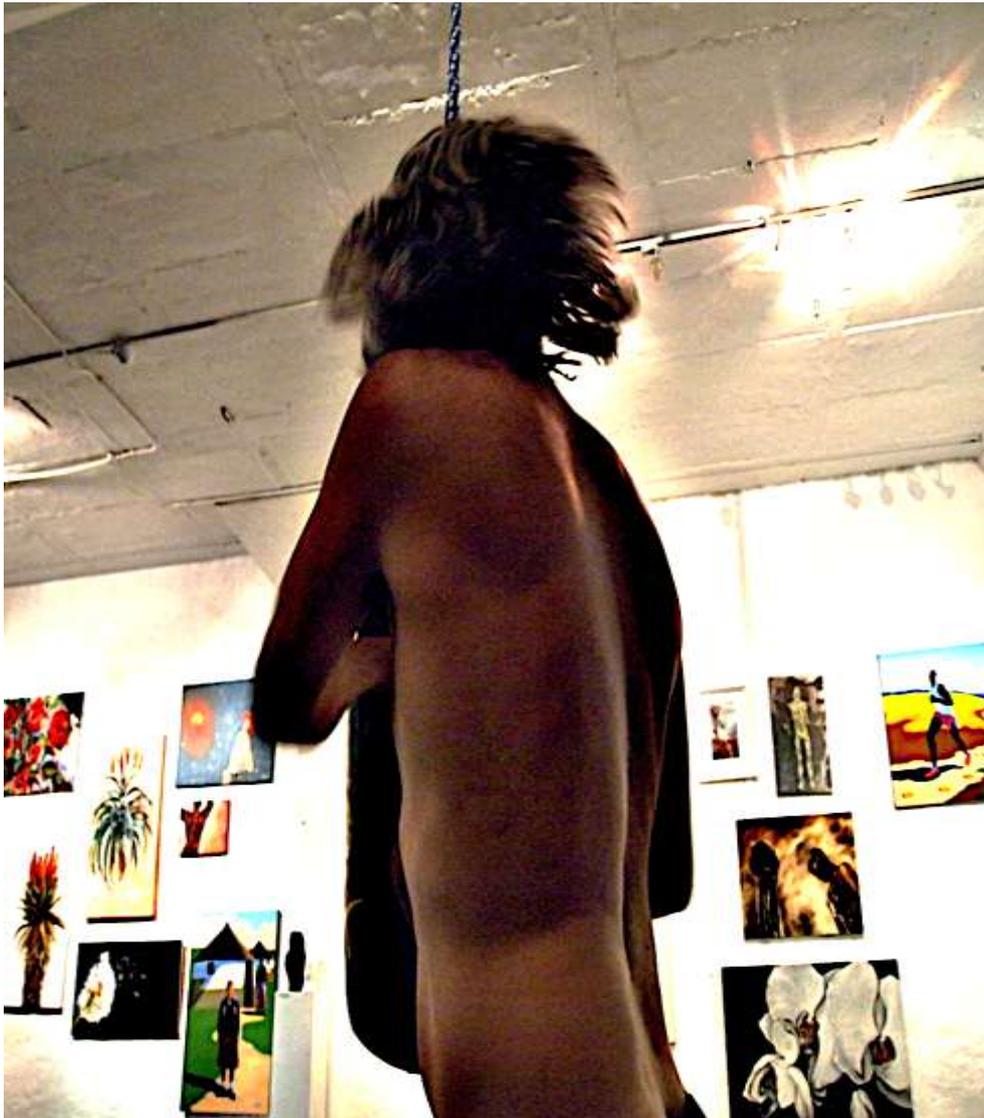
structure. This power structure was paralleled by a hegemonic one: that of the tall, muscular, heterosexual, white, male, Afrikaans, rugby-playing farmer.

Additionally there were informal designations, sanctioned and encouraged by both commanding non-commissioned and commissioned officers. As an English speaker, I received the title, *soutpiel*. *Soutpiel* or *soutie* was a derogatory name given to English-speaking conscripts. It is derived from the metaphor of English-speaking South Africans having one foot in Africa and the other in Europe, with their penises hanging in the ocean. My speaking what my commanding officers referred to as *the language of the communist*, was exacerbated by the fact that I had an Afrikaans surname and lived in *the Last British Outpost*, Durban. There was a special hell reserved for English-speaking conscripts from Durban, especially if they had Afrikaans surnames. These attributes signalled me out for especially brutal treatment during the training phases of my military service.

The brutality of the National Service system was notably reflected in the language used and the rituals enforced on the conscripts, such as the cadence: “this is my rifle, this is my gun, this is for fighting, this is for fun!” There was a conscious and ideological linking of rifle and penis here, as weapons of the State. Insults such as: “jy lag soos ’n hoer wat ’n sak vol piele gevind het” (you laugh like a whore who has found a sack full of penises) furthered this military environment’s disassociation from, and denigration of the feminine. It was these words which I burned into my leather canvases, a process indicative of this brutality and the resultant trauma.

In January 2016, in a performance which marked the culmination of my experiential interrogation of the military institution, I returned to the scene of my induction: the Natal Command Precinct. The performance commenced with my standing guard in a local art gallery¹⁹ from 18h00 to 06h00 hours (the duration of the SADF’s night watch). During my 12 hour vigil, sealed within the confines of the gallery, I pummelled a punching-bag and carried out military drills. Alone in the space, I documented these performances on camera and video.

¹⁹ The night vigil took place in the artSPACE Gallery, located at 3 Millar Road in Durban

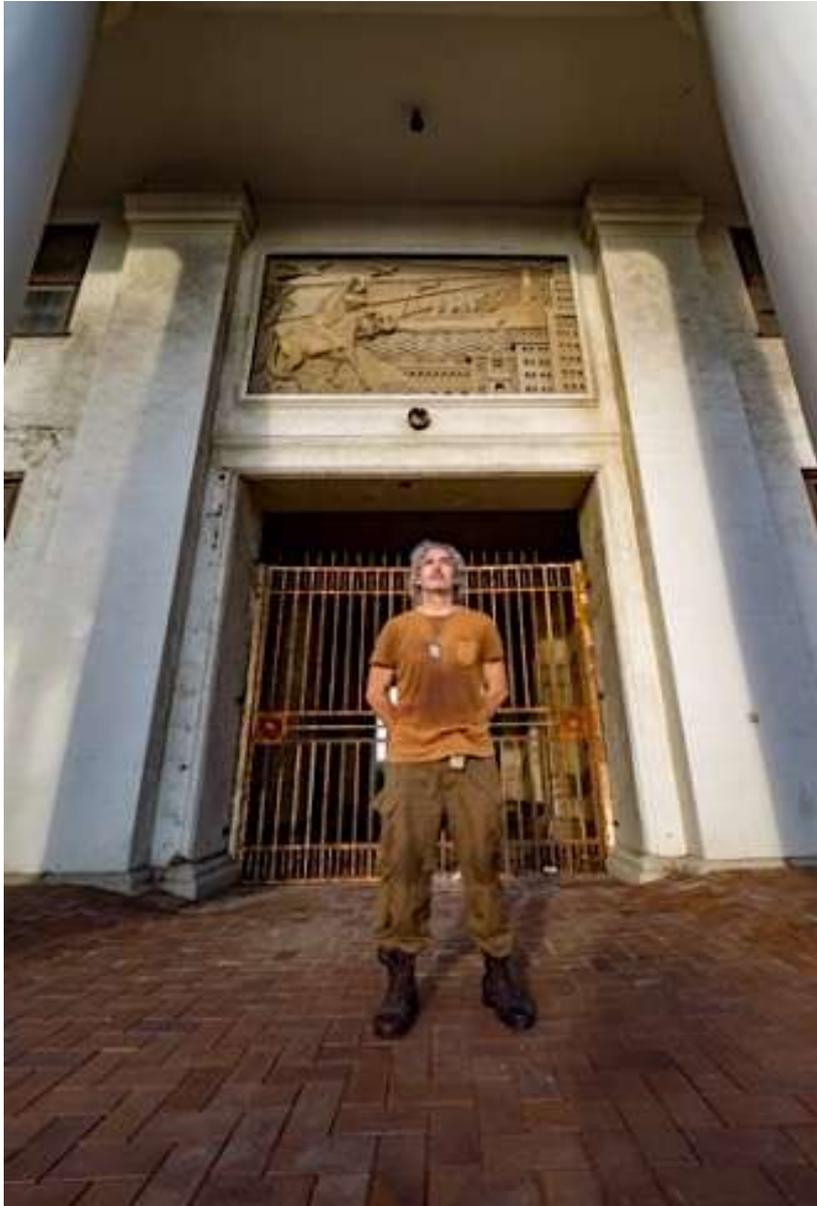


16. swany, Untitled (Nightwatch) (2016).



17. swany, Untitled (2,4) (2016).

Just before 06h00 hours the gallery owner freed me to run a 2,4 (the army standard fitness evaluation test of 2.4 kilometres). Running to the old SADF Natal Command Precinct in my army uniform, I carried out three rituals using my own blood, which I had a nurse draw from me. Much as early man did in dark caves around the world, I marked three specific sites in the old military precinct with my handprints. The first site was the two sentry houses that new conscripts would pass through on their way to being inducted, leaving their civilian lives behind. The second site was the old Natal Command Church, while the third was the towering ceremonial arch of the main entrance facing the Indian Ocean and Durban's Golden Mile. This part of the performance was documented by a photographer.



18. swany, Untitled (Natal Command) (2016).



19. swany, *Untitled (Natal Command)* (2016).

In no way was the work an attempt to negate the struggle conflict or to claim victimhood for white men. Instead, by marking this historical military site with my bloody handprints, I indicated not only my physical presence in the institution but also my coming to terms with my complicity with Apartheid and its war machine. The trauma of this relationship is alluded to through the thirteen hour process of physical trials and bloodletting which preceded a cathartic public ritual within the old military precinct. This performance was a presentation of lived experience, in an attempt to foster understanding and to initiate transformation.

5.6 CATHARSIS THROUGH TRIAL - 40RTY (2016)

All my performances of masculinity concern catharsis and transformation. The performances concern the identification of toxicity, an acknowledgement of complicity, followed by a process of submission and abjection, and finally, transformation. This same process is fundamental to the performances of Peet Pienaar and Peter van Heerden. The identified crisis of self, often referred to as a *crisis of masculinity*, is indicative of questioning and transformation. It is something I view as positive rather than as the negative often associated with the term. I locate my masculinity and reveal alternative trajectories, trajectories that are as applicable to fellow X-Men and other white South African masculinities. As a performance artist, I cause a rupture, challenging tradition in order to initiate change.

Informed by my academic research for this dissertation, and by the praxes of the selected artists and mine, I constructed a performance specifically for this project. This was an exercise in translating text into corporeal action. The piece is entitled *40RTY*, the number *40* serving as signifier. This number is significant in Western ideology and Christian beliefs. Christ is driven into the desert wilderness by the Holy Spirit, where he fasts for 40 days and 40 nights. During this time, he is tempted three times by Lucifer. The number 40 appears in both the Old and New Testaments: it symbolises a period of testing, trial or probation. In secular life, a generation is determined as 40 years. For the X-Men of my generation, *40 days* was a ritually celebrated day: the first day of the final 40 days as a SADF conscript. Central to this work are the various ways that the number 40 is significant. It informs my performance piece, buttressed by my physical presence and bodily actions. Since I am cognisant of the semiotic, political, ethnographic, cartographic and mythical implications associated with a breathing body, I present my own body as the primary artwork. The associations are amplified through ritual, artefacts, symbols, a sacred space and significant gestures.

A *significant gesture* is a simple action or a body movement that takes on a special significance through its duration, repetition, exaggeration, isolation, difficulty or context, or combinations of these factors. Once I have researched my concept, I usually consider which performative action or gesture will translate the research into the visual. The rule which I abide by is that it should be a simple gesture that eschews the illustrative. In this case my concept was informed by

Butler's theory of performativity and thus my intention was to present a performance of masculinity. I selected to perform what is generally considered one of the most masculine of rituals; the shaving of the face. There is a certain intimacy associated with the ritual as well as aspects of purification, gentrification and silent introspection. However, I subverted the ritual by waxing my face instead of shaving it, undergoing the painful process before an audience in the art gallery. This performance was designed to challenge gender perceptions.



20. swany, 40RTY (2016). artSPACE Gallery, 29 October 2016.

I am always mindful that, during my performances, the action must be enacted (acted out) rather than acted (acted as), ensuring that I remain the artist, rather than assuming a fictive role. A comparison may be made with a person entering a classroom and assuming the role of teacher. The identity of the person remains, despite the person assuming the mantle of teacher. The performance of teacher is not a fictional one unless performed in the context of theatre or film. As a teacher in a classroom, the role is enacted while in a theatre it is acted. The viewer will read the performance according to the location and context: these are crucial to the premise of enacting or acting.

This dissertation deals with the artist as subject of a performance ethnographic study. As such, I constructed a structure to be installed specifically in an art gallery. This was to be my *sacred space* within which my ritual would be performed.

The *sacred space* comprises of a construction of welded metal bars. Viewers have commented that it resembles a pulpit, a confessional, a guard-tower and even a *Ratel*. A *Ratel* is an armoured combat vehicle, and was used to transport infantry soldiers by the SADF. I was pleased by the multiple associations attached to the structure as symbol/artefact/relic. This questions the observer's preconceptions of the observed. The structure itself plays an active role in interrogating the notion of the gaze, through two-way mirror glass and controlled lighting. The only light is a single bulb installed within the roof of the structure. As a result, when I am performing in the *sacred space* my vision is limited to my reflection. The viewers can see me through the glass or the opening at the rear of the structure. The entire notion of Western white male reality as a condition resulting from the gaze is challenged, and deconstructed when that same male is made an object for consumption and interpretation. Further, an artist's body placed within a gallery space becomes an art object, presented to an audience as part of an on-going visual discourse. A component of this discourse concerns the concept of the subject being observed while observing self: the gaze as a dual act of narcissism and introspection. The highly charged gallery space created within the gallery becomes conducive to the performance of rituals.



21. swany, 40RTY (2016). artSPACE Gallery, 29 October 2016.

In order to prepare for the performance, I underwent a gruelling, self-imposed period of testing. This included a 40-day fast, designed to not only purify the body but to construct the state of mind necessary to present a performance art piece. This process intensified the ritual performance, as the audience was aware of the preparation leading up to the piece. During the performance I played a recording of me chanting, singing and whispering. I layered various recordings into a single audio track, a soundtrack which was aimed at creating an atmosphere that intensified the experience for both viewer and performance artist. It also served as ethnographic tool. Aligned with Butler's theory of performativity, language is not merely a *stating of something* but is an active *doing of something*. Gendered subjects are produced by naming them and their roles, and are reinforced through repetition. Repetition includes behaviour and dress, of which ritual and ritualistic reproduction are a part. I recorded performative utterances about the construction of the masculine gender. I included utterances that denigrate the masculine as a way of provoking a refutation of the feminine. For example, the

word *boy*. The implication is not only, *not yet a man*, and is further threatened by the implied association with the feminine through words like *baby*, *cry-baby*, *girl* and *girly-boy*. These words instigate action and reaction, whereby an action is instigated through utterance.

Essentially this is a performance of masculinity and of resistance or protest masculinity (as in reaction to). The viewer is made aware of my attempt to reposition gender markers by means of my presentation of a vulnerable and exposed masculinity, and its public *shedding*.

By presenting a performance ritual with performative utterances, the work is aligned with performance ethnography. It becomes the reporting of *research in performance*. Further, although this dissertation is practice-led, integral to its purpose is that the practical component is considered performed research.



22. swany, 40RTY (2016). artSPACE Gallery, 29 October 2016.

5.7 PERFORMANCE ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE X-MEN

George Belliveau (2014:126) believes that “performed research consists of translating analysed data into performance in a manner that research findings and art inform one another”. As practitioner and researcher, performative inquiry allows me to engage in research which engineers critical moments through creative action while allowing for critical reflection and analysis. I am able to interrogate how individual moments of performance, both as artist and as masculine identity, can be understood as embodied data. I use the conclusions of my praxis-in-action to inform my own behaviour. These conclusions are further informed and supported by my study of fellow artists in the X-Men community.

In the preceding chapter, I analysed the selected works of four white male South African artists, identified as X-Men. Research and analysis of these artists served to corroborate my own work and conclusions. This process is aligned with the theories of Butler and Heidegger concerning being-in-the-world and the intersubjectivity of our social being. I contend that, in order to become different from what and who we are, we must have some awareness of what and who we are in the first instance. As argued, the body may be considered representative of the larger socio-political body. Performance artists are aware of this, consciously presenting and performing their bodies and gender before an audience. The body becomes a fundamental tool to interrogate, critique and deconstruct societal prescriptions and perceptions. As such, there is an acknowledgement of the corporeality of existence, its temporality and the specificity of its historical contexts and situations.

This type of study exemplifies the *ethnographic turn* highlighted by Hal Foster’s article, “The artist as ethnographer?” (1995). Aligned with Foster’s caution (1995:302-304) the study does not assume that the *other* is located outside, but instead, consciously *self-others* without becoming an endeavour in narcissism. Admittedly it is, as Foster puts it, a form of *confessional testimony*, but it also serves as a self-aware, reflexive reading of culture as text, and vice versa (Foster 1995:304). Throughout this praxis one arrives at a site or moment which is an intersection between artistic and political transformation, initiated by a crisis of self rather than of a need for representation (Rutten & Soetaert 2013:465).

My process has been determined by an analysis of my past in order to understand its impact on my present, positively impacting on my future. As an academic exercise I have contextualised and corroborated my process through research that includes the study of a group of subjects I share characteristics and circumstances with, the X Men. This is an exercise in Foster's *self-othering*: it is both ethnographic and auto-ethnographic. As researcher, I challenge the norm by using performance ethnography to present my findings in performed research. This is motivated by a desire to initiate social transformation, specifically as pertains to constructions of masculine gender identity, its performance, associated prejudices and stereotyping.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

6.1 LICHTUNG - THE CLEARING

I have stressed that Heidegger's concept of *Being* and its designation, *Dasein*, are key to this dissertation. *Dasein* is a *being-in-the-world*, and a *being-of-the-world*. It involves being situated in a pre-existing world, that acts upon *being* and upon which *being* itself acts. This is a world of involvements and relationships, where all things are shaped. This presumes agency in *Being*, allowing for potentiality, possibility and actuality (MacAvoy 2000:37). The notion of *Dasein* and its agency dovetails with Butler's theory of performativity. Both theorists address the question of phenomenology or lived experience, and its role in *Being*.

The immediacy of presence and experience is evidenced in *openings* which allow for illumination, enabling the *unconcealing of the concealed*. Heidegger refers to these moments of illumination or clarity as *lichtung*. The metaphor concerns a clearing in a forest where things may be uncovered or observed anew. This thinking is aligned to Meleau-Ponty's (1964:5) notion of rediscovering the structure of the perceived world through a process of excavation, much like that carried out by an archaeologist. Enlightenment is a consequence of *awareness-of* instigated by *unconcealment*. This position may be observed through masculinity's growing self-awareness (and understanding) as a consequence of feminism and gender studies. Following the lead of Heidegger, I have attempted to engineer my own clearing or moment of *lichtung* in this study. I have used research and my art practice as excavation tools to *unconceal* (reveal). It is envisioned that my process results in Heidegger's *lichtung* for researcher and reader, and artist and viewer.

6.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sets out to examine an identified problem; men as the main agents and perpetrators of violence in our societies. A research review establishes a possible root of this societal ill. This concerns the processes involved in the formation of gender identity, specifically, masculine identities. A focus group is

selected to investigate this premise: white South African men of the Baby Boomer and Generation X generations. As part of this focus group, I argue that we X-Men are not necessarily stuck in the past, caught in the trap of how our gender identities were formed.

The focus is not limited to scholarship and prevalent theories but includes practice and activism. The study endeavours to contribute towards a strategic reversal of gender prejudices and stereotyping, and to initiate transformation within these masculinities. I envisage that this goal is attainable through a focus on gender performativity and the praxis of performance art. I suggest that the artist can contribute to the conversation by working through old perceptions and situating gender markers differently. This premise is informed by the notion that there is reciprocity between the concept of gender performativity (in theory) and real-life art performance (in practice). I believe that this has the potential of realising a new, unforeseeable, cathartic gender identity for men. Additionally, I hope that it undermines the stereotypical perceptions harboured by broader society as a consequence of men's toxic behaviour.

6.3 MAIN FINDINGS

Research and ethnographic inquiry reveals that gendered institutions play a major role in the creation of problematic masculine behaviours and the resultant toxic masculinities. As pertains specifically to my focus group, schools, rugby football and the military are found to be actively responsible for the construction of male identities within a specific historical and geographical context. In the case of the X-Men, the regulated codes of behaviour, and rites of passage employed by these institutions are identified as problematic processes that instilled and enforced exaggerated notions of masculinity.

Influenced by researchers Jeff Hearn, Raewyn Connell and Robert Morrell, I focus on life-history research to provide empirical evidence on the construction of masculinities. The X-Men's problematic gender identities and their connection to Apartheid institutions is examined and analysed in relation to current lived experiences with the hope of cathartic resolution.

A study of the praxes of selected X-Men artists substantiates my theoretical study and proposed a way forward for a generation of South African men. Inherent in my process is an acknowledgement of an identity constructed by, and implicated with, the social, cultural and political ideology of Apartheid. By *sacrificing* this past identity a new strategy of practice (performance) emerges from the redefinition of the X-Men's identities. As a result, a cathartic resolution is achieved, as evidenced by the analysis of my own art praxis.

6.4 RELATION TO PRIOR RESEARCH

The relevance of my study is abundantly supported by the currency of available research, and the growing interest in the field. My findings are consistent with those of Connell, Hearn and Morrell. Our starting points are similar: the influence of feminist studies on gender, and ethnography as tool of enquiry. Although my conclusions are compatible with their findings, my methodology and methods differ in various respects.

Ethnography, one of the main tools of masculinities research, is utilised in this study. Ethnography operates as a theoretical lens through which the social behaviour and social relations of specific, contextualised masculine identities are observed. It allows me to tell a group's story from the perspective of the individual participants. Important to this study, specific patterns of masculinity and their formative processes are revealed through the use of ethnography. However, my methodology differs from the majority of other research studies as it supplements the study by means of the inclusion of an autoethnographic study. I elect to analyse my personal experience of masculinity and its performance/behaviour. This is motivated by the desire for an understanding of broader societal experience and behaviour, and how these can be resisted and even transformed. Recognising the masculine performances of others made me acutely aware of my own. This awareness identifies the potential of agency within my own performance and those of other men. This conclusion is supported by my analysis of other X-Men's praxes. Informed by my research, performance art is my tool of action and activism.

The inclusion of my own art practice with that of my fellow X-Men is done in order to gain new knowledge through the personal experience of practice and the

outcomes of that practice (Candy 2006:1). As with my focus group, this art practice concerns performance art. Implicit is the idea of performance and performance art as not only a method for practice, but also as a means for understanding. This *understanding* or consciousness gives rise to a critical self-awareness (Denzin 2003b:264).

Norman Denzin contends that every person is like every other person, but like no other person (2003b:268). This contention allows the auto-ethnographer to function as a seemingly contradictory *universal singular* (Denzin 2003b:268). In this scenario, the ethnographer inscribes autobiographical experiences of *an historical moment*, and then universalises these experiences by presenting their effects on a particular life (Denzin 2003b:268). My study makes use of this theory where the performing body, specifically my own, is a site for analysis of evidence and interpretation. The findings are extrapolated for the purposes of initiating change in greater society. This is a significant point of difference when comparing earlier research with my research.

6.5 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

There are points of difference between my study and those of others, and yet our findings remain consistent. Namely, within the hierarchal structure of hegemony, masculinities are multiple, socially constructed and most importantly, fluid. Significantly, if we view gender as a performance as proposed by Butler, then we allow for *agency within gender*. Men cannot change the fact that they are men, but they can change their behaviour, and to a degree, their masculinity and the performance thereof. If we acknowledge the performance of gender identity (as something we do rather than something we have) and its problematic formative processes, then we can initiate positive transformation. In this way the violence considered to be characteristic of masculinity can begin to be eradicated from our societies. This process of working through the past, acknowledging it, and using it to initiate transformation is also cathartic. An implication of this is the possibility of healing. This is of vital importance to those X-Men who live with the trauma of their military experiences. If they are to overcome their problematic formative processes, this must begin with a reckoning, and then an acknowledgement of these processes. Purging the past and its toxicity allows for a release from

negative feelings such as fear, anger and isolation, enabling healing to begin. When viewers watch the X Men artists' performances, understanding is fostered. Additionally, their own anxieties are brought to the surface and may be purged in a socially harmless manner.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

I have restricted the research scope of this dissertation to an intensive focus on a specific group of men and their formative processes. The research is further limited to the influence of three specific gendered institutions on the focus group. This process of delimitation is of course characteristic of research.

Although I stress the multiplicity and fluidity of masculinities, they do remain collective. Extensive data confirms that violence is predominantly perpetrated by men (not all men, of course). My research eschews essentialism, acknowledges the preponderance of male violence and addresses the issue. My study proposes that men must initiate and instigate a change in the performance of masculinities - action by men for men.

In keeping with the scrutiny of the intimate, I have utilised ethnography, auto-ethnography, performance ethnography and my art practice to investigate my focus group. Although these techniques are sometimes regarded with scepticism and considered of limited value by some academics, it is precisely their engagement with the personal and the researcher's presence that makes them potent. In this scenario, they facilitate insights into the intimate processes of a specific group. Although we are individuals, we are part of a larger social body aligned with other societies. As such, I believe that my findings may be extrapolated. As pertains to this point, I admit that perhaps I present more of a justification than a limitation.

The study is limited by my inability to undertake personal interviews with my selected artists, apart from Paul Emmanuel. As such I am reliant on previous interviews and information acquired from current scholarship. I would like to have asked questions specific to this research and analysed the responses. Personal interviews would allow for an engagement with the artist's personal masculinity, identification of it in his practice, and provide insights concerning the artist's role

in addressing my research problem. This would provide an enhanced understanding of the X-Men, possibly providing supporting evidence and validation of my own interpretations, experiences and insights. The failure to undertake personal interviews was disappointing but could be addressed in future research.

6.7 PROPOSED FUTURE RESEARCH

Broadening the focus group is a viable consideration for future research. An enlarged focus group with participants amenable to personal interviews would facilitate research focusing on two key areas. Namely, each artist's formative processes, within gendered institutions, and the way in which he, through art, repositions his masculinity.

These findings could be applied to similar groups of men in other geographical, historical and political contexts. For instance, the common thread of colonial and postcolonial contexts could be applied to white male performance artists in other African countries, New Zealand, Australia and Britain. All the countries in Africa have been reclaimed by their indigenous populations, whereas this is not the case in Australia or New Zealand. Ironically Britain, previously the great coloniser, is now being colonised herself. What of the problematic formative processes these men have experienced? How do these artists, through creative practice, reposition themselves within the postcolonial paradigm? More importantly, how do these men initiate positive transformations of their masculinities within greater society?

An undeniable consequence of this academic process has been a greater understanding of the nature of research, and of my field of interest. My experience has encouraged me to further explore the influence and impact of gendered institutions. I shall continue working with performance ethnography to further my interest in how academic texts/findings may be translated through the body and performed.

6.8 AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTION

Reflecting on the completion of this academic journey, I am surprised at how cathartic the process has been. What began as a commentary and social critique on a generation of South African men (informed by Jungian theory of all things; anima/animus) transformed into a very different, far more complex and personal undertaking. The who, what, where and why remained, what changed was the perspective; the how.

As I conducted the literature research, analysing my art practice and that of the selected artists, the research began to take the form of self-analysis, even, self-therapy. From the pragmatic interest of an academic in addressing an issue that affects me, I embarked on a process of healing and resolution. I know I have achieved a level of closure. The research process has enabled me to work through the problematic formation of my own gender identity by raising my consciousness. My research (my embodied actions) provided me with a clearing in the forest of my consciousness, that is, *lichtung*. This is a field that I have cleared with my research, and is a field of awareness. In this clearing, things were made visible and this initiated transformation. I believe that, as pertains to the X-Men artists and myself, that which is concealed is aided and abetted by two elements: a personal inability or unwillingness to speak about our Apartheid identities, and a disinterested public, unconcerned by our experiences. It is my hope that my research and resultant performances will provide other men, and women, with moments of clarity and awareness, and encourage them to create and share, their own moments of *lichtung*.

APPENDIX 1: **Future performance**

Possibly one of the most notable characteristics of this study is my attempt to reposition the researcher. This is achieved by using the body, as “a critical tool of performative intervention upon dominant narratives” (Spry 2006:345), and to reconstitute the self. The dominant narrative is that of a very specific masculinity, its formative processes and how it might be reconstituted. In addition, I critique traditional academic structures and institutions by presenting a physical manifestation of embodied research. In so doing, I believe I avoid the trap of text, which focuses on the *said* and not the *saying*, the *done* and not the *doing* (Conquergood 1998:31). I indicate here my intentional use of present participles rather than gerunds or nouns: the *saying* and the *doing* are continuous on-going verb forms. My dissertation does not conclude with the final written word in this document: it continues as I perform, and negating the idea of action, performance, identity and even research as textually fixed. Denzin (2003c:196) cites Della Pollock, who states that texts are inseparable from the “processes by which they are made, understood and deployed”. My processes, deployed by performance, continue beyond the pages of this dissertation.

Metaphor, allegory and embodied text are powerful tools in the hands of the performance artist. Driven and informed by my research dissertation I construct an ethnographic performance piece which is indebted to Heidegger’s theory of metaphoric language (read *art*) that brings forth *being*, or creates the *World*. It will be performed at a future date within an academic institution’s gallery space.

BLOU STEEN (BLUE STONE) (2018)

The performance work addresses three specific problematic aspects of the Apartheid SADF institution: blue stone, weaponising the penis, and military designations. The first, and the title of the piece, is *Blou Steen*. The legend of chemically castrating or chemically restraining the virility of youthful recruits has long been associated with the military. The containment of the South African conscript’s sexual urges was said to be achieved through the use of what was known as *blue stone* or *blue vitriol*. Copper sulphate was believed to have been added to the coffee and the *battery acid* (mixed juice concentrate) by the army chefs. The blue colouring of the chemical resulted in its colloquial names: *blou*

steen or *blou fieterjoel*. Although never confirmed or admitted to by the SADF, the assumption that the institution would or could do this, was never in doubt in the minds of the soldiers or the South African public at the time.

The second aspect concerns the channelling of sexual urges – the belief in the use of blue stone was indicative of the military institution's attempts at controlling the sexuality of its members, specifically the penis as a sexual instrument. Controlled it could be transformed into a weapon to be used by that institution. As conscripts we were taught that our penises, although not rifles, were guns, in other words, weapons: "This is my rifle, this is my gun! This is for fighting, this is for fun!" We were regularly called on by our platoon leaders to repeat this cadence, slapping our rifles and grabbing our crotches at the appropriate times.

The third aspect concerns military designations - my dissertation includes a discussion of the use of both formal and informal designations used by the SADF. One of these designations was *soutpiel*. It was one of the tools used to implement and maintain a strict hierarchal power structure within the military.

I provide the viewer with signifiers or visual clues linked to the subjects I wish to focus on. The signifiers will be framed within a gallery space, and in a created sacred space. Within this space, their import will be intensified through repetition and ritual. I use considered metaphoric language to communicate my thinking to the viewer.

The first major signifier the viewer will be confronted with is a half a ton of sea salt in the gallery space. This references my informal designation in the military, *soutie* (salt penis). The second signifier is my performance installation, positioned in the centre of this field of salt. The installation piece is the one used in *40RTY*. It embodies militarised masculinity through its design, material and construction. During the performance I will include the use of various artefacts (props) in my rituals. These include a headpiece, a military uniform, blue dye, a rifle and electric hair clippers. I will use the rifle to perform military drills relating to the weaponisation of the penis. I will then dye my hair blue and, in conclusion, shave my head. During the performance, I create what is termed in the military as a battlefield cross or marker. These temporary memorials are used in the field to indicate where a soldier has fallen. They generally consist of the dead soldier's boots, rifle, helmet and dog tags (identity tags).



23. swany, *The Mask of Masculinities* process (2018).

In my praxis, preparation is an integral part of the performance. It plays an important role in getting me mentally prepared for the rigours of the actual physical performance act. In preparation for the *Blou Steen* performance, I began a period of fasting that commenced on 1st January 2018. Fasting facilitates cleansing, purification, and mentally toughens me. The fast consists of a strict vegan diet, that is, no meat or animal products whatsoever. The fast will continue until the conclusion of my performance in October 2018. In addition I have once again started taking proof-of-life images of myself and will continue to do so for two years: the duration of my national military service (1st January 2018 – 31st December 2019). These rituals keep me obsessively focused on my work; an intensity that is carried over into my concluding performance in the gallery.

The final part of my preparation involves making. The construction of my *sacred space*, the metal cage used in the *40RTY* performance is part of this process. I focus on the various artefacts I will use in the performance. A major component is a headpiece constructed from wire, resin and cast resin heads, entitled *Mask of Masculinities* (2018). The Mask of Masculinities is made of Ken²⁰ doll heads. The generic blonde, blue eyed Caucasian male was replicated to create hundreds of heads, alluding to the 'sameness' and loss of individuality experienced during military conscription. I will wear a full, authentic soldier's uniform, boots and underwear emblazoned with my army number. A confined space will include an army issue bed and accoutrements such as the *varkpan* (food tray) and *trommel* (metal trunk). A mound of salt will be formed to resemble a grave. A concealed plinth will support the soldier's rifle, boots helmet and dog tags. My sacred, performative space, an illuminated metal cage, will take centre stage. The sound of marching soldiers and screamed commands will background my response: "Ja, koporal!" The automatic, unquestioning response is repeated over and over again while I shave my head alludes to the depersonalisation and brutalisation of military conscription. My blue-dyed hair references the manner in which even the conscript's sexuality was regulated by the army. The entire space will be enclosed by sandbags and mounds of coarse salt.

²⁰ Ken was introduced to the boomer-era market in 1961 as the fictional boyfriend of toy doll Barbie, who was introduced in 1959 (<https://www.aarp.org/politics-society/history/info-2017/barbies-boyfriend-ken-doll-makeover-fd.html>).



24. swany, *The Mask of Masculinities* (2018).

APPENDIX 2: Reflections on performances

What follows are my immediate thoughts and reactions, recorded after some of the performances discussed in this dissertation. I include them to give the reader an idea of the rigour and trauma that is characteristic of performance.

Gaze (2012)

23 November 2012

It is the morning after, and while the event is still fresh in my mind, I am writing about the last night's entire experience. Last night was the opening of my conceptual piece inspired by the second-wave feminist performance artists of the 60s and 70s, and relates to the patriarchal gaze and attempts to rupture that via exposing myself to the gaze! It was one of the most unpleasant experiences I have ever put myself through! A fellow artist's husband put it perfectly: "now you know what a stripper goes through when she steps onto that stage". What was supposed to be an intimate space turned out to be like a sauna, right next to a bar. It was hot and loud, and to attempt a performance, a FIRST performance art piece under those conditions was very difficult!! Add to that an audience passing through, in and out, plus a photographer and videographer in my face under the stark, hot studio lights they required, while I shaved my entire body and performed a number of other rituals!! I am proud to say though, that I stayed focused, and shut out the outside world, ironically performing my rituals for that same world to observe. I experienced the weight of the Gaze as I am sure few men have, but as women probably do every day of their lives. As I said, it was not a pleasant experience!

In addition, the sheer enormity of my personal journey really is astounding, I kid you not! It began in my first year of my studies when I discovered the artist, Ana Mendieta, and her silhouette art works. I have an incredible, natural thirst for knowledge so I voraciously pursued any information on her, and this in turn led to my discovery of other feminist performance artists such as Carolee Schneemann, Marina Abramović, Mary Beth Edelson and Hannah Wilke. I was overwhelmed, enthralled, addicted (add any emotive you choose in this space)! This was in

2010, three years later, and my concept crystallized into one final act, or in this case, performance

So here I sit writing about how I feel, and what it felt like, this most visceral of experiences. OK, immediate stream-of-consciousness thoughts, the assault on my senses: exhaustion, discomfort, a flatness of spirit and emotion, aching muscles and back, itchy. I feel, to quote my mentor, like “a sordid whore”, and as the saying goes: ridden hard and put away wet. The body is sore because of the extremes I have put it through in creating this performance piece: 21 days of fasting, stress and lack of sleep, the physical toil involved in creating the installation pieces (altars, drops), the final four full days of erecting the installation, and then the climatic physical and emotional effort of the performance. These were the things that I had some control over. However once the performance began, I was no longer in control of the audience and their reaction and comments, of the photographer, of the videographer, of the space I presented in. It was set in motion and I carried out my rituals within it, presenting myself to the gaze. I felt myself to be in a fragile, embryonic bubble which my mind instinctively created in order to offer some protection to the almost hostile attentions. My senses were heightened to supernatural levels; the feel of the razor on my flesh, the heat of flames, the scent of candles, sulphur, fabric, shaving cream, perfume, alcohol and cigarettes ... my sweat.

I could hear the voices of the public, as though from the end of a long, misty tunnel, yet with crystal clarity, each syllable making my skin crawl, tense and twitch. The men’s comments especially, as traditional possessors/wielders of the gaze, were aggressively dismissive and derisive; their gaze threatened and threatening in equal measure.

“What is this supposed to be?”

“This is art?”

“I’m a serious, competitive cyclist and that’s not how you shave your legs. I should show you all how to do it!”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“There, are you happy now? He’s taking his fucking pants off. That’s what you’ve been waiting for!”

“I need a drink.”

“What the fuck?!! He's breaking coconuts nuts now!! He's nuts!! Ha ha!”

“What a load of fucking shit.”

The noise of the crowd around the bar in the room alongside, rumbled and growled threateningly the entire time, providing an audible presence to the gaze.

Now, I sit writing, my body itching and tender as a result of my savage shaving. It is as though it can still feel the weight of the gaze I exposed it to. Although clothed, it feels vulnerable and emasculated, its protective hair removed: head shaved and planed like a piece of wood, strength removed as in the old Biblical tale of Samson; genitals soft and baby-like without their covering of dark curls; chest that of a youth, flat and pale in its nudity; legs, shiny and smooth and feminine. Accompanying this physical discomfort there is also a measure of irrational shame that I feel, as though by exposing myself, not just physically but emotionally to the gaze, I have done something sinful and implicitly, morally wrong. I feel like people, when they look at me and see my shaven head, can see my sin and so I have taken to wearing a cap to hide my shame.

But it never was supposed to be pleasant, the gaze, and if nobody else in the gallery took anything away with them from my work I most certainly did, and therefore it was a worthwhile journey! My goal then, was attained: my investigation of the gaze: firstly, an internal gaze, and the resultant unlayering of my various male identities in an effort to understand where I am at this point in my life. I feel that I certainly presented my internal gaze as well as questioned the male identity as possessor of the gaze. Secondly, the subjecting of myself and this introspective act to the audience and their gaze. These spoke of a type of public shedding of skin, so instead of being the stereotypical gazer (the coloniser) I became the colonised, the object gazed at. I most certainly felt the sheer, terrible weight of the gaze, and what it felt like to be the other.

So what remains? Well I need to face my shame and discomfort, and edit the video so that my piece can be completed. The edited video (ten minutes) will be looped and play continuously within my installation, a stark record of the rituals which took place within that very room. This should create a feeling of dislocation within the viewer, somewhat like coming across a bloody garment in a room and

being told what occurred there by another. The physical evidence of my rituals remains. To then view these same rituals taking place on a screen while the sound of a slow, steady, rhythmic beating heart fills the room, surrounded by this evidence is sure to invoke disquiet and uneasiness. Mission accomplished.

Untitled (New Year's Day) (2018)

In 2016 I performed *40RTY* at the artSPACE durban Gallery. In an intimate ritual I waxed my beard in front of an audience, and although I had a photographer document the performance I did not have a videographer do the same. I wanted video for my upcoming *Blou Steen* installation so I began planning a performance which would signify the commencement of the entire work.

The plan was to use a warehouse space that I had organized for my senior Unisa students' end-of-year exhibition. Fortunately I still had access to it while the business was closed for the Christmas and New Year break. There is a small room in the factory which I wanted to use. The room has no windows and is therefore completely dark. This was suitable because of my need to be able to control the light in my performance space. I had initially planned to carry out the performance on 31st December (Old Year's Eve) to see out the year. But the truth is, I was afraid. As a result, afraid of the challenge, and of the discomfort and pain that awaited me, I made excuses and procrastinated. However, knowing that the space would no longer be available once the business re-opened on 2nd, I steeled myself, and then prepared to do it early on New Year's morning. In order to get a good night's sleep I went to bed at about 10 on 31st. Partaking of no drinking or festivities, I set my alarm for five am.

The sun was just coming up when I arrived at the deserted business park. I entered the dark and silent warehouse and quickly set up my installation and prepared the wax in the microwave in the kitchen. For the previous performance I had used wax strips. This was partly because they had to be warmed by placing the strips between the hands. The action made it appear as if I was praying and this intensified the ritual being performed. I found however that my beard was not long enough to be waxed effectively and as a result my face ended up a sticky, bloody and patchy mess. This time I consulted a number of beauty salons and

they suggested hot wax instead, and gave me a number of helpful tips to more effectively wax.

Based on advice given by waxing specialists I ensured that my beard and moustache were fuller, the suggested length being at least five millimetres. Within my confessional space I began the ritual by covering the hair on my face with the rather pleasantly warm wax. I was able to observe myself applying the garishly pink wax with the supplied wooden applicator in the surrounding mirrored panels of the installation. I impulsively covered all of the hair rather than doing a section at a time. This was probably a good thing because the pain as I tore the first hairs from my face was excruciating!

I had come prepared for the pain having performed the ritual before. However, this process was far more painful. With the strips one could grasp firmly and pull quickly. Not so with the hot wax. After the first tear, an almost-overwhelming, claustrophobic panic threatened to envelop me. I looked at my face covered with this toxic pink wax and realized just how much effort, and how long the procedure was in fact going to take. The space and my mirrored selves closed in on me and I struggled to breathe in the airless room. Fearful, I left my upper lip area until last knowing it was going to be the most painful area to wax. My eyes literally streamed with tears of pain. Finally, with my face cleared of the pink wax, I used wax strips to complete the ritual, removing the clumps of hair that had been left behind. In all, it took me approximately an hour to complete the ritual.

On the way home after the performance, I stopped off at the local supermarket to buy a newspaper. Part of my preparation for *Blou Steen* was to start taking daily proof of life photographs again. There were no newspapers in the racks so I enquired from the store manager. The look of sympathy and horror on her face confirmed the ruin that was my own. I rushed home, and while my neighbours were gingerly rising, nursing their New Year's Eve hangovers, I cleaned my face with surgical spirits.

My face has been tender for days now and I still do not recognise myself, the abuser, in the mirror. After a performance there is always this feeling of shame, as if, the abuse is punishment for something. You feel violated and that people looking at you can tell that you are the kind of person who deserved it

APPENDIX 3: Proposed interview questions

For the purposes of further research, I include some of my considerations regarding proposed face-to-face meetings with members of the X-Men focus group. In my original research proposal outlining my concepts and planning, I proposed holding interviews with my selected artists as part of my methodology. I was unable to conduct the interviews, since the artists were either unavailable or disinterested in participating in the research. Paul Emmanuel was the notable exception, committing fully to assisting me and provided a wealth of information concerning his praxis. As pertains to the other three artists, I was reliant on existing scholarship, articles and the internet.

The bulk of the questions for inclusion in the interview are informed by James Spradley's work concerning the interview process in his book, *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979). I devised four main aims for the proposed interviews:

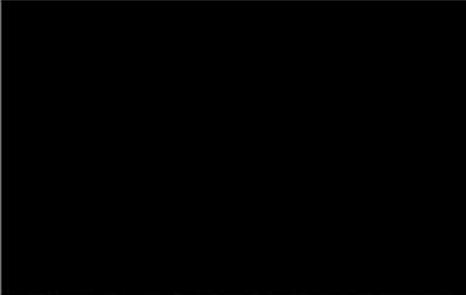
- 1) Locate/contextualise the artist.
- 2) Engage his masculinity.
- 3) Identify how it is reflected in his work.
- 4) Ascertain his view of the future of white masculinities in South Africa.

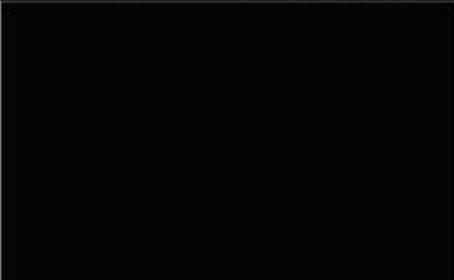
I wish to establish how white South African male artists think about, and integrate into their self-image, the post-Apartheid transitional experience. I am interested in how the X-Men define their feelings, their experiences and how they process and make sense of them. Finally, I would like to understand how they integrate these experiences into their work and their self-images. The proposed questions include the following:

- 1) I consider myself ----- (gender, explain). [To which gender do you most identify?]
- 2) Ideally I would like to be ----- (gender, explain). [To which gender do you most aspire?]
- 3) Traditionally my interests would be considered ----- (gender, explain).

- 4) Traditionally my attitudes and beliefs would be considered -----
(explain).
- 5) Traditionally my behaviour would be considered ----- (explain).
- 6) Traditionally my outer appearance would be considered ----- (explain).
- 7) How is your identity reflected in your work?
- 8) List your main feminine and masculine role models growing up?
- 9) How do you think they influenced your ideas of what feminine and masculine are?
- 10) As an artist when you create work do you feel that you are presenting your ideas of what feminine or masculine are?
- 11) What effect are you hoping to have on the viewer?
- 12) Is the societal perspective on the male role positive or negative? Why?
- 13) What do you consider positive and negative aspects of masculinity?
- 14) How do you personally work on your own masculinity?
- 15) Do you consider being artistic a feminine or masculine attribute? Why?
- 16) In your artistic processes which would be considered masculine and which feminine (not necessarily by you)?
- 17) Do you perpetuate or subvert all of the above?

APPENDIX 4: Performance storyboard

	ACTION / DIALOGUE
	<p>Performance space is dark. Audience guided in by gallery member. Sound is activated.</p>
	<p>swany pulls light switch cord. The ritual space is activated when it is illuminated by the single bulb (lichtung).</p>
	<p>In the performance space are mounds of salt. the sacred/ritual space (metal installation piece), swany and various artefacts including a rifle and the Mask of Masculinities (a headpiece the artist is wearing).</p>
	<p>swany performs a profane military drill, the movements of which are dictated by the soundtrack: "this is my rifle, this is my gun, this is for killing, this is for fun"!</p>
	<p>Drill ends. swany stands at attention and then removes headress.</p>

	ACTION / DIALOGUE
	Preparation for dyeing ritual.
	Ritual of Dyeing hair.
	Head shaving ritual.
	Ritual of creating the fallen soldier's cross.
	Returns to sacred space and turns off light.

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