ZEF AS PERFORMANCE ART ON THE 'INTERWEB':

How Ninja from Die Antwoord performs South African white masculinities through the digital archive

by

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ABSTRACT

The experience of South African rap-rave group Die Antwoord's digital archive of online videos is one that, in this study, is interpreted as performance art. This interpretation provides a reading of the character Ninja as a performance of South African white masculinities, which places Die Antwoord's work within identity discourse.

The resurgence of the discussion and practice of performance art in the past thirty years has led some observers to suggest that Die Antwoord's questionable work may be performance art. This study investigates a reconfiguration of the notion of performance art in online video. This is done through an interrogation of notions of risk, a conceptual dimension of ideas, audience participation and digital liveness.

The character Ninja performs notions of South African white masculinities in their music videos, interviews and short film *Umshini Wam* which raises questions of representation. Based on the critical reading of Die Antwoord's online video performance art, this dissertation explores notions of Zef, freakery, the abject, new ethnicities, and racechanges, as related to the research field of whiteness, to interpret Ninja's performance of whiteness. A gendered reading of Die Antwoord's digital archive is used to determine how hegemonic masculinities are performed by Ninja. It is determined that through their parodic performance art, Die Antwoord creates a transformative intervention through which stagnant notions of South African white masculinity may be reconfigured.

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<u>Key concepts</u>

Digital liveness

Freakery

Masculinity

Online video archive

Parody

Performance Art
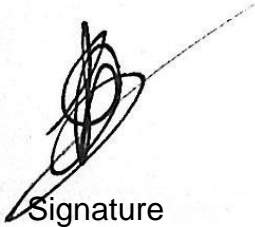
Risk

South African Identity

Video Art

Whiteness

DECLARATION

I, ESTHER ALET ROSSOUW, declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work, except where indicated in the acknowledgments, the text, and references. It is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Drama and Film Studies at the University of Pretoria, Pretoria. It has not been submitted before in whole or in part, for any degree or examination at any other university.
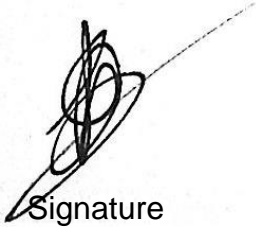
ESTHER ALET ROSSOUW

Signature

Date: August 2015

ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval.

The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of ethics for researchers* and the *Policy guidelines for responsible research*.

ESTHER ALET ROSSOUW

Signature

Date: August 2015

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1. Contextualisation and Aims of the Study

In this study, I argue that a classification of Die Antwoord's work as performance art may reveal a multitude of identity discourses, particularly within South African white masculinities. To facilitate this argument, a gendered reading of the character Ninja and his digital presence is utilized, within the context of Whiteness. The conceptual framework of Whiteness is of particular use in the South African context, and informs the contentious notions of representation within Die Antwoord's digital archive.

> "Next time u ask me 'Is it real?' I'm gonna punch u in da face" (*Fok julle naaiers,* Jones & Garrett 2011).

Die Antwoord's introduction into the international music scene in late 2010 was met with an explosion of questions, but few answers: Were they 'real' (Delahaye 2010)? Were they making a joke (Marchese 2012)? Was it a "genuine expression of its members' roots" (Kevin 2013)? Die Antwoord is the Zef rap-rave creation of Watkin Tudor Jones also known as 'Ninja', Anri du Toit also known as 'Yo-Landi Vi$$er', joined by 'DJ Hi-Tek', a character who has appeared as several men – white, black, tall, short, fat and thin (Purple 2013: 46). This ambiguity of identity is a big part of their work, featuring most prominently in their music videos online (as they say, "in the interweb"). They have been asked many times to define themselves, to which their answers are defiant, as seen in the quote above. This reveals what Liese van der Watt calls a "cross-racial, cross-lingual, and cross-cultural fluidity" (2012: 416) within their identity. The questions asked about Die Antwoord relate particularly to their identity as South Africans, and what cultural, gender and racial identities are reflected in the art that they create. The implications of these questions also involve their supposed 'authenticity' within those identities. Because culture, gender and race are so interrelated within this study, a discussion around these identities will connect the various concepts.

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The "punch u in da face" reference above suggests an important element to Die Antwoord's work: Ninja. This character, created by Watkin Tudor Jones, has uttered some controversial remarks, such as that he "represent(s) South African culture" (*Enter the Ninja*, Malpage 2009). This idea of Ninja representing "South African culture" is provocative, especially within the context of South African white masculinity. According to Walker, South African white masculinity currently finds itself in a crisis, caused in part by the major changeover to democracy (2005: 226). This crisis involves a transition from conventional ideas of masculinity to new, alternative versions. While some men are clinging to traditional conventions, others are seeking to initiate a new social order (Walker 2005: 225). This alleged crisis may cause disruptions in South African constructions of masculinity, which is visible in Die Antwoord's work. Ninja and Yo-Landi contribute to constructions of masculinity in a significant way, representing masculine identities communicated through their art.

The representations of South African masculinity within Die Antwoord's work present a myriad of investigative opportunities through ideological paradigms. Baldonado's (1996) claim that representations are ideological instruments which can function towards reinforcement of systems of inequality emphasizes the importance of an investigation of Ninja's character within the context of South African white masculinity. The whiteness which is put on display by Die Antwoord is considered provocative because of South Africa's past of racial segregation through Apartheid. Lopez states, "despite the obvious role that the visibility of whiteness … has played in the colonial context, whiteness itself remains a largely unexamined category" (2005: 2), which illuminates the need for research into interracial power relationships in the context of post-colonialism and whiteness studies. In addition to Ninja's representations of white identity, the form in which they are presented is significant, and should be examined in order to grasp the ideological meanings implicit in Die Antwoord's work.

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Ninja: That's what Die Antwoord's music is: We work hard to make playgrounds to fuck around in.

Yo-Landi: All the thinking and planning is to set up a spontaneous occurrence.

(Marchese 2012)

The above quotation suggests another answer to the question that is Die Antwoord: Performance art. They react evasively, even aggressively, to being categorized as conceptual art: "What the fuck is 'ceptual art'?" (Norwegian TV 2011) and performance art: "We do perform live and we do make art, so you can call it what you want. It's cool, we don't mind" (Dombal 2010). However, that might be taken as part of the performance. When one considers Die Antwoord's performances on Youtube, some of them seemingly spontaneous (*Wat kyk jy*, Jones 2010) and some of them carefully and intricately stylized (*I fink u freeky*, Ballen & Jones 2012), a characterisation of their work as performance art can be used to make sense of the form their work takes, as well as the supposed authenticity of identity which the duo tries to demonstrate. However, this characterization raises issues with the very definition of performance art, which is traditionally considered to be live.

Philip Auslander has said that the live forms of performance and the mediatized forms of performance have traditionally been seen as oppositional – because live performance is associated with "intimacy and disappearance" and mediatized performance with "a mass audience, reproduction and repetition" (1997). Many writers hold the live in higher esteem than the mediatized – therefore the documentation (photography or video) of the live event is also looked down upon. In Auslander's *Performativity of Performance Documentation* (2006: 1-10), he states however that the document itself should be viewed as a performance which "reflects an artist's aesthetic project or sensibility and for which we are the present audience" (Auslander 2006: 9). In other words, the meaning of the documentation is not merely ontological, referring solely to the original event, but also phenomenological: the audience's experience has an effect on the meaning of the documentation. Die Antwoord self-identifies their work as experiential: "We create exaggerated experience... to wake [people] up." (Marchese 2012).

Therefore, although their online work consists of documentation (video), it is indeed an archive which consists of performances. The meaning of their work lies within each viewer's experience of the "playgrounds" which they create, in which there are self-proclaimed "spontaneous occurrences". These 'occurrences' can be read as performance art which emphasize their representations of South African identity. Die Antwoord's frequent dressing in babygro suits (infant bodysuits) in the archive, for example, may connote their supposed 'futuristic' (or as they frequently assert, "futuriste") viewpoints – suggesting that they are the 'newborn' documentarians of South African culture.

Nathaniel Budzinski, in his article about the current emergence of online video art, states that the concern of attention is major (2013: 69). It should be asked whether Die Antwoord's online archive, as Budzinski puts it, plunges the viewer "into a froth of new ideas, and ways of listening and seeing", allowing them to "question what they've previously experienced" (2013: 69); or alternatively falls into the trap of seeking attention for attention's sake. It is debatable whether they are creating performance art in their online video archives in order to spark public discourse concerning South African identities, or if they are simply interested in using South African identities to spark controversy for profit.

This study will examine Ninja's appearances in Die Antwoord's music videos, interviews, short film *Umshini Wam* (Korine 2011) and other YouTube videos in order to place them in the context of online video performance art. These appearances will be interpreted within the context of their representation of the socio-political elements and the 'Zef' counterculture included within their performances, in order to establish a reading of their work as performance art which interrogates a multitude of identity discourses. A gendered reading of the character Ninja will form a central part of the study as representative of contemporary South African white masculine identity.

The 'Zef' counterculture movement as depicted by Die Antwoord invites many readings, as performance art usually does (Davies 2011: 213-214). The work of performance

artist Laurie Anderson, for example, has been said to set up "blind confrontations" between "mutually incompatible readings" (Owens 1984: 203-235). Because of its departure from the stabilities and boundaries of the 'object' within fine art (Kaye 1994:2) and its situation between vocabularies, performance art disrupts expectations (Kaye 1994:6). Die Antwoord's Zef performances unsettle norms on many levels. The racial significance of their personas and works have sparked controversy online (Stodghill 2012), for instance their usage of blackface in the music video for *Fatty Boom Boom* (Jones, Neale & Berg 2012). A gender-based discussion of their music video and lyrics for the song *Evil Boy* also exploded, including accusations of glorified rape and homophobia (Jardin 2010b). Yo-Landi and Ninja's representation of gender and sexuality have been igniting discourse ever since their first music video for *Zef Side* (Metelerkamp 2010), in which Ninja swings his penis inside boxer shorts while Yo-Landi looks on, biting her lip. This scene is also very indicative of Yo-Landi's role in creating Ninja as a character. The masculinity of Ninja is maintained, catalysed and sometimes even impeded by Yo-Landi. While she acts as a sidekick, and Ninja is generally seen as the spokesperson for the group (Van der Watt 2012: 414), Yo-Landi supports Ninja's outgoing masculinity, as seen in *Enter the Ninja* (Malpage 2009), where she wears a T-shirt with 'NINJA' printed on it and yells "Go, Ninja, go!" and "I need your protection". She deploys her femininity both in this faux innocent schoolgirl way and an abject sort of way, as seen in *Evil Boy*, where she embodies a dangerous, demonic dominatrix covered with rats (Van der Watt 2012: 414). In these ways, she disrupts femininity as Ninja disrupts masculinity. In *Umshini Wam*, she is also the more actively aggressive character, literally kicking Ninja awake and gunning down a man while Ninja shuts his eyes. In *Baby's on Fire* she also takes charge, throwing Ninja with a brick in the teeth when he tries to exercise control over her. In these and many other ways, Yo-Landi's own identity and her interactions with Ninja have a direct influence on his masculine identity. Therefore, the effect of Yo-Landi's female identity on Ninja's male identity will form part of the study of his performance of masculinity.

Ninja's claim that he represents "all" South Africans "fucked into one person" (Harris 2012) demonstrates the emphasis on South African identity in their work. The

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representations of gender, identity, culture, race, sexuality and sex within their music videos are replete with socio-political concerns. *Fatty Boom Boom* (Jones, Neale and Berg 2012), for instance, has been criticized, in part because it does not engage with the historical significance of blackface, and only borrowing it for a cheap thrill (Harris 2012). The same critic comments that if Die Antwoord used blackface artistically, attempting to make "an intelligent point", it would have been acceptable (Harris 2012). Die Antwoord have been called provocateurs (Harris 2012), but their intentions are questioned by critics. Although some may think that they are in it for 'cheap thrills', there may be a deeper significance to their works, as part of a performance art which challenges thought about identity. The value of their provocations in fact might lie in their unsettlement of identity, revealing the flux of white male identity.

1.2. Problem statement

Mirzoeff has said that "everyday life is the key terrain for visual culture, just as it has been for cultural studies" (1998: 125). Die Antwoord is a prime subject for a study on identity in South African visual studies, in the sense that it visually portrays, represents and distorts some everyday aspects of life in South Africa. This is evident in the numerous formal academic studies analysing Die Antwoord within identity studies, focusing especially on race (Scott 2012; Marx and Milton 2011; and Dekker 2011). However, it seems that there is no specific discussion of the form of their online archive of work. While there have been some passing remarks that their work is performance art (Noakes 2010; Scott 2012: 748; Patrick 2014; Houlihan 2015) and also informal online discussion about it (Reddit 2015), this notion has not been investigated formally. Some may argue that it is not of importance to analyse the form or the content of Die Antwoord's work. Van der Watt goes so far as to insist that all of their work is to be taken at surface value, "what lies beneath", according to her, is not of much importance (2012: 415). However, if one only sees the surface of Die Antwoord, as they indeed invite one to see, one loses the significance of their visual representation of South African culture.

The popularity and acclaim of performance art installations such as prominent performance artist Marina Abramovic's *The Artist is Present* in 2010 in the Museum of Modern Art (O'Hagan 2010) has prompted some to speculate that performance art "will be *the* medium of the 21st century" (RoseLee Goldberg, as quoted in Goldstein 2012). What seems to be equally important, albeit underexposed, is online video art, according to the article by Nathaniel Budzinski (2013:68-69): "the question is less how to grab someone's attention in a noisy world than how to focus, survive and flourish amid a rich plethora of images". If Die Antwoord's online archive of work qualifies as an intersection between video art and performance art, their work gains significance as part of an artistic dialogue about identity through their provocative work.

Studies about Die Antwoord mainly relate to cultural identities, specifically white Afrikaans identities (Marx & Milton 2011; Haupt 2012a; Krueger 2012; O'Toole 2013; Scott 2012; Van der Watt 2012). Informal online discourse about Die Antwoord includes discussion about the gendered implications within their work (Meer 2013; Saint 2010; and Huber 2011), but no formal academic research has been done specifically towards a cultural as well as gendered reading of Ninja's character within the frame of the digital archive. Therefore, this study of Zef and Ninja as online performance (art) of South African white masculinity will be topical, and provide a reading which is currently unexplored.

The main problem can be summarized as follows: The digital presence of Die Antwoord demonstrates a performance of South African white masculinity through the character of Ninja, which raises concerns within the context of representation. A possible classification of their work as performance art may provide a greater understanding of their work as identity discourse. This has not been formally investigated through academic research.

1.3. Thesis statement

A reading as performance art aids interpretations of Die Antwoord's work as identity discourse, with specific focus on Ninja's online performances of South African white

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masculinity. These performances occur in Die Antwoord's digital archive, which constitutes their music videos, short films, and interviews, all available to a mass audience online. Through this reading, I propose a new way of reading online South African visual culture. This approach is based on the concept of online video performance art.

1.4. Research approach and aims

The main aim of this qualitative study is to provide a reading of Die Antwoord's online work as performance art, which, particularly in the character of Ninja, reveals identity discourse surrounding South African white masculinities. This is done through the framework of Whiteness studies which contains notions of culture, race and gender which are used to analyse Die Antwoord's representations of South African identities.

A reading of Die Antwoord's work as performance art provides a framework for analysis and evaluation which, through the construction of the argument of this thesis, also speaks to the following sub-aims:

- The development of a notion of 'online video performance art'; and
- An analysis of Die Antwoord's digital archive, consisting of primarily music videos and short films but also interviews.

In the study, Die Antwoord's works are regarded both individually and as part of the larger digital archive. To find merit in their usage of Zef, not only as performance art, but as a reconfiguration of South African white male identity and even as post-hegemonic (Du Preez 2011: 114), Whiteness studies is used to analyse representation within their work.

1.5. Outline of Chapters

Chapter One: Introduction
This chapter introduces the subject of the study with a brief discussion of its context. It

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also provides the research problem, the research approach and the research aims, and clarifies key concepts. An outline of chapters is also included.

Chapter Two: Performance art reborn online

This chapter aims to explore and elucidate the concept 'online video performance art'. It compares and contrasts contemporary performance art with performance art at its conception. The concepts of risk, liveness, and the archive are interlinked with an exploration of Die Antwoord's online digital archive, in order to ultimately form a characterisation of online video performance art.

Chapter Three: Zef and Die Antwoord: A Shift in South African identities

This chapter describes the Zef movement in South Africa, focusing on Die Antwoord's introduction into the international music scene and the discourses that were formed around South African identities because of them. This frames Die Antwoord and Zef as important and relevant because of a shift that is taking place in South African identities.

Chapter Four: Freeky Ninja: A Subversion of South African White Masculinity

This chapter examines the character of Ninja as representative of South African white masculinity, specifically within the framework of whiteness. It interrogates notions of structural violence, hegemonic masculinities and the perceived 'crisis in masculinity' in order to position Ninja's performance of white masculinity in a South African context. The photography of Roger Ballen and the films of Harmony Korine are used to locate Ninja within their shared references to white trash and freakery. Ninja's performances are thereby discussed as a possible parody of South African hegemonic white masculinity.

Chapter Five: Zef: Performance art?

This chapter introduces a possible reading of Ninja's performances of white masculinity as performance art. After providing a short history of performance art in South Africa, it places the Zef counterculture as performed by Die Antwoord and especially Ninja, within the genre of performance art. It critically assesses the possible merits of such a reading,

especially through the perspective of a social critique of South African white masculine identities.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The final chapter summarizes the main ideas uncovered within the study. It explores the implications of reading the Zef movement as performed by Die Antwoord and the character Ninja as a performance art. It will also delineate limitations that the study may have, as well as offer suggestions for further research.

1.6. Clarification of Concepts

The central notions which form the base of this study are: Identity, Masculinity, South African Whiteness, Zef, Culture, Representation, as well as Performance art and Video art. For the purposes of the study, a clarification of these terms is necessary.

1.6.1. **Identity**:

According to Barker, identity can be described as a broad practice enacting or producing something which it names via reference and recurrence of culturally influenced standards or conventions. It is important to see identity not as a fixed entity but rather a process of production within the trajectory of similarities and dissimilarities (2005: 93-94). Because identity is almost always critically articulated through such grounds as race, class and gender, it involves a process of 'Othering' – defining identity by what it is not and segregating those who appear to oppose the identity in question, which in turn raises the issue of ideology (Drzewiecka & Nakayama, 1998: 22). Althusser states that individuals are subjected to ideological processes such as religion, education, the law and the media (1977: 158) which label them according to social positions, imposing certain identities on them (Althusser 1977: 158). Therefore they are led to assume identities and become subjects within ideology which are usually controlled by certain groups generally based on gender, class and race (Althusser 1977: 158). According to Foucault, these ideological influences can reduce the individual to a

'product' of the practices of power to which it was subjected (1972: 205-206). Because humans are shaped by many ideological systems, they are therefore multi-dimensional in their identity, not necessarily a 'product' of ideology, but individuals with many identities, who, as subjects of social discourses, invest in positions they inhabit. Within these different, even contradictory positions, it consequently becomes difficult to attain a fixed or stable identity (Foucault 1972: 205-206).

The notion that individuals possess a core, stable self has been rejected by theorists such as Derrida and Foucault, who has proclaimed the 'death of self' (Callero 2003: 117). The self is said to be driven into existence as a device of social control (Callero 2003: 118). Derrida, according to Hall (1996: 1-4), asserted that the self and identity are constructed "within, not outside discourse". Derrida's deconstruction of the self signifies defying essentialist beliefs that the self is a limited, stable object and examining the self as a fluid response to many factors (Callero 2003: 121). The 'discourse' implies a variety of contexts, without which the self cannot be grasped. Self-construction is influenced by a diverse set of resources – social narratives, political ideologies, features of the physical body, and of course gender roles and identities (Swidler 1986: 273). Likewise, Ninja's identity construction is influenced by these factors. His persona directly and indirectly references several cultural and gender identities, with his 'tjappies' (prison tattoos), grabbing of his penis, exaggerated white (or black, in *Fatty Boom Boom*) appearance, and usage of Afrikaans and a heavily South African accented English. All of these identity signifiers were constructed within discourse, and therefore has to be examined to fully comprehend the implications of Zef and its link to the transformation of South African male identity.

1.6.2. Masculinity

To speak of masculinities, according to Connell, is to speak of gender: gender relations, the practices by which people engage in gender, and how these practices affect bodily experience, individual behaviour and culture (2005: 71). Elin Diamond defines gender as the "words, gestures, appearances and behaviour that dominant culture understands

as indices of feminine or masculine identity" (2001: 84). These can be seen as instances of what Judith Butler calls gender construction, which is formed through a stylized replication of acts or performances (1990: 30). The focus should be on the analysis of these performances instead of an essential referent of the notion of masculinity (Cornwall & Lindisfarne 1994: 10).

MacInnes asserts that masculinity is sometimes defined as a list of characteristics which popular culture sees as belonging to a man (1998: 15). However, as Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994: 12) notes, the meanings of masculinity are diverse and ambiguous, and differ according to context and culture. Connell argues that the relations between multiple masculinities are important to investigate (2005: 74-75), because the notions of masculinity, like the notions of identity and gender, are so fluid and bound by context. In the South African context, for example, race and gender are inextricably bound, especially in the post-transitional period after 1994. This has led to suggestions that South African masculinity is in crisis (Walker 2005: 226).

Connell (2005: 84) describes the concept of the crisis tendencies within gender as distinct from a so-called 'crisis of masculinity'. There are crisis tendencies within gender, but as masculinity is not so much a 'system' as a "configuration of practice *within* a system of gender relations" (2005: 84), it cannot truly be in 'crisis'. Rather, crises within gender impact masculinities, so that there is a perceptible shift. Connell suggests a three-fold model to analyse crisis tendencies. Firstly, it can be seen in respect to power relations, such as a shift in power from patriarchy in Western countries; production relations, for example the division of labour between males and females; and relations of cathexis, like in the recognition of sexualities other than heterosexuality (Connell 2005: 84-85). This model can be used to analyse the apparent gender crisis in South Africa, which can be seen through the performances of masculinity of Die Antwoord's work. A persistent trend in their work is a focus on the male body – and not only Ninja's body. The music video for *Fok julle naaiers*, for example, starts off with a variety of male bodies and faces which are aggressively held. MacInnes has stated that aggression has been considered a signifier of masculinity (1998: 15). The aggressive signifiers continue

with the display of guns and the focus on male genitals in Die Antwoord's work, through crude drawings in the background and through 'crotch-grabbing' in many music videos. These rather coarse ways of signifying masculinity suggest that there is a need to reclaim a sense of power, which could be indicative of a loss of agency because of the post-transitional shift of power after apartheid. These may be signs of the effects of the struggle for liberation, which according to Sathiparsad, are still clearly visible in African men (2007: 183). A crisis of gender can therefore be seen through Die Antwoord's approach to the performance of masculinity.

1.6.3. South African Whiteness

Whiteness, according to Raka Shome, is a "powerladen discursive formation that privileges, secures, and normalises the cultural space of the white Western subject" (1999: 108). Harris (1995: 277) sees whiteness as a form of property, endowing whites, those passing as white, and sometimes honorary whites with material and symbolic privilege such as better access to higher education, safer neighbourhoods, and presumed beauty and intelligence (Thompson 2001). This property is called white privilege, which depends on the devaluation of non-whites, normalizes white to the point that it is invisible and treated as preferable (Thompson 2001). The invisibility of whiteness has been described by Toni Morrison as a fishbowl, containing both fish and water, which is the "structure that transparently (and invisibly) permits the ordered life it contains to exist in the larger world" (1992: 17). She therefore sees whiteness as the provider of context and the norms by which meaning is made and things are measured. However, because one is focused on the fish in the fishbowl, no attention is given to the fishbowl itself. In the same way, whiteness is invisible. However, Thompson notes that it may become hyper-visible as a threatened status when whites believe that they are losing privileges to which they are entitled (2001).

Whiteness studies has advocated "historicizing the manufacture of white identities, documenting the intersection of ideologies of class, nation, and gender, and ultimately analyzing whiteness as unearned privilege" as an antidote to white supremacy

(Willoughby-Herard 2007: 481). In South Africa, engaging with the notion of 'whiteness' is complicated by political and social tensions, because it can be seen as further privileging and centralizing of a concept that carries a very negative historical connotation (Scott 2012: 752). As Zoë Wicomb (2001: 169) puts it, whiteness "is no longer a nice word". However, critical whiteness studies ultimately attempts to describe white identity and practices in order to investigate them and, in the end, decrease the hegemonic social, cultural and political power that is associated with whiteness (Scott 2012: 753). In a South African context, whiteness must therefore be analysed through an interrogation of the construction of whiteness as well as a challenging of the way in which white South Africans attempt to "re-moor their identities and guard privilege in the context of changing power relations" (Ansell 2004: 7).

White identity in South Africa is indeed being repositioned in the post-transitional period after Apartheid – as Melissa Steyn suggests: "being 'white' is replete with dissonance" (2005: 122). Despite the social and economic privileges white South Africans may have retained in a post-Apartheid context, many claim that they are being deprived of a legitimate space from where to voice their opinions – their voices are being silenced (Scott 2012: 746). Leon de Kock argues that in South Africa, "whiteness had become so delegitimized by virtue of its complicity with apartheid that it had often been rendered 'blank', a taken-for-granted negative essence, a place less looked-into, a site of unredeemed racism and assumed uniformity" (2006: 176).

Die Antwoord's performance of white South African identity renders whiteness more visible, and it also exoticizes it – which undermines the normalization of whiteness (Scott 2012: 753). Their often paradoxical identity politics overly racialises 'white', attempting to lose its privilege and focusing the audience's awareness on white as uncomfortable, distasteful and undesirable (Scott 2012: 753-754). Die Antwoord therefore attempts to reposition themselves within an alternative narrative of white identity. Claire Scott argues that because Ninja appropriates racial signifiers from other race groups, such as his 'tjappies' (tattoos) which are synonymous with Cape Coloured gangster identities, he is able to render his white skin, and white identity, ironic (2012:

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755). He claims in the lyrics of *Fishpaste*, "I am a fucken coloured cos I am a fucken coloured if I want to be a coloured / My inner fucken coloured just wants to be discovered" (Jones & Du Toit 2010). Ninja thus presents a hybrid identity that is complicated by the marker of his white skin (Scott 2012: 755). It is important to investigate Die Antwoord's works within the context of whiteness to most effectively analyse the value of their work against the perpetuation of white privilege.

1.6.4. Zef

The term 'Zef' is an Afrikaans word meaning 'common', 'kitsch', especially in the context of South African 'white trash' (Du Preez 2011: 106). Historically, the term comes from the Ford Zephyr which was very popular in the 1950s and 1960s, and also symbolic of this era's culture of mass consumption, with the car's tailfins raised to Pop status by American artists of the time such as Roy Lichtenstein (Du Preez 2011: 106). In the same period, the biker subculture also arose, which became known for its members' rowdy behaviour and 'ducktail' haircuts, similar to a mullet (Du Preez 2011: 106), which is seen clearly in Die Antwoord's video for *Baby's on Fire*, with the hairstyles, motorcycle and jacked-up car.

Die Antwoord has taken the term 'Zef' as their key identifier, taking it to the extreme and aggressively cultivating it into a transgression (Du Preez 2011: 106). They employ 'Zef' signifiers such as the silk Pink Floyd boxer-shorts worn infamously by Ninja in their first video for *Zef-Side*, the bedtime-slippers and pyjamas, the fake fur, cheap costume jewellery (usually gold), bleached hair, bad teeth and prison-style tattoos. Du Preez argues that Die Antwoord converts 'Zef' into a crossbreed masquerade, a questionable performance of trashiness, mimicking the earlier meaning of the word "with such over-compliance that… 'the next level' of being (*Zef*) is reached" (2011: 107). This level, it can be argued, is performance art to the extent of 'living' the performance.

Zef, in this study, will also be argued to be a signifier of South African white masculinity. According to Sathiparsad, the effects of the struggle for liberation in post-apartheid

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South Africa are still visible in Black men (2007: 183). The declaration of manhood for Black men in apartheid was a "claim for freedom", and the fight for freedom was a "claim for masculinity" (Sathiparsad 2007: 183). When considering that Afrikaners, as part of the National Party, lost the fight for apartheid and consequently were forced to recognise the leaders of the opposition (the ANC) as their own, it has been argued that Afrikaners have to a certain extent lost their claim to masculinity (Rossouw 2012: 10). Furthermore, the economic shift that was caused by affirmative action in South Africa has caused a rise in white poverty, with an estimated 10% of the white population currently destitute (Krueger 2012: 401-402).

With Die Antwoord's deliberate positioning of themselves within the poor white Afrikaner culture (Krueger 2012: 402), the significance of their intention must be examined. In the music video for *Baby's on Fire*, the satirical attack on the working class white Afrikaner culture includes the depiction of a semi-incestuous relationship between brother and sister (Ninja and Yo-Landi Vi$$er), the mother and father watching impassively as Ninja 'defends' his little's sister's 'honour' with a baseball bat, a ninja sword and a gun; with Yo-Landi finally throwing Ninja with a brick in the face. The intro of the music video leaves no doubt that they mean to set their story within a Zef (Afrikaner) household, with the usage of Afrikaner Zef signifiers such as the juxtaposition of morality (the prayer before the meal) with vulgarity (the framed pictures of naked women on the kitchen walls). The colouring within the music video is also almost blindingly white, which invites more readings of whiteness.

Anton Krueger remarks that there seems to be something aggressive about Zef, which includes a rejection of the norms left behind by one's heritage – identifying with the ethnic grouping while contesting its orthodoxies (Krueger 2012: 404). This would suggest that the work of Die Antwoord, by association, is progressive in nature. Frantz Fanon's ideas of the "starving peasant, outside the class system" who uses violence to achieve revolution can be seen as relevant here (1963: 61). In light of this, Zef may be viewed as a new revolutionary stance for the white man in contemporary South Africa, the descendant of the "rotting corpse of the settler" (Fanon 1963: 93), who aggressively

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not only disassociates himself from the "rotting corpses" of his past, but also violently revolts against the imposed silence of his present. The new masculine identity that is created is one that critiques white privilege, one that may disrupt racial and cultural norms.

It can also be argued that Die Antwoord simply created Zef as a 'new South African identity', denigrating cultural identities, especially (poor) white South African masculinity, for shock value and commercial success. This study will problematize Ninja's role in their work and its so-called 'progressiveness'. The possibility that the Zef Man may be post-hegemonic (Du Preez 2011: 114) will be considered in contrast to a perpetuation of the colonialist project of South Africa's troubled past.

1.6.5. **Culture**

The concept of culture has been much disputed within theoretical discourse because it cannot be said to represent a single, demarcated entity (Barker 2004: 44). According to Barker (2004: 44), various discourses have identified culture as a way of life, a tool, concerned with practices, artefacts, and spatial arrangements, constituted by representation and as mass and popular. Dodd states that culture can be understood to be the "total accumulation of an identifiable group's belief, norms, activities, institutions and communication patterns", moving through a "continuum from values and beliefs to feelings and behaviour" (1991: 41). This definition emphasizes the very broad nature of the term 'culture', as well as it being a very fluid concept, perpetually socially constructed within a changing socio-political world.

The meaning of culture, according to Green (2008: 2) can be understood within an idealistic and materialistic context. The idealistic focuses on human intellectuality, relating to the "language, styles of art" and other intellectual works which is seen as cultural activities. The materialistic argues that culture arises inside social contexts which form the expression of culture, for instance social relationships within economic production (Green 2008: 2). Culture can therefore be seen as a social construction

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which changes constantly and is something different to each individual. Culture can be a manner of identifying with a group of people, and also of self-identification. Central to the concept is also the Other, because many understand their culture in relation to what it is not (Pavis 1992: 8). Therefore, it can be problematized to be a channel for marginalization.

The concept of culture is important to this study because of the myriad cultural signifiers used by Ninja and Die Antwoord within their work. Because of his claim of representation of "South African culture", poor whites and the whole concept of 'Zef' culture, it is essential to analyse these claims within the notion of cultural production. Theodor Adorno's theories about the 'culture industry' assert that mass media is not produced by the masses, but media created for the masses by capitalism to keep them passive and politically apathetic (Adorno 1975: 12). Ninja has stated that Die Antwoord's music is intended as a "shock machine" to wake "unconscious" people (Marchese 2012), which could be indicative of a dissent towards the 'culture industry'. Popular media is branded by what Adorno calls 'standardisation' and 'pseudo-individualisation' – respectively the strengthened conditioning of the public's formulaic expectations (Adorno 1941: 125) and supposed differences imitating distinction, making the audience "forget that what they listen to is wholly intended for them or pre-digested" (1941: 25). According to Adorno, a work of art should be reflective of social structures, but act within this system as both "an irritant" and "the negative knowledge of the actual world" (1980: 160). Die Antwoord's provocative work can therefore be seen as deliberately offensive towards cultural sensibilities – it is intended to transgress into an irritant, so that political and social questioning might occur.

1.6.6. Representation

Representation as a notion is definable in a variety of ways. Representation is often seen as re-presentations of something in images, reproductions, performances or simulations, in a range of different media: film, photography, the plastic arts, advertisements, literature (Baldonado 1996). However, the relationship between the

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representation and the thing it represents is never exactly identical or truthful – and cannot be seen as 'realistic' or 'objective', as they are constructed images usually loaded with ideological content (Baldonado 1996).

Spivak distinguishes between two elements involved in representation, *Vertretung* and *Darstellung* – the former meaning "speaking for" and the latter "portraying" (1990: 108). Die Antwoord's representations can be examined via these elements, asking questions about who they are speaking for and/or portraying, especially within the context of cultural and gender identities. Because there is always an amount of interpretation involved in representation, an on-going analysis and critique should be active when representation is present, in terms of who is doing the representing, who is being represented, "for what purpose, at which historical moment, for which location, using which strategies, and in what tone of address" (Shohat 1995: 173). This study of Die Antwoord gains importance in the light of the effect which representation have on the ways in which individuals, in this case white South African males, are perceived – questions must be asked about the ideological influences which their work accomplish. Representations are ideological instruments which can function towards reinforcement of systems of inequality and persistence of colonialist or neo-colonialist projects (Baldonado 1996).

1.6.7. **Performance Art and Video Art**

Performance art is a difficult concept to define. By its very nature, Forte argues, it has a deconstructive intent, and therefore to understand, to critically investigate, and to provide an absolute definition is difficult and frustrating, if not impossible (1988: 217). Féral says that it is, above all, a 'form' with a function within the artistic realm (Féral & Tennessen 1992: 157). Historically, performance art arose as part of a movement of dissent against established norms specific to the time – the notions of "representation, rehearsal, and memory" and practice without risk or questioning for both the artist and spectator (Féral & Tennessen 1992: 144).

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Although definition is practically impossible, a characterisation of performance art was summed up by Féral through some propositions: favouring the 'real' presence of the performance artist as opposed to the notion of representation (which involves the rejection of characters or roles and any repetition of the performance); a disagreement with the commercialization of art (which involves a rejection of museum visits or leaving any traces); favouring the process over the product; an integration of art into 'real' life with the focus on an influence of art on the 'real'; and a definite rejection of any sort of catharsis (Féral & Tennessen 1992: 146). However, many of these propositions did not characterize the recent exhibit of Marina Abramović's performance art, *The Artist is Present*. It took place in a museum, with restagings of her previous works (Thurman 2010) and she got paid for it (Goldman 2012). Still, it was categorized and recognized as performance art. Similarly, Die Antwoord's work break many of these set 'propositions' for performance art – the major contradiction being the fact that it consists of video, mostly accessed online. One might argue that it might fit better in the realm of video art.

Video art, historically, consisted also of 'live' works which used the apparatus and the processes of video and television (Hartney 2009). It was featured in galleries as broadcast recordings or distributed tapes, installations in which live recordings were used and video representations displayed through performance. Video artists also broadcast events 'live' through television transmission (Hartney 2009). There was therefore also a precondition of 'liveness'. Die Antwoord's online oeuvre seems to break, yet also rework the 'live' form, traditionally speaking, of both performance art and video art.

Davies states that most authorities on performance art resist forming a definition of the term, because "the phenomena we seek to capture under that label are too diverse" (2011: 207). According to Davies, "[a]ll that can be said is that performance art is 'live art by artists.' But, as we have seen, this is at best a necessary condition for being performance art in the accepted sense" (2011: 207). This study will also resist defining performance art, and will read and identify performance art according to its function,

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which, according to Féral, is to awaken, to provoke, to speak out against convention and to create a different connection between an artwork and its public (Féral & Tennessen 1992: 148). Davies echoes this inclination towards a function-driven reading and reads performance art according to the "*point* of what the performance artists were doing and the way in which this point was articulated through the performance" (2011: 207).

Video art's function, similar to performance art, has been to articulate ideas descending from cultural, art and political movements – "questioning, stirring up, provoking, engaging, educating, inventing, informing, and articulating new ideas" (Horsfield 2006: 8). As the video medium ventured into the age of internet, a new platform for expression opened online, for example in streaming or screening video as the "new exhibition model" (Budzinski 2013: 68).

The intersection between performance art and video art can be found in this: an occurrence where there is both a performance and a clear intention to express some artistic content through this performance (Davies 2011: 201), utilizing the processes and instruments of video. Additionally, this intersection may gain "digital liveness" which, as described by Auslander, occurs as a specific connection between the audience and the technology – the experience of liveness resulting "from our conscious act of grasping virtual entities as live in response to the claims they make on us" (Auslander 2011). The experiential meanings within Die Antwoord's work can be said to facilitate this connection which results in digital liveness. Their claim on South African identity may be understood as 'live' the moment that some people ask "Are they for real?", referring to the doubt of authenticity they create. As Chris Roper says, Die Antwoord is "a performance piece acting itself out, and like all great performance, the audience is as complicit as the actors" (2010). The online platform which Die Antwoord utilizes can then be seen as the meeting place of the exhibition of performance art and digital liveness, and its form and purpose is therefore also relevant to the interrogation of Die Antwoord's oeuvre.

CHAPTER TWO

Performance Art Reborn Online

This chapter forms a conception of 'online video performance art' in order to frame Die Antwoord's work as performance art. Performance art as it was at its conception is compared to contemporary performance art, with a focus on the notion of risk. The notions of digital performance art and digital liveness are discussed and applied to Die Antwoord's archive of work, with specific focus on viewer responses. The chapter concludes with a hypothetical situation in which Die Antwoord's work can be considered to be performance art.

2.1 Destroying the Sacred, Serious and Sublime through Performance Art

In the last three decades, there has been a resurgence of discussion and practice of performance art, arguably due to a series of performances conducted by Marina Abramović (Sherwin & Clark 2014; Spivey 2010). It has also been suggested that this pioneer of performance art is responsible for the movement of performance art into the mainstream (Sherwin & Clark 2014; Spivey 2010). While some remain convinced that the golden era of performance art was in the 1960s and 1970s (Swan 2014), and that performance art 'died' (Steinhauer 2013) the moment Abramović collaborated with Jay-Z in *Picasso Baby: A Performance Art Film* (Romanek 2013), dialogue regarding performance art is increasing both in academic discourse and mainstream popular culture. Abramović asserts that *Picasso Baby* points to a rare shift in the public's attention towards performance art (Sharpe 2013), which shows in the engagement of popular culture.

Celebrities are also engaging in what they specifically label 'performance art' – such as Shia LaBoeuf's *#IMSORRY* (2014), an act similar to Abramović's *The Artist is Present* (2010), in which he sits at a table across from one audience member at a time, wearing a brown paper bag with the words "I AM NOT FAMOUS ANYMORE" written in black

marker (Rothman 2014). LaBoeuf has also performed in singer Sia's music video *Elastic Heart* (Sia & Askill 2014), and Rob Cantor's *Shia Laboeuf Live* (Uhfelder 2014), which can both be described as emotive projects in his ongoing venture into commentary on the "dehumanising and obsessive nature of celebrity culture" (Cliff 2014). Similarly, performance art has entered the public's vocabulary when speaking about celebrity culture, as seen in commentary about Beyoncé and Jay-Z's performances together: "The Beyoncé and Jay Z show has taken the American cult of celebrity, our obsession with reality television, our hunger for knowledge of what famous people are 'really like', and smushed [sic] it all together into a product, into capitalism *as* performance art" (Silvers 2014). Roselee Goldberg (quoted in D'Addario 2011) argues that celebrity flirtation with performance art has moved the medium both into the mainstream art scene and everyday terminology. It seems to have gained relevance across the spectrum of art and celebrity.

However, while in informal online discourse the term 'performance art' tends to be used in an almost cavalier fashion, art critics are not so forgiving. Acts like those Beyoncé, Jay-Z and Laboeuf does are not seen as "art for art's sake", because it is argued that the label of 'performance art' in their case serves more as a vehicle to discuss celebrity and fame (Rothman 2014). However, the claim that discussion of celebrity and fame is unoriginal and therefore invalid as performance art (Rothman 2014) evokes purist notions of what performance art has always been perceived to be.

When one examines performance art as it was at its conception in the 1960s, it may seem that what is deemed performance art in the 2010s all but disgraces the long-established form of performance art. If one takes Marina Abramović as a case study, it becomes clearer why art critics are sceptical of 'mainstream' performance art. When one compares an influential piece such as *Rhythm 0* in 1974, where Abramović put down 72 objects with which the audience could treat her as if she were an object, resulting in cuts over her body, a loaded gun being pointed at her, and a knife thrust into a table between her legs (Thurman 2010); with a 6 hour rap marathon featuring many different invited celebrities out of the 'art world' (Steinhauer 2013), it does seem that

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performance art has fallen from its dangerous, shocking, glorious past into a tamed version of itself (Micchelli 2012). According to biographer Mary Richards, high-risk performances like those done in the 1970s by Abramović creates a "special spectator/performer relationship" and "opens up new horizons of consciousness" in the artist (Richards 2009: 63). What seems to be absent in today's 'tamer' version of performance art, or at least in short supply, is the risk factor.

Risk, an increasingly popular field of research in the social sciences, is described by Adam Alston as a specific "relationship between time, uncertainty and daring" (2013: 134). John C. Welchman argues that since the Romantic movement, 'safe' practises of leisure have been replaced by riskier ones, for instance going for a walk became an expedition, safari or hike into the wilderness (Welchman 2008: 10). This points to a tendency towards risky actions, developed as a mannerism "in self-conscious antithesis to the regimes of public- and self-governance and social welfare believed to circumscribe the expressive capacities of the subject" (Welchman 2008:11). In other words, risk is being adopted in opposition to governing powers, in order to gain freedom for self-expression. In the electronic age, where human activities are controlled and monitored for potential risks, or rather, "disruption[s] to the system" (Welchman 2008: 11), liberties that should be protected may be jeopardised (Welchman 2008: 13). Therefore, some resist the definition and quantification of risk, "preferring to experience life … which entails taking risks", often physically involving their bodies (Welchman 2008: 14). It is also possible that the recent prominence of dangerous lifestyles might be a result of people's inability to understand and cope with the horrific, pervasive, habitually trivialised, risks of others (Welchman 2008: 21).

> By enacting risk in both simulated and real forms, individuals can avoid the collective responsibility of responding to large-scale systemic problems. In order to avoid calculable societal risks, the individual psyche takes on personal danger as a surrogate, which acts as a cathartic form for authenticating the existence of the self. (Welchman 2008: 21-22).

This is played out in what Welchman calls a "culture of narcissistic suffering" in Western cultures – models starving themselves; dangerous sports; drug addiction; tattoos and piercings that can be described as "neo-primitive" – through which individuals inflict both

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real and symbolic pain upon themselves in order to accept punishment or perhaps avoid responsibility for others' risks (2008: 22). This is one example of how the concept of risk can be utilized to distinguish behaviours and explain self-conscious practices and postures (Welchman 2008: 27). The cause and effects of these practices are not simple (Welchman 2008: 22), however, and unsettled psychological conditions may also be at play. Therefore, risk becomes a medium for self-expression on a psychological level, which might be conveyed in artistic ways.

Repressed emotion and consequent bodily tension is accumulated by most individuals and is also transmitted to others, perpetuating the repression of emotion throughout society (Scheff 1979: 51). Catharsis is the process of emotional discharge which relieves these tensions, "mediated through socially accepted genres and formats that broker transformative or ecstatic experience" (Welchman 2008: 30). This means that risk is both constructed and legitimated through catharsis (Welchman 2008: 30). In performance, catharsis can be enacted in the audience, who both observe and participate in their own distress, consequently releasing strong emotion (Scheff 1979: 62). Cathartic experiences in performance thus become a legitimised form of self-expression, and a central element to these experiences is risk.

A major factor is audience perception and investment in the risk, which is in part related to thrill-seeking (Alston 2013: 134). In other words, it is important to analyse what the audience believes to be risky, and the measure of their mindful participation in risks. A psychometric paradigm is utilized by sociological scholars which illustrates the functioning of risk perception according to four intentions, namely: "to establish 'risk' as a subjective concept as opposed to an objective entity; to include technical/physical and social/psychological aspects in risk criteria; to accept opinions of 'the public' (i.e. laypeople, not experts) as the matter of interest; [and] to analyse the cognitive structure of risk judgments" (Renn & Rohrmann 2000: 17). This paradigm's propositions therefore position risk as dependent on the subject's experience – thoughts, emotions, relationships and other factors. Alston writes that whether the daring venture is confrontational or trivial, there is at all times a sense of "putting oneself on the line, often

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in the presence of others" (2013: 134). In immersive theatre and performance art, risk is negotiated when the audience is exposed to uncertainty, which causes them to be vulnerable to a gain or a loss, especially a subjective vulnerability (Alston 2013: 136). A mutual vulnerability between audience and performer may result from audience participation, a sense of being collectively accountable for the performance (Alston 2013: 136). The consequences of the participatory encounter have to be faced by both performers and audiences, and when audiences take this risk, aware of their own agency and accountability (Alston 2013: 136), a sense of liveness is created (Cooke 2011: 20). Risk can then be considered an integral and also useful element of performance art.

Roselee Goldberg recalls the Futurist Manifesto in 1910 calling for performance artists to act as "public irritants", taking pleasure in being booed and thrown with vegetables by audiences, destroying the "Sacred, Serious and the Sublime in Art with a capital A" (1980: 370). This is intended to turn performance into an "art for all" and combine high art and popular culture (Goldberg 1980:370-376). Die Antwoord seems to take their "futuriste" mission of taking risks, aggressively pushing transgressive concepts in South African cultures such as ritual circumcision in Xhosa culture (*Evil Boy*), paradoxical religion alongside sexual deviance in Afrikaans culture (*Baby's on Fire*) and the gangster culture of the Cape Coloured community (*Cookie Thumper*, Jones 2013) to the forefront. They also seem to strive for controversy in their music videos, most famously portraying American singer Lady Gaga as an ignorant tourist who gets a Parktown Prawn (a king cricket) stuck up her vagina and is eaten by a lion in the end (*Fatty Boom Boom*). In an even more offensive way, at the end of *Fok julle naaiers*, a famous speech by Mike Tyson in which he tells an audience member, "I'll fuck you in the ass… you punk-ass white boy… look at you scared, scared of a real man… I'll fuck you 'til you love me faggot" is remixed and rapped by DJ Hi-Tek. These examples of confrontational, inflammatory conduct demonstrate Die Antwoord's attempts to destroy all that is sacred, serious and sublime ostensibly in traditional South African cultural norms, fulfilling their own interpretation of the Futurist Manifesto.

Die Antwoord's work complies with the characteristic reductionism associated with performance art (Nelson-Teutsch 2013): a stripping of all notions of social convention. It is not politically correct, or culturally sensitive. Performance art is larger-than-life, can't-look-away, untamed, art for art's sake, which transforms meaning (Nelson-Teutsch 2013). While Die Antwoord has been criticized thoroughly for its cultural appropriation (Kitchiner 2013:65-79) and perceived cultural insensitivity if not racism (Haupt 2012a), it falls rightly into the similarly criticized area of performance art (Nelson-Teutsch 2013). Chinua Achebe has called art for art's sake "just another piece of deodorized dog shit" (1973:617). This is a sentiment shared by many who call performance art "bullshit" (Brockway 2010; Crocker 2014; O'Hagan 2010). Because it is so frequently misunderstood, it is often not seen as legitimate contemporary art (Nelson-Teutsch 2013). As Emma Brockes puts it, "When performance art is bad, it is worse than almost anything and even the good stuff is vulnerable to ridicule" (2014). This is part of the risk integral to performance art.

2.2 Die Antwoord's Online Digital Archive

When one considers the continual questioning of the legitimacy of performance art (Nelson-Teutsch 2013) and the notion of Die Antwoord positioned within its realm, there is one tenet of performance art which disqualifies their work from this positioning: Performance art is live. No recreation or documentation can be seen as the art itself – the body in space is the performance (Nelson-Teutsch 2013). Although Die Antwoord's performances occur both live on stages and in online videos, I will argue that their performance art is above all in their online digital archive[1].

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[1] The archive and its meaning has become a contentious subject across many disciplines over the last 20 years, according to Marlene Manoff (2004: 9). Prominent theorists such as Derrida and Foucault have contemplated the archive and its significance within hegemonic structures (Derrida 1995:3) as well as its role as a "system of discursivity" (Foucault 1972: 129). Building on these and other works on the archive, Manoff states that archival work requires selecting the significant pieces of information from a mass of data (Manoff 2004: 19), thereby making fine distinctions of inclusion and exclusion – this is in part an exercise in power (Derrida 1995: 4) over the archive. Though I acknowledge the multifaceted meanings of the archive, in this paper I will use the term 'archive' in a broad sense, to refer to all information currently existing in online digital videos featuring Die Antwoord.

"But look at me now / All up on the interweb / Worldwide" (*Enter the Ninja* 2009)

Watkin Tudor Jones has been involved in many different projects before he formed Die Antwoord with Anri du Toit (Yo-Landi Vi$$er) – some of them performance art projects such as MaxNormal and MaxNormal.tv (Stewart 2010). With these projects, Jones and Du Toit performed live with multimedia aids such as PowerPoint projections, in a motivational speaking style (MaxNormal.tv 2007). However, none of these projects seemed to allow Jones to achieve "full flex" (*Take No Prisoners,* News24 2010). What he needed to do, it seems, was to take his project to the 'interweb'. Therefore, he moved his and Du Toit's work into digital performance.

According to Steve Dixon, digital performance can be characterized as any performance work in which computer technology is utilized as a key component (as opposed to a supplementary one) aesthetically, content-wise, in techniques or in delivery form, which includes "performative works and activities that are accessed through the computer screen" (Dixon 2007: 3). Jones introduced the character Ninja through posting the video *Zef Side* on YouTube, which Xeni Jardin reposted on the website boingboing.net (Jardin 2010a). The video promptly went viral and it was also featured in a Guggenheim museum exhibit for innovative video art (Breihan 2010). It had thus gained the attention of both mainstream media and art critics. This commercial and critical success of Die Antwoord's digital performance on the 'interweb' indicates the effects (and effectiveness) of computer technologies on the action and creation of performance, which Dixon calls a "distinct blurring of what we formerly termed, for example, … performance art" (2007: 3). Performance art can thus also theoretically happen in digital spaces.

Digital performance art differs from embodied performance art in many ways. Brandi Wilkins Catanese discusses the now-defunct rent-a-negro.com, in which the artist damali ayo offered herself up as a 'professional black person' for services to help "diversify" the professional and social networks of her "customers" (Catanese 2005: 699). Digital performance art such as this one provides an impersonal, invisible

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opportunity to partake in discourse that is not bound to physical time and place, as well as the externalization of audience response, like embodied performance art is (Catanese 2005: 712). It transcends these constraints and therefore, more people in more places can be reached by the works of art. The accessibility of digital performance art thus surpasses that of 'traditional' performance art, where liveness comes about because of an "occurrence within a shared context and spatio-temporal relation" between performer and audience (Cooke 2011: 10). Therefore, the liveness of digital performance art is essentially different in its connection to the audience. Auslander declares that both mediatised and live performance is equally authentic and auratic – they are simply different reproductions of the text (2008: 50). However, as Dixon notes, they are watched differently by the spectator (2007: 130).

Although they also perform in live shows, I would argue that Die Antwoord's digital archive online is where the best part of their connection to their audience happens. As Ninja says, "We just make tracks, put them on the net, make videos, put them on the net" (HBO 2013). While their live shows can be described as conventional concerts, their online archive of work is where their ideas and style are emphasized. Their concerts are filled with the costumes, background video displays and other signifiers of their music videos (Psinka 2013), which show that these are what audiences find most indicative of Die Antwoord. The style which hooks people, Ninja says, is "documentary fiction", which is when you insert your "fictional" self into the documentary of life, "playing with reality" (HBO 2013). This somewhat vague statement may be interpreted as the characters Ninja, Yo-Landi and DJ Hi-Tek being exaggerated products of South African culture in 'reality'. They repeatedly reference Roger Ballen's photography of impoverished white people in South Africa in their aesthetics, which is what Miles Keylock calls "a deep plunge into the white South African subconscious in all its ugliness … They are Roger Ballen's mutant psycho-sexual urchins, orphans and outlanders" (Keylock 2012)[2]. Their digital archive online can therefore be seen as representative of South African whiteness – a documentary, a mirror held up to society, "discomforting, filthy and hilarious, but it's also potentially the long-neglected first step in

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[2] See Chapter Three.

reflecting a culture's inner psychology, no matter how scary" (Keylock 2012). It can be argued that Die Antwoord unsettles because their subject matter presented through digital performance art reaches audiences through the factor of risk – self-awareness is raised by means of a sense of possibility, challenge and danger when the Sacred, Serious and Sublime is disrupted. The digital archive through which Die Antwoord reaches audiences has its own unique type of presence, which have to be comprehensively investigated in order to analyse this raised self-awareness particular to performance art.

2.3 Presence and Liveness in a Digital Video Archive

The notion of presence, in performance studies, has been used principally to denote the "flesh-and-blood performer, there with you in the same shared physical space" (Dixon 2007: 132). However, the meaning of online presence is part of the larger shift in thought related to the physical envelope of the body and the position of human agency (Stone 2001: 16). Dixon argues that while presence has been linked to spatial proximity and liveness, it is essentially about interest and command of attention, for instance in public places when there are both a live body and a television screen – either the TV or the live person may gain attention, depending on which is more stimulating to the individual representing the audience (Dixon 2007: 132). This substantiates the notion that attention and engagement from the audience is what creates presence. Indeed, live performance is sometimes devoid of any presence, though there might be corporeal liveness (Dixon 2007: 133).

Peter Wright contends that there is undoubtedly a distinctive liveness about YouTube (Giaccardi 2012: 240), that lies within interaction in the comment section. He uses the example of a Paul Simon 9/11 memorial video, which garnered commentary discussing not only the video itself and collectively remembering the events of September 11th 2001, but also social issues such as the US-centric viewpoint of the service – condemning the war, American society and the disregard of the Iraqi and Afghan losses (2012: 241). In recent times, South African hip hop electro group DOOKOOM released

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a music video called *Larney jou Poes* (Dodds 2014), which roughly translates into "Boss, fuck you" (Young 2014). The video features mainly Coloured and Black farm workers who band together to burn down a white farmer's farm, to which the reaction was extreme – the White Afrikaans Civil Rights group Afriforum petitioned to get the video banned on grounds of hate speech (Young 2014). Comments on the YouTube video also show explosive discourse, mostly concerning racial issues of South Africa [sic]: "The lyrics in this video is promoting terrorist acts against white farmers in South Africa", which is answered with "all you whites are just mad because of the history reflected in the video....ain't no hate speech, yes a bit of incitement..." (Dodds 2014). One user comments, [sic] "I Love This Video, I Love What It Brings Out Of People.... Look At Our Selves...." (Dodds 2014).

Similarly, the comments on Die Antwoord's videos form conversations which often have little to do with the music. It regularly discusses their South African origins and their racial identity, as seen in this conversation:

> BJ: Their [sic] straight garbage trying to be different but honestly their [sic] just an embarrassment to my race. I'm ashamed be white right now. Off with their heads!!
>
> RR: They're not white. Hopefully you're being sarcastic.
>
> CP: They're still white. African or not. You don't stop being white because your family moves to Africa, and neither do your children.

(Comments and replies from *Fok julle naaiers*)

The responses and conversations in the YouTube comment section of a video can be said to constitute a contribution to the digital archive and its liveness. Slavoj Zizek states that the real-world (as opposed to cyber) body of the other serves only as a support for our phantasmic projections (1994: 5). Following this, Walker (2011a) suggests that online encounters on YouTube serve to facilitate the viewer's experience of the online body as a phantasmic projection, fabricated both by its creator (the artist) and the audience. The 'real', Erving Goffman contends, is whatever is perceived as real by more than one person (1974: 43). Following this, the viewer experiences Die Antwoord's

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liveness the moment she asks, "Are they for real?" As Chris Roper says, Die Antwoord is "a performance piece acting itself out, and like all great performances, the audience is as complicit as the actors" (2010). Simply viewing videos on YouTube, then, involves one in the interactive meaning-making process that is YouTube (Walker 2011b), and the viewer becomes a participant in the realization of these phantasmic projections. The viewer is simultaneously present in front of the screen and separated from its content, and so the video archive becomes a conduit (Walker 2011b), a channel of expression for performance.

Within this community, the archive, there are performers and those who punish them for it – individuals who act within the system and comment upon its contents (Westlake 2008: 36). While the viewing of online videos is usually a private activity, the viewer therefore enters a community just by watching. A relationship is created not only between the viewer and the performer, but also the viewer and other viewers and commentators. A complex network of interactions is created, involving many people and creating two layered archives that are very much present and live: the existing archive and a generative archive produced from the online archive. Between all of the participants, there is a performance occurring, in which none of them are truly passive. To watch videos which create an impulse to interact with the creators of the video in the form of a comment, and subsequently reading other comments, puts a viewer at the equivalent type of risk that watching a live performance would. Although there is no physical risk to the viewer (assuming that there is the potential for physical risk in live performance), there is a definite risk of direct confrontation in the comment section of YouTube videos.

In a study of hateful comments on YouTube, Patricia Lange found that participants experience emotional injuries from this form of online bullying (2007: 361-380), which means that even the viewer's anonymity on YouTube offers no protection from risk. In commenting on a YouTube video, one is exposed not only to hateful comments, but one also risks intellectual and critical engagement in ideas, which according to Guillermo Gómez-Peña, is what performance artists seek: "our job may be to open the Pandora's

Box of our times … in front of the video camera and let the demons loose. …our hope is that a process of reflection gets triggered in [the audience's] perplexed psyches" (2013). The connection between the viewer and the digital performer thus gains what Auslander calls "digital liveness" (2011). He describes it as a specific connection between the audience and the technology, which results from the viewer consciously seeing virtual entities as live as a result of the claims made on the viewer by these entities (Auslander 2011). The risk for the viewer is therefore in watching the video itself, experiencing digital liveness, as well as putting oneself at risk for direct confrontation and engagement with a conceptual dimension of ideas within the archive.

The inherent risk in participating in online video archives thus offers substantiation of the classification of some videos as performance art. Then again, this may infer that all videos on YouTube could be considered as such. I would argue that the creator's conceptual dimension of ideas determines the difference between performance art videos and non-performance art videos. This dimension, different from the much-criticized notion of artistic 'intention', can manifest in both live performance and performances in the online video archive (Roms 2013: 37). However, it becomes especially clear upon examination of the archive, because connections can be made between repeated ideas expressed in the artist's body of work. When one looks at Die Antwoord's online video archive, there is a definite conceptual dimension of ideas which presents itself to the viewer and which is repeatedly commented upon by its online audience. Herein lays the distinction between non-performance art work and performance art in online videos: Online video performance art is made by artists; it is made with a clear conceptual dimension of ideas, which in turn elicits strong responses from viewers; and it elicits an element of risk accompanied by digital liveness. These distinctions are unmistakable in Die Antwoord's work.

Die Antwoord's conceptual dimension of ideas includes an assortment of recurring notions, including South African culture, white identity, poverty, ambition, zef, masculinity, and materialism. The following table shows the number of total comments for their most popular videos (as recorded at 4:00 PM UTC on 31 March 2015). Die

Antwoord never respond on the comments, except for a video responding to a choice of comments on the *Fatty Boom Boom* video (Noisey 2012).

VIDEO NAME	YEAR RELEASED	TOTAL COMMENTS (31 MARCH 2015)
Enter the Ninja	2009	41 953
Fatty Boom Boom	2012	37 195
Baby's on Fire	2012	26 139
Evil Boy	2009	26 089
Rich Bitch	2011	28 696
Zef Side	2010	17 414
Cookie Thumper	2013	15 491
Ugly Boy	2014	13 593
Pitbull Terrier	2014	9 287
Fok Julle Naaiers	2011	8 260
I fink u freeky	2012	6 831
Umshini Wam	2011	4 182

The responses garnered from the videos show that there is a strong interactive element to their work. Comments frequently draw out emotional and analytical responses.

> MT: Everyone always finds something to be angry about when it comes to Die Antwoord.
> (Comment from *Pitbull Terrier*)

There is a lot of angered and serious discussion of the intention of Die Antwoord's usage of blackface:

> APWG: I wonder if the actual black person in this group knows how horribly racist the other two people in the group are.

> EL: … there is a big difference between this and black face. Black face is done with the intention of having a white person portray a racist caricature of black people …There is also no implication that they are representing anything about being black. It's art and I actually think it's quite well done.
> (Comments from *Fatty Boom Boom*)

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Some people, however, take a more humorous stance, while others try to understand what they have just witnessed.

> LKJH: If Hitler had won the war, this.
> (Comment from *Baby's on Fire*)

> BKT: Disgusted yet strangely aroused. . . .
> L: somehow i always get afraid when i hear their songs :(but i like them :) [sic]
> AW: Clearly Africa is hell on earth
> BZ: It's a song about the racial segregation in South Afrika. It's shock humour / provocative to challenge the still very present view in south afrika that races cannot mix. The fact that the white girl is "zef" and doesn't follow the typical South African "White" image is also something that is not done in that country. Die Antwoord is very confrontational about race stereotypes in their country. We "westerners" don't really get it until someone explains the situation.
> (Comments from *Cookie Thumper*)

> AM: I feel so strange that I look at this video of a bunch of wooden cocks and naked women and the first thing I really think to myself is "Wow, what a powerful cultural statement against ritual genital mutilation. Everyone should see this."
> (Comment from *Evil Boy*)

In a more alarming way, some people mistake the cultural signifiers for white supremacist propaganda.

> GE: This is so amazing, I love music by white South Africans!
> Sad to see how much racist attacks are focused on whites just because of stupid stereotype that they're guilty from Apartheid and only whites are racist!
> JWS: Like and reply to this comment if you support the White Power symbology that this video expresses - #BlackPeopleExtinction [sic]
> (Comments from *Ugly Boy*)

These comments show that the video viewers presumably watched directly before, provoked a reaction in them which they felt so strongly about that they were moved to write down their thoughts and broadcast them to the creator of the video and other viewers. These reactions are the result of signifiers that trigger different responses in different people, depending on their perspective and frame of reference. It's fair to say that viewers of South African descent have a different understanding of the videos, because the majority of Die Antwoord's conceptual dimension of ideas alludes to South African perspectives.

> BD: You really should be from South Africa to catch most of the references… Even then most people might not agree with it so much. Personally I think it's meant to be deeper than it seems, an expression hinting toward feelings many South Africans have, which is spot on. Misunderstood genius takes many forms, and I'm sure some will grasp the meaning behind it all.
> (Comment from *Umshini Wam*)

Die Antwoord's videos seem to affect South Africans very intensely – causing them to either calling the group 'Satanists', 'abnormal', and 'garbage', or adoring them and saying they're their favourite South African band (Jaan 2014). Koos Kombuis, a well-known Afrikaans singer and social commentator in South Africa, called them a "flash in the pan" and in informal online discourse, many condescendingly refer to them as "common" – which means 'trashy', 'scum', in South African vernacular (Fourie 2012). The reactions of South Africans and especially Afrikaans people are on opposite points of the spectrum – as Ruan Fourie (2014) says, people in South Africa either hate them or love them, passionately. Arguably, this is due to their frequent reference to South African ideas and perspectives, and the fact that simply by portraying certain things, they are irretrievably altering perceptions of South African identities (Scott 2012: 757-758).

When the South African film *Skoonheid* was released in 2011, audiences at Cannes Festival were fascinated by it and it won the Un Certain Regard category (Pople 2011), while theatres in South Africa were almost empty to begin with, and many audience

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members walked out, at least during the showing I was at, in Brooklyn, Pretoria (a predominantly white, Afrikaans-speaking neighbourhood, according to Census 2011). The experience for some, including myself, was unsettling due to seeing Afrikaans characters perform subversive acts. I saw a fellow audience member closing her eyes in a particularly gritty scene, which exemplified the difficulty an audience can have with watching something culturally destabilising. The shared feeling after the movie could be described as a sense of unease. The portrayal of a representative of one's culture in a perceivably negative manner can be demanding, especially when there is perhaps limited representation of one's culture in international entertainment and media. It can be argued that it is the same type of feeling that South Africans and especially Afrikaans people get when watching Die Antwoord, because of their popularized usage of the Afrikaans language and its accent (Pollak 2014).

Jocelyn Teri, in her discussion of national identity in South African film, argues that many white South Africans feel alienated from their country because of the escapism of American popular culture to which they readily expose themselves to (Teri 2008: 9). White Afrikaans-speaking South Africans especially struggle with their cultural identities, and whether to associate themselves with the concept 'Afrikaner' (Van Zyl Slabbert 2000: 79). Therefore, seeing an Afrikaner represented as unpleasant, criminal and even evil can be challenging in the face of arguably limited representation in entertainment and media. In the time of Apartheid, Afrikaners were portrayed as evil racists, and after Apartheid, this trope continued (Botha 2011) in the form of the 'Amoral Afrikaner', a bloodthirsty, racist villain as seen in films like *The Sum of All Fears* (Robinson 2002), *The Manchurian Candidate* (Demme 2004), *Elysium* (Blomkamp 2013) and *RED* (Schwentke 2010) as well as the PC game *Far Cry 2* (Ubisoft 2008). The extreme responses toward Die Antwoord's work show that people who identify with Die Antwoord's representations of white South Africans and Afrikaans people, find it intriguing at best and insulting at worst. However, as Teri muses, the time has arrived where Africans (especially its artists and filmmakers) can reclaim our ability to exchange experiences and "communicate across the spaces between us" (2008: 10). In other words, white South Africans can remake their cultural identities through art, challenging

the existing stereotypes and representing ideas that reflect voices that have remained unheard. As Sharlto Copley, South African actor who plays the Afrikaans hero in *District 9* (Blomkamp 2009)*,* the Afrikaans villain in *Elysium*, and most recently the Afrikaans-accented pet robot of Die Antwoord in *Chappie* (Blomkamp 2015), said about Die Antwoord (quoted by McGroarty & Bischof 2014): "There's the chance for Afrikaans culture to be sort of accepted and embraced without people feeling like they were sleeping with the enemy".

In a hypothetical situation, a white South African viewer and a viewer from another nationality would watch and respond to the online video archive of Die Antwoord through their respective perspectives and identification with the subject matter and language. Digital liveness occurs through the raised self-awareness of participating in a digital archive. The digital performers, Ninja and Yo-Landi, are active in expressing their conceptual dimension of ideas and the viewers are active in responding and engaging in conversations regarding these ideas. They put themselves at risk, creating discourse regarding the destruction of the sacred, the serious and the sublime by Die Antwoord's online video archive. In this situation, both the white South African viewer and the viewer from another country will experience liveness through performance art, by interactively engaging with inherent risks.

Therefore, when one opens the Pandora's Box of YouTube, it starts a process in the audience's confounded consciousness, in Guillermo Gómez-Peña's words (2013):

> If the performance is effective (I didn't say "good," but effective), this process can last for several weeks, even months, and the questions and dilemmas embodied in the images and rituals we present can continue to haunt the spectator's dreams, memories, and conversations. The objective is not to "like" or even "understand" performance art; but to create a sediment in the audience's psyche.

CHAPTER 3
Zef and Die Antwoord: Shifts in South African Identities

There have been many movements during the evolution of Afrikaans music, but at the start of the 2010s, certainly no one would have predicted that the next big thing would be Afrikaans rap or hip hop (Kahn 2010: 8). Considering the punk rock and alternative movements before them and the political ideological views that were exhibited through the music of previous times, Die Antwoord and Jack Parow seem like rather strange additions to an already dysfunctional body of musical works using Afrikaans. It could be argued that the expression of Zef is the reason for its unexpected success. This chapter will explore the concept of Zef, its place in South African music history, and the effect it has had on South African cultural identities.

3.1 The Dawn of Zef

> We just wanted to do something that was violently South African and not be mistaken for fucking anything.
> Ninja (as quoted in Myers 2015)

While there is hardly consensus about what Zef means exactly, two facts are uncontested: Zef is sincerely South African, and unashamedly Afrikaans (Fourie 2010). The word is said to have been used by Afrikaans South Africans for decades, and the earliest usage included Zef used as a noun, referring to rough guys with souped-up Ford Zephyrs; as well as the adjective Zef, which referred to anything kitsch or common (Fourie 2010). Nowadays, it is used not in a derogatory fashion but to denote a credibility which comes from embracing a particular style of humour that is vulgar, which Anton Krueger notes has a twofold meaning: vulgar in the coarse, rude, obscene and flamboyant sense and also, very importantly, in the dated sense of meaning characteristic to the commoners (2012: 400). An indicative example of the appeal of this approach is shown in *Baby's on Fire*, where at the end, Yo-Landi picks up a brick and throws it into Ninja's face, making him splutter blood confusedly. This kind of vulgar

humour is evocative of William Shakespeare's crude jokes, or travesties, meant to please the commoners filling up the cheap seats (Poirier 2012: 27). Zef music being called 'kômmin' (common) is therefore a key signifier – it is both inspired by and directed at commoners.

Krueger states that in 1950s and 60s South Africa, Zef was a term used to deride unemployed or blue-collar impoverished whites, insulting their unrefined tastes, not unlike the descriptive American word "redneck" (2012: 402). However, according to Frikkie Lombard, the editor-in-chief of the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (*Dictionary of the Afrikaans Language*) (quoted in Fourie 2010), the term has recently gained a sense of credibility. A Zef persona is thus a deliberate exaggeration of certain "low class, ill bred, boorish" attributes (Krueger 2012: 400). Together with the loss of preferential governmental treatment, Afrikaners have lost their privileged position within both the general population and the white community of South Africa since the end of Apartheid (Krueger 2012: 402). The generation who came after the end of Apartheid has experienced this loss of agency from their parents, and the frustrations which resulted from this have led to a group of people without means of expression. This is where Zef fills the void: as an authentic, resilient, rude instrument of expression for the young working-class Afrikaner youth (Marx & Milton 2011: 739), with Die Antwoord stepping in as the representatives and spokespeople for Zef.

Ninja and Yo-Landi formed Die Antwoord in 2008, but their appearance onto the local South African music scene would only be noticed and written about in late 2009[3]. Local South African newspaper *Die Burger*'s youth segment 'warned' readers about them, saying that they "make the devil blush" and advising people to bring their "pepper spray and/or stun guns" (Zef rap rave… 17 December 2009, p. 14,15). Nadine Theron of

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[3] The year 2008 marked the end of Waddy Jones and Anri du Toit's previous project Max Normal and the start of the conception of Die Antwoord, as shown in an interview with Jones (Thompson 2008). They became Ninja and Yo-Landi Vi$$er, and late in 2008, they threw their "1st ZEF RAP-RAVE JOLS at a dodgy little club called the Purple Turtle in Long Street" in Cape Town with other artists Jack Parow, The Wedding DJ's, and DJ Solarize (the late Leon Botha) in front of about 200 audience members (Jardin 2011). In mid-2009, they released the video for *Wat Pomp* (Jones 2009), and as Jimbo Stevens remarks, no one noticed (Stevens 2013). They continued to perform at events like Ramfest and Oppikoppi for the rest of 2009, until their rise to internet fame in early 2010.

Beeld wrote about their performance at the Oppikoppi festival of 2009, that it was doubtful whether the public was "mentally ready to properly interpret Zef rap's social commentary" (29 August 2009, p.6). Johannes de Villiers of *Rapport* commented that the point of Die Antwoord is to simultaneously disturb, entertain and baffle viewers, and that "if you start hyperventilating over it, it's a victory for both you and the group" (17 October 2010, p. 5). The initial reactions to Die Antwoord were mainly criticism for appropriating Cape Coloured culture, as well as disparaging Afrikaner culture, according to Kameraad Mhambi (2010). Interestingly, one of the detractors was musician Koos Kombuis, one of the members of the *Voëlvry* movement in Afrikaans music, who has rather ironically been called the 'grandfather of Zef' (Kahn 2010).

Upon its inception, the Voëlvry movement, similar to the Zef movement, was criticised by the former Afrikaner Nationalist government and its agents – the N.G. Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church) and cultural leaders of the time – warning people against this group of "Alternative Afrikaners" (Hopkins 2006: 6-8). Musicians such as Johannes Kerkorrel, Bernoldus Niemand and Koos Kombuis caused an "unprecedented orgy of Afrikaner anarchy" in the late 1980s, marking the end of the Afrikaner "as our grandmothers knew him" (Hopkins 2006: 14). They were the rock 'n roll voices of their generation, the Afrikaner youth in opposition to older, authoritarian, Christian Nationalist Afrikaners (Hopkins 2006: 19). In their songs, traditional Afrikaner symbols like the *ossewa* (ox wagon) were subverted into something new – a modern car with a V6 engine and Elvis's music blaring out of the speakers (Grundlingh 2004: 499). However, as a social movement, it was short-lived because of their evanescent rationale as protest musicians (Grundlingh 2004: 507). The group broke up the very next year, and in the wake of Apartheid's abolishment, it was questionable what the real impact of the Voëlvry movement was (Grundlingh 2004: 502-506). It has been argued that the value of the movement lies in its usage as a trope for post-Apartheid Afrikaner identity – a way to embark on a future without the strains of the past (Grundlingh 2004: 509). Although the Voëlvryers were not exactly revolutionaries, and their reign of the Afrikaans music scene was brief, the impact they made can be seen in the music, lyrics and themes used in successive Afrikaans music groups.

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Andries Bezuidenhout (2009) comments that the power of rigid Afrikaner identities and the agents (churches, schools, suburbs, etc.) which perpetuate them are very clear within themes first used in the Voëlvry movement, and echoed in the Fokofpolisiekar phenomenon. The group Fokofpolisiekar, which directly translates to "Fuck off police car", formed in 2003, and after starting out in the Cape town underground circuit, they caught the Afrikaner nation's attention with their controversial name as well as writing "Fok God" (Fuck God) on a young fan's wallet (De Vries 2011). The backlash from Christian groups was immense, and because the majority of the South African population, especially the Afrikaners, remains very Christian in its beliefs, the members of Fokofpolisiekar were assaulted, received bomb threats, and were banned from venues (De Vries 2011). The themes in their song lyrics and music videos engage with their inherited Afrikaner identity, dealing with the collapse of the icons and ideologies of the traditional, nationalist Afrikaner (Rossouw 2012: 11), which includes Christian belief. Interestingly, in the music video for *Brand Suid-Afrika* ('Burn South Africa') they took the interpretation of the image of the *ossewa* one step further – showing them as cars in a *laager*, the traditional circle of ox wagons which has become a symbol for Afrikaner fortitude (Mungazi 1998: 49), and displaying their occupants descending into violent anarchy.

Both of these phenomena were described as controversial in their respective eras, criticising the Calvinist community that raised them (Haupt 2012b: 95) and giving a voice to the Afrikaner youth, presenting them with the means of expression of an alternative identity. It has been argued that Zef does the same, showing a "confused, multi-lingual emerging national identity" (Krueger 2012: 406) and giving an exaggerated, but authentic, voice to the 'common' Afrikaans youth. Adriaan Basson (2010) writes that Die Antwoord, who have followed in the Voëlvry movement's rebellious traditions, were criticised rather antagonistically by Koos Kombuis, who accused them of being one-dimensionally anarchical, nihilistic, talentless and flash-in-the-pan (Kombuis 2010). What makes Zef different from Voëlvry is that, as Liese van der Watt argues, it functions "on the surface", no longer focusing on the deep issues of race, class or language, but

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encouraging spectators to engage with "entangled connections, rather than … past estrangements" (2012: 416). As a commentator on Basson's article, Piet Smit, said: "The generation without the baggage from the past is coming through." This is not to say that Die Antwoord necessarily displays ignorance of the issues of the past, but that they are embracing the interwoven and intricate state of South African identities and seeking to produce transformation by creating a culturally entangled Zef Identity.

3.2 A Zef Identity

Breyten Breytenbach has said that Afrikaans puts the history and the ongoing process of bastardisation and metamorphosis of South African society on display (1999: 176). Die Antwoord's usage of Afrikaans therefore places them directly at the site of identity reconfiguration. This is exemplified in Ninja's famous claim that he represents Black, White, Coloured, English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu, indeed all South African people, "fucked into one person" (Harris 2012) at the beginning of the *Enter the Ninja* video. This illustrates an engagement with identities, the meanings of which are bastardised and mutated by Die Antwoord. Hannelie Marx and V.C. Milton argue that this points to the "deterritorialised shifting cultural space of racial and class identities" that young white speakers of Afrikaans experience especially, which opens up a liminal space in which all identities are destabilised and opened up for reconfiguration (2011: 724). Die Antwoord's engagement with white Afrikaner identities is not unproblematic, but their constructions do merit investigation, because it shows how South African identities remain in a state of flux.

Representations of whiteness, Henry Giroux argues, must be analysed especially because of their extensive appeal and popularity, which makes potentially liberating reconfigurations of the meanings of whiteness so much more significant (1997: 8). Whiteness is a complex concept, and inherently contextual, according to Raka Shome (2000: 368). The context of Afrikaner whiteness is particularly important because of the South African history of racial segregation. While Afrikaner identity is not something that is purely shaped by historical events, and a number of ideological and behavioural

options were open to the Afrikaner at specific times in history, certain ones did win out over others at these times (Laubscher 2005: 310). However, Giroux asserts that whiteness has to be rearticulated by whites in ways which allow them to cross racial boundaries in order to initiate a forging of multiracial unions (1997: 8). As Marlin-Curiel says, Afrikaners yearn to feel at home and secure in South Africa; but while they seek acceptance by non-white Afrikaans speakers, Afrikaners avoid embracing their problems (2001: 162). A rearticulation of whiteness is necessary to initiate a change in attitude for whites and Afrikaners, which might open up possibilities of a more unified South Africa against white privilege. If the inner workings and daily functioning of whiteness is exposed as normative and inherently privileged, it can become visible and evident to whites and ultimately they can stop their denial of white privilege and participation in the normativity of whiteness (Shome 2000: 367).

Die Antwoord's engagement with whiteness may not provide direct criticism towards identity in the same way as Fokofpolisiekar or the Voëlvry movement overtly critiqued the establishments which perpetuate the status quo, but their performances of white identity creates a valuable commentary on present-day South African reality (Marx & Milton 2011: 742-743). This commentary is created using the following strategies.

First, the genre of their music is rap and hip hop. These are considered explicitly Black cultural phenomena, and for this reason, Die Antwoord immediately lose the invisibility of their race – they are no longer neutral, but White (Marx & Milton 2011: 736). This creates an opportunity for them to cause a disruption in the power of whiteness by drawing attention to it and recognising the complexities of racial identities (Fraley 2009: 50). It has been argued that to Die Antwoord, traditional definitions of which sounds are considered to be 'English', 'Afrikaans', 'White', or 'Black', are irrelevant – Kahn insists that their sounds are instead unquestionably South African (2010: 10). Die Antwoord utilizes the traditionally Black genre of rap and hip hop to destabilise traditional white identities; providing criticism against these identities, rather than validating white superiority (Marx & Milton 2011: 738).

Second, they utilize the Zef identity, which has frequently been directly associated with 'white trash' – a term which overtly articulates white identity and makes it glaringly visible. This creates a perfect opportunity for whiteness to be exposed and disrupted (Heavner 2007: 66). An example of this can be seen in *Baby's on Fire*, which has a stark white aesthetic with some light pastels, visually inviting readings of whiteness. The video combines this colouring with a setting that is evocative of Marlene van Niekerk's novel *Triomf*, which tells the story of the poor white Benade-family and shows how Apartheid failed even those it was supposed to ideologically benefit (Viljoen 1996: 71). The settings of the white working class neighbourhood called Triomf (now Vrededorp) and the urban neighbourhoods Die Antwoord showcase in *Baby's on Fire* (and other videos like *Zef Side* and *Cookie Thumper*) are visually similar. Also, thematically it alludes to *Triomf* in the semi-incestuous relationship shown between Yo-Landi, her father, and brother Ninja (like the character Mol in *Triomf*'s relationships with her brothers and son). Louise Viljoen writes that the incest and inbreeding of the Benade family can be seen as a symbol of the extreme consequences of the racially exclusive philosophy of apartheid (1996: 71). *Triomf* can be classified as a postcolonial work, showing that the colonial past cannot be erased by simple amnesia – it must be confronted in order to move past it (Viljoen 1996: 72).

Die Antwoord's usage of identifiers of working-class Afrikaners, which is what they call Zef, is a portrayal of whiteness which causes discomfort. Like the characters in *Triomf*, this portrayal doesn't simply let the past go gently into the good night. A Zef identity is one that exposes, in Eve Fairbanks's words, the "nasty, freaky, gleefully trashy *underbelly* of post-apartheid white South African culture" (2012; emphasis added by author). That is to say, while Die Antwoord proclaim "Simunye!" (the post-apartheid proclamation of idealistic unity, meaning "we are one") in the video titled *Simunye* (Jones 2011), they do so ironically, in effect showing the false happy faces of the mythologized Rainbow Nation as distorted. They thereby disrupt that which Jeremy Cronin calls 'rainbowism' (1999: 20). Cronin warns that avoiding problematizing a nation's history and the process into democracy may cause a betrayal of the potential for "real transformation, real reconciliation and real national unity that are still at play in

our contemporary South African reality" (1999: 20). Uncomfortable questions need to be asked, difficult issues need to be probed, and outdated institutions need to be revised.

Die Antwoord metaphorically takes rainbowism and detonates it into a colourful, chaotic mess ready for radical transformation. To start with, they exhibit a portrayal of whiteness which causes discomfort. Additionally, their use of hip hop invokes elements of rupture which according to Watkins (2000:39), suggest "ways in which profound social dislocation and rupture can be managed and perhaps contested in the cultural arena". In other words, Die Antwoord displaying disruptive notions of whiteness in the genre of hip hop is a very blatant way of unsettling norms and racializing whiteness.

3.3 New Ethnicities

It can be argued that Die Antwoord promotes a more hybrid form of identity (Marx & Milton 2011: 738), one that doesn't simplify or elucidate, but instead consciously perplexes in order to reconfigure notions of identity. Stuart Hall's notion of 'new ethnicities' posits that racial identities are "multiple, porous, complex and shifting" – seeing identity according to the complex processes included in the creation of individual identities (as quoted in Fraley, 2009: 50). In South Africa, this is especially applicable because of the social adjustments in recent years. Melissa Steyn writes that South Africans can now select, edit, and borrow from all available cultural resources, reinterpreting their old selves in this way, using new knowledge but also attempting to retain their personal congruence (2001: xxii). However, expressions of a reworking of racial identity are not unproblematic. The term 'racechange', according to Susan Gubar, is used to denote a "traversing of race boundaries, racial imitation or impersonation, cross-racial mimicry or mutability" in performance (1997: 5). Racechanges "test the boundaries between racially defined identities, functioning paradoxically to reinforce and to challenge the Manichean meanings Western societies give to colour" (1997: 5-6). The expressions of more hybrid forms of identity which Die Antwoord promotes (Marx & Milton 2011: 738) come in many different racechanges, which simultaneously may reinforce and challenge fixed notions and narratives of race.

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One such example is the video *Fatty Boom Boom*, which shows Yo-Landi and Ninja in blackface and whiteface which, according to Brian Schmidt, runs the risk of projecting detrimental representations of non-whites through a white performer (2014: 143). Blackface and blackbody portray a racial absurdity, and can function to fragment the performer's body, destabilizing fixed social categorizations (Amkpa 2010: 84). However, relying on racial tropes is inevitable as it has to be read in the social context, and herein lies the risk taken when employing racechanges (Schmidt 2014: 138). It is important, therefore, to critically examine all performances which include racechanges in order to assess cultural offerings reflexively – relating not only to the artist, but also the consumer's own accountability in its creation (Schmidt 2014: 146). In other words, Die Antwoord's performances may portray new ethnicities through racechanges, moving whiteness beyond racist or antagonistic frames towards interpretations of constructions of individual identities. However, it doesn't come without the risk of harmful representations.

Late in 2010, Waddy Jones and Anri du Toit reportedly sent the photographer Roger Ballen an email, declaring their admiration for his work, which had been a major inspiration in their creation of the concept of 'Die Antwoord' (Erdmann 2012). Ballen is known for his transgressive, uncanny and abject portrayals of whiteness in surreal settings (Barnard 2012: 24). It can therefore be argued that Ninja and Yo-Landi built their 'white trash' Zef aesthetic specifically around Ballen's photography, which is best displayed in the *I fink u freeky* music video, which he also co-directed. Their bodies, their clothes, and the setting is shown as dirty, strange and unclean, which is in and of itself in opposition to conventional notions of whiteness and purity (Dyer 1997: 76). Additionally, it is worth noting that the dirt makes their bodies a shade darker, providing colour where there was none – whiteness is devoid of colour (Dyer 1997: 207). The erratic choreography also connotes a lack of control over body and emotion, which is also a contradiction of the physical and emotional 'restraint' attributed to whiteness (Dyer 1997: 28). The music video seems to consciously attack notions of whiteness and Afrikaner identity, for example in the kitchen scene where Yo-Landi is preparing

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breakfast for Ninja as a good Afrikaner housewife – and there are some maggots in the frying pan. Die Antwoord have adopted Ballen's use of the abject in order to create ambiguity and a threatening otherness which disturbs "identity, system and order" (Roudiez 1982: 4). Ballen states that his photography is seen as shocking because it doesn't show whiteness as ordered, authoritative or assertive (Pryor 2009). His photographs show white subjects in bizarre dreamscapes where the dimensions seem all wrong – but there is a sense of brutal honesty in the images (Pryor 2009). One of his most famous photographs of twins alongside screenshots of *I fink u freeky* illustrate Ballen's approach and the influence on Die Antwoord's aesthetic (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1 Yo-Landi and Ninja in *I fink u freeky*. W.T. Jones and Roger Ballen (dirs.), *I fink u freeky*, 2012 (screen shot by the author) (Jones & Ballen 2012).

Figure 2 Roger Ballen, *Dresie and Casie, Twins*, Western Transvaal, 1993. (Dresie and Casie, Twins 1993).

Ballen has said that disturbing elements in his work reveal more of the viewer than the subject: "What they're really doing is making you look at yourself, and that's probably

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why you don't like their stare" (In Pryor 2009). This may suggest that Die Antwoord similarly endeavour to hold an uncomfortable mirror up to South Africa, showing whiteness not as pure, but as bastardised and contaminated. Krueger argues that Die Antwoord's usage of Zef signifiers is an attempt to reconcile "unsettling qualities inherent in a new South African white identity" (2012: 406). Their simultaneous employment and disowning of Afrikaans tradition are illustrated perhaps most strongly in their blasphemous language and imagery, as also shown in the kitchen scene in *I fink u freeky*.

The notion of the religious Afrikaans meal setting, where they use "God se Jesus" vocally and concurrently show them praying at the table, is denigrated to show their disregard of the moral guidelines of the conservative Afrikaner. This might suggest that the new configuration of the Afrikaans couple (Barnard 2012: 38) is not pure, moral, or clean, but rather dishevelled, impure and decidedly dirty. Yo-Landi's whiteness may be more emphasized in Die Antwoord's work, with her white (not blonde) hair, eyebrows and clothing but she conducts herself in a decidedly dark manner, signifying danger and hypersexuality with her language, movements and clothing (Barnard 2012: 40). This is directly oppositional to the angelic and pure white women which symbolized white virtuousness in the nineteenth century (Dyer 1997: 127).

Figure 3 Yo-Landi in *Cookie Thumper*. W.T. Jones (dir), *Cookie Thumper*, 2012 (screen shot by the author) (Jones 2012).

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Ballantine states that white popular music has reacted to post-apartheid South Africa in various ways such as "direct criticism, sharp satire, humour and the expression of fugitive identities" (2004: 105). A blatant disdain for fixed identities signifies movement towards a more integrated future (Ballantine 2004: 105). In this way, post-apartheid music mirrors the reconfigurations of white Afrikaans identity itself as it endeavours to produce a new subjectivity (Marx & Milton 2011: 727). Die Antwoord, drawing inspiration from Roger Ballen and using Zef, create a whiteness that is "made strange, something that can be designed, constructed and mass produced through an artifice of soiled, derelict and scarred settings, minimal clothing and expletives" (Barnard 2012: 43). Through the creation of Zef identities, they have initiated a process by which South African white identity can be reworked.

The vulgar humour of Zef offers a means of expression for the South African white youth, who have to reconfigure their identities. By making whiteness glaringly visible and not acceding to notions of idealistic rainbowism, potentially liberating reconfigurations are created. Whiteness is shown in disorder, which could be considered a much more applicable reconfiguration for the young Afrikaner commoners than in the ideologies of the past.

CHAPTER 4

Freeky Ninja: A Subversion of South African White Masculinity

This chapter offers a critical reading of Ninja's performances of South African White Masculinity. After providing a framework of South African conceptions of masculinities, with reference to structural violence, hegemonic masculinity and a perceived crisis in masculinity, the discussion progresses to how Ninja's performances engage with methods of reproduction of hegemonic masculinity, as articulated by Nick Trujillo (1991). Ninja's whiteness as related to his performance of masculinity is the focus of the next section, which addresses Die Antwoord's cultural appropriation, and proceeds to form connections between Ninja and notions of white trash, Harmony Korine's films and Roger Ballen's photography. These notions are utilised to form a reading of Ninja's performances as destabilising notions of white hegemonic masculinity. The notion of canine masculinity as abstaining from the performance of heteronormativity is addressed in the end with reference to white male South African performance artists. The conclusion places Ninja in the role of the organic intellectual, and discusses the potential of Ninja's performances as parodies of South African white hegemonic masculinity.

4.1 Reading South African Masculinities

> [M]asculinity has always been in one crisis or another.
> (MacInnes 1998: 11)

Although South Africa is recognised for its progressive constitution, it is also marked by one of the highest rates of violence and inequality in the world (Beinart 2001; Seekings and Nattrass 2005; Fassin 2007; Mlatsheni & Leibbrandt 2011). The country's violent past, which was shaped by colonialism and apartheid (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger 2012: 4), still echoes, especially in the manifestation of gender-based violence (Mills *et al.* 2015: 10). In South Africa's strongly heterosexist society, where both men and women actively construct masculine ideals (Mathews, Jewkes & Abrahams 2015: 108),

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violence is experienced in multiple and intersecting manners, particularly by people not conforming to the highly patriarchal norms of gender and sexuality norms (Mills *et al.* 2015: 10). This can be seen not only in the extreme rates of rape, as a specific form of gender-based violence, but also in violent behaviour towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) persons (Mills *et al.* 2015: 4). Therefore, when reading gender constructs in the South African context, it becomes clear that violence resulting from patriarchal and heteronormative constructs is a major consideration. The framework of structural violence can be used to understand the interactions between gender, heteronormativity and violence.

Structural violence is a concept which can be described as "social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm's way", which are "embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world" and is especially inflicted upon "those whose social status denies them access to the fruits of … progress" (Farmer 2001: n.p.). In other words, structural violence is socio-economically, socio-politically imposed configurations in society which inflict damage on individuals and populations which are considered lower on the social hierarchy due to entrenched values in society. The widespread socioeconomic inequality in South Africa has been found to be inextricably linked to structural gender-based violence (Mills *et al.* 2015: 36). This inequality has been found to be inscribed into the very spaces inhabited by South Africans – their homes, their bodies, and their communities – which shed light upon the extent to which normative gender roles pervade in South African society (Mills *et al.* 2015: 36). Structural gender-based violence is caused in part by institutions which maintain hegemonic masculinities, which include political and religious institutions such as governing bodies, judicial systems and church leaders (Mills *et al.* 2015: 37). In short, structural gender-based violence can be used as a notion which explains the pervasiveness and violent effects of hegemonic masculinities in countries such as South Africa.

Hegemonic masculinity, as defined by Connell, is "not a fixed character type", but the masculinity (or masculinities) that "occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of

gender relations, a position always contestable" (2005: 76). Hegemonic masculinities are constantly evolving and have been questioned since the beginning of the 20th century (Whitehead & Barrett 2005: 1-26). Several South African hegemonic masculinities have arisen, such as the three described by Morrell – the economically dominant White, the rurally based African, and the urbanized Black masculinities (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger 2012: 2). Historically, South African hegemonic masculinities can be traced through its leadership – the repressive and racist Afrikaner masculinity of the National Party and President P.W. Botha (Conway 2007: 3), the peaceful, thoughtful, egalitarian masculinity of President Nelson Mandela (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger 2012: 7), and the "heterosexist, patriarchal, implicitly violent" masculinity of President Jacob Zuma (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger 2012: 7). These leaders have all produced meanings of what it means to be a man in South Africa, which gain influence because of their powerful position in society. When a particular kind of masculinity is modelled by a leader which legitimises forms of gender-based violence, such as rape (Mills *et al*. 2015: 36); and which glorifies certain artefacts such as guns, the idea of violence as masculine is perpetuated (Cock 2001: 43-47). The notions of structural gender-based violence and hegemonic masculinities within South African society can therefore be seen as changeable and responsive to various authoritative figures in history.

The major changeover to democracy in South Africa in 1994 has resulted in what some have called a post-transitional crisis of masculinity (Walker 2005: 226), meaning tensions arising from socio-political changes relating to masculine identities. Post-transitional is a contentious term, because it is measured not by mere change, but by the magnitude of a transition, exemplified by changes as dramatic as those in the South African socio-political landscape around the years of the 1990s and the early 2000s (Frenkel & Mackenzie 2010: 2). The notion of a crisis is supported by the ideological changes within masculine identities, which inevitably transform out of traditional conventions into alternative versions, in step with the new social order (Walker 2005: 225). Therefore tensions arise between 'old' and 'new' notions of masculine identity, which have been described as a crisis of masculinity.

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However, this notion of a crisis, which allegedly causes a disruption in South African notions of masculinity, has been questioned because of its problematic implications. To start with, masculinity has not come under threat only recently, as it has, as previously mentioned, been under scrutiny since the beginning of the twentieth century (Whitehead & Barrett 2005: 1-26). It is also not a speculative, malleable entity (Brittan 2005: 51-55), or a coherent finite system (Connell 2005: 67-81), which can be implied by the word 'crisis'. Furthermore, traditional, hegemonic masculinities are not waning, but are indeed emerging more violently in a number of spheres (Whitehead & Barrett 2005: 1-26). The notion of masculinity in crisis can also be used for political ends, for instance the problematic interrogation of masculinity and gender as a key factor in political movements and mobilisation towards world peace (Edwards 2006: 51). The concept of a crisis in masculinity thus has the potential to create misleading, prescriptive and dubious notions of masculinities.

It is therefore preferable for Walker to understand masculinities as disturbed and destabilised in the post-transitional era (2005: 225-226), whereas Connell sees a disruption and transformation in masculinities, which are not in crisis, but instead tends towards crisis (2005: 84-86). This idea is taken further by Edwards, who argues that, while demographically or geographically there may be 'crisis tendencies', masculinity is not in crisis, if anything, masculinity is crisis (2006: 21). This chapter will thus read South African masculinities in the light of constant evolution, affected, destabilised and disrupted by socio-economic circumstances, if not in a post-transitional crisis.

South African masculinities have to be seen not only in terms of gender, but also ethnicity, race, and political choice, along with other socio-psychological categorisations (Ratele 2008: 521). It has been argued that the ability to acquire wealth via getting a job, earning a salary, or other means is one of the primary socially acknowledged functions for males in adulthood, and is also a crucial component of male identities (Barker 2004: 104). These factors can be used to perceive and understand constructs of hegemonic masculinities as well as subordinate masculinities.

It has been determined that recognising South African masculinities as fragmented, diverse, changing and shaped by many factors can facilitate interventions against the damaging effects of hegemonic masculinities (Ratele 2008: 533). When one considers the high rate of structural gender-based violence, which arguably is a result of the patriarchal and heteronormative society in post-transitional South Africa, as well as evidence of some crisis tendencies of hegemonic masculinities, the importance of analyses of constructions of masculine identity in popular media such as Ninja's becomes clear. As Nakayama affirms (1999), popular culture is an important and influential means for interrogating masculinities. Therefore, analysing Ninja's performances of hegemonic masculinities will display possible interventions against hegemonic masculine identities which can be damaging to South African society.

4.2 Ninja and Hegemonic Masculinities

Nick Trujillo, in his analysis of the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity in mediated sport, identifies five ways in which hegemonic masculinity is exhibited: through physical force and control, frontiersmanship, by demonstrating work-related achievement, through familial patriarchy, and the performance of heterosexuality (1991: 290-291). These notions can be used to interrogate Ninja's engagement with hegemonic masculinity. Seen within his individual performance, the first three ways become especially prominent. The last two ways of exhibiting hegemonic masculinity will be discussed later in the chapter.

> Ninja is hardcore
> Been cut so deep, feel no pain
> It's not sore
> Don't ask for kak or
> You'll get what you ask for
> I'm like a wild animal in the corner
> Waiting for the break of dawn

Trying to get through the night

Just a man with the will to survive

(Ninja in *Enter the Ninja*)

In *Enter the Ninja*, arguably Die Antwoord's introductory music video, a cultural narrative of Ninja is formed: One of overcoming financial hardship, enemies and naysayers and finding a style that is "hard to miss" and becoming "the chosen one". Ninja presents himself as a frontiersman, in the sense of "exploring new territory and breaking new ground" (Calhoun 2005: 286) with his repeated mentioning of reaching the "next level" with his art: "Never seen Zef so fresh … My style is UFO/ Totally unknown" (*Enter the Ninja*). Through Die Antwoord's creation of Zef rap-rave, he breaks new "futuriste" ground. Also, his presence as white male in the world of rap connotes a danger, because rap is seen as a wild frontier not for 'sissies' (Calhoun 2005: 287): "Everything you rap about comes true if you got some freakin balls" (*Evil Boy*). Rap is therefore seen as a dangerous world, in which only 'hardcore' men with 'balls' can thrive. Ninja's conquest of this frontier can therefore be seen as an assertion of hegemonic masculinity.

As a continuation of Ninja's cultural narrative, he denounces all who didn't believe in him and threatens all who don't take him seriously. These themes are aggressively elevated in *Fok Julle Naaiers*, where the overtone is threatening both visually and lyrically (the title directly translates to 'Fuck you fuckers'). The ominous-sounding intro is filled with Coloured, Black and White men and boys, looking menacingly into the camera. Their naked torsos are tattooed, wiry with lean muscles, looking like Cape gangsters. The aggression is also shown through frequent images of guns, held by several men as well Ninja – as manner of emphasis, Ninja brings out his "little two friends", two guns, named "I'm telling you" and "I told you". Towards the end of the video, there are also a lot of middle fingers in the air, with Ninja wearing two gloves with skeleton-like middle fingers painted on ("Middle finger in da air/ ja fok julle naaiers!"). The threatening gestures, repeated parading of guns, and menacing lyrics spat at the

screen by all of the men in the video all indicate an assertion of domination, and attacks any threat of subordination.

Hegemonic masculinity is made blatantly obvious both in lyrics and visual signifiers – almost suspect, as if it is all a parody of hegemonic masculinity performed by Ninja (Calhoun 2005: 281). It illustrates a need for physical dominance and control, equating masculinity with violence and power (Katz 2003: 352). According to Katz, men are motivated by deep tensions in masculinities created by socio-political changes to validate their masculine identities through the usage of their bodies as instruments of dominance (2003: 351). This is especially true "for working class males, who have less access to more abstract forms of masculinity-validating power (economic power, workplace authority)" and subsequently use their bodies and the potential for violence as a means to achieve and assert 'manhood' (Katz 2003: 351). Ninja's references to his (previous) financial hardship and his constant violent threats towards his detractors and enemies, further emphasised by the physicality of his typically naked torso, demonstrate this type of working class physical approach to wielding his masculinity. Ninja also asserts his ability to acquire money in lyrics (*I Fink U Freeky*, *Fatty boom boom*) and visually (such as waving stacks of money around in *Baby's on Fire* and burning dollars in *Ugly Boy*), but not nearly to the same extent as the assertions of physical dominance, which occur in almost every Die Antwoord video.

It is however important to note that Ninja's identification as working class male does not necessarily position him as subordinated, marginalised or disempowered. Even in the post-transitional South African context, where white men have lost some of their agency (Dent 2007: iv), hegemonic white masculinity still has a major measure of control over the hegemonic centre of gender paradigms in South African society (Vincent 2006: 356). This brings into question key identifiers utilized by Ninja to position himself as marginalised, aside from the lyrical references to "tough times" with little to no food ("fokkol kos, skraal") until he hit the "triple seven at the ATM" with Die Antwoord's fame (lyrics from *Enter the Ninja*). However, Ninja's performance of white masculinity in post-transitional South Africa allows an "exploration of the varieties of white anxiety and

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masculinities that attempt to establish themselves in a country that it perceives to be innately hostile to them" (Broodryk 2013: 7), and is therefore not to be dismissed as an empty reproduction of hegemonic white masculinity. Ninja's assertions of economic prosperity as indicative of masculine identity may be seen as expression of a need to regain a sense of power in a country where white masculinity is sometimes perceived to be a weakness, a burden, instead of an asset. In this way, Ninja fulfils a social need of those who perceive themselves as marginalised; creating a counter-narrative of the world they live, or rather want to live in.

4.3 A Waste of a White Skin: The freakery of Ninja

Die Antwoord has created a cultural narrative that is highly provocative, generating a lot of dialogue around notions of South African culture. As previously mentioned, Die Antwoord has been accused of cultural appropriation by several critics (Haupt 2012a; Philander 2014; and Jason 2015). Examples include blackface in *Fatty Boom Boom* and *I Fink U Freeky*, repeated appropriation of the Yin-Yang symbol, most notably in a tattoo on Ninja's back, appropriation of Japanese characters on DJ Hi-Tek's shirt in *Fok Julle Naaiers*, as well as some usage of the word 'nigga' and 'faggot', which Ninja attempts to explain in a video called 'FAGGOT' (Jones 2012) by saying that South Africans don't feel as offended by these words as Americans do. The usage of the name 'Ninja' can also been seen as problematic not just because it has been appropriated from ancient Japanese culture, but also because the word 'ninja' is sometimes used (mostly by white people) as a substitution for the socially unacceptable and offensive word 'nigger' (Pappademas 2012; Word 2014). The name 'Ninja' (unlike the name 'Yo-Landi Vi$$er') does not reference the identifier of Die Antwoord as South African, working class, or poor Afrikaners. Instead, I would argue that 'Ninja' is used for two reasons: to connote a "brotherhood-born-of-oppression thing" (Pappademas 2012), which is a common and powerful theme in the rap genre (Calhoun 2005: 284), and also because ninjas are gangster-like, historically originating out of the lower social classes, and deviating from the honour code of the noble samurai – they were "beneath contempt and yet indispensable" according to historian Stephen Turnbull (2012: 5). These connotations fit

into Ninja's cultural narrative of self-made, rags to riches man, overcoming troubled times and enemies by deviating from established rules ("'You can't do this, you can't do that'/ Yeah fucken who said so?" – *Enter the Ninja*).

The racist connotation of the name 'Ninja' can also be connected to the 'white kaffir'[4] narrative which has been asserted by Ninja especially in the song *Never le Nkemise* ("Ninja, die wit kaffir / Ja, julle naaiers / Skrik wakker" [Ninja, the white kaffir / Yes, you fuckers / Wake up]) and also in the short film *Umshini Wam* directed by Harmony Korine. In this film, Ninja and Yo-Landi are shown rolling around in old wheelchairs and digging through trash, seemingly destitute. They cook sausages over an open fire on bricks in a forest and smoke oversized dagga zols (marijuana joints), Yo-Landi repeatedly declaring that they have to get better wheelchairs if they want to be "taken seriously". They later murder a man who wears the typical khaki clothes of an Afrikaner boer (farmer), who calls them "a waste of a white skin" and "white kaffirs" after refusing to sell them new fancy wheelchairs. Jeremy Krikler, in his historical analysis of the 1922 Rand Revolt, remarks that the white working class in South Africa asserted their distinct identity as being different from people of colour, or 'kaffirs' (Krikler 2005: 149). To collapse into destitution and dependence meant becoming a 'white kaffir' (Krikler 2005: 149), thereby becoming 'less than' white and giving up the privileged identity of whiteness. Ninja's identification as such can therefore be read as a disassociation from white privilege and continuation of his identification as white working class 'gangsta'. When read in conjunction with the conceptual framework of ideas in Korine's previous and following films, it becomes clear that the 'white kaffir' narrative contains added multifaceted meanings.

Harmony Korine's films *Spring Breakers* (2012), *Trash Humpers* (2009), *Julien Donkey-boy* (1999) and *Gummo* (1997), as well as his screenwriting debut *Kids* (Clark 1995) indicate a conceptual framework of ideas which explore whiteness in various ways,

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[4] The word 'kaffir' etymologically derives from the Arabic word 'kafir', which means 'unbeliever' (Harper 2015). It is considered an extremely offensive word in South Africa, where it is almost exclusively used in a derogatory sense by outspoken white racists to describe black people, carrying meanings of stupidity and laziness (De Vos 2008). In this study, this word is critically analysed as part of Die Antwoord's work, remaining aware of its status as hate speech in South Africa.

which relate to a representation of class. There are a lot of comparative lines to be drawn between Korine's oeuvre and Die Antwoord's work, which echo in their collaboration in *Umshini Wam*. They can be identified as white working class identity, ghostliness and invisibility, and freakery.

Alexia Jane Smit (2007), in her analysis of three films in Korine's oeuvre, argues that these films place white male characters within a frame of the Other by presenting them as ghostly, invisible freaks. In *Kids*, for instance, the white male body is presented as grotesque (Smit 2007: 34). This strategy is echoed by Die Antwoord in videos such as *I Fink U Freeky* and *Pitbull Terrier*, where Ninja and other white male bodies are presented as grotesque, as Richard Dyer describes, "whites/zombies gouge out living white arms, pull out organs, munch at orifices" (2000: 748). The scene in *I Fink U Freeky* where Yo-Landi lies on a pile of boxes decorated with crude drawings, empty masks, empty body suits and white arms vaguely grasping at her body, comes to mind in this respect, as well as Ninja as dog, tearing apart the throat of a model dressed as a cat in *Pitbull Terrier*. The Othering of these white bodies as grotesque creatures of the living dead, place them in a space where whiteness can be destabilised and interrogated.

In addition, *Kids* deals with what Dyer describes as an invisible non-identity of whiteness, as device of maintaining dominance (2000: 735). The character Casper struggles with this dilemma of invisibility, with his very name connoting ghostliness through the cartoon character, Casper the Friendly Ghost, which is explicitly referred to throughout the film (Smit 2007: 35). The cartoon version of Casper struggled with his invisibility and ghostly identity, tormented by his loneliness and inability to integrate into human society (Smit 2007: 35). Smit argues that through this character, the film suggests "the fallacies behind traditional constructions of whiteness while at the same time it makes patent the pathological nature of this void in identity" (2007: 36). The invisibility of whiteness is something that makes it powerfully normative, but in this way, *Kids* shows that the invisibility also causes a certain feeling of 'emptiness' in identity. Smit asserts that this "vacuum of identity" is the deathly condition of white masculinity

(2007: 38), which means that the reference to Casper can be read as connoting both invisibility and death, the culture produced by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, as bell hooks calls it (1996: 64-65). White identity is shown as something blank, empty, invisible, deathly, an embodied result of the myth of whiteness.

Interestingly, Die Antwoord also makes many visual references to Casper the Friendly Ghost, albeit in an altered way, with Casper clutching an oversized phallus attached to him. Ninja has this figure tattooed on his arm, and it is also seen in their videos *Evil Boy* and *Simunye*. This figure has a twofold meaning: first as a continued depiction of the working class 'gangster' culture, which relates to Ninja's 'white kaffir' narrative, and as rather literal depiction of the ghostliness and invisibility of whiteness.

According to Andy (2010), this figure is in actuality a symbol of the notorious 28s prison gang in the Western Cape – traditionally believed to be the gang of sexual offenders, and the oldest, most powerful of the Numbers Gangs active in South African prisons (Gear 2001, Carracciolo 2010: 6). In the 28s gang, there is a line of feminized sex slaves called *wyfies* (Small Arms Survey 2010: 163). Andrew Tucker, in his book on queer identities in Cape Town, writes that the 28s are known to engage sexually with other men, making them into *wyfies*, while still identifying as heterosexual in order to assert their masculinity (2009: 87). Die Antwoord's usage of the symbol of the 28s therefore carries meanings linked to structural gender-based violence. Tucker further contends that gangs such as the 28s "facilitate an archetype of masculinity that helps condition heterosexuality generally, in contrast to an effeminate queer visibility" (2009: 87). Sasha Gear, in a paper discussing sexual violence in South African men's prisons, comments that the construction of manhood is often associated with male rape (2001): "By raping another, the attacker seeks to validate his male dominance and superiority. This is achieved by destroying the victim's own claim to masculinity". Die Antwoord's usage of the symbol of the 28s therefore carries meanings linked to structural gender-based violence, within a society associated with lawlessness – the prison gang system of South Africa. One implication of this is that Ninja, as a fictitious member of the 28s, satirically reinforces this violently heteronormative archetype of masculinity. Die

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Antwoord has also depicted this aspect of prison gang culture in *Cookie Thumper.*[5] Their exaggerated depiction of structural gender-based violence within their overarching narrative of economic hardship and working class identity evokes the 'white kaffir' narrative. Ninja as 'white kaffir' is therefore a product of the widespread socioeconomic inequality in South Africa – being not only destitute and dependent, but as a 28 gang member also an imprisoned criminal associated with other lower class citizens. Considering that in the South African prison system, the gang memberships are not determined according to race as in the similarly racially divisive United States of America (Small Arms Survey 2010: 163), this reference is made even stronger within Ninja's post-racial narrative. Ninja as white kaffir can then also be read as an assertion of post-racial white man, whose identity is not so much racially defined as socially, or more specifically, according to class.

Furthermore, the Casper symbol also connotes invisibility and deathliness. The symbol being tattooed on Ninja's skin invites readings in the context of white masculinity, signifying that the invisibility of whiteness is felt by South African white working class males to such an extent that a death in authority and autonomy is caused. This may possibly lead to assertions of power via sexual violence towards subordinate masculinities and women. Ninja's association with the 28s gang can then be seen as a satirical representation of the homophobic, misogynistic archetype of masculinity which they perpetuate, while paradoxically still being men who have sex with men. The "I'll fuck you till you love me, faggot" rant at the end of *Fok Julle Naaiers* can be seen as an example of this. Its extreme aggressive tone carries a message of frustration at remaining invisible, an empty negative space of whiteness, devoid of authority that is associated with maleness.

Kartina Richardson's article 'How can white Americans be free?' (2013) comes to mind when speaking about white invisibility. In her analysis of Korine's *Spring breakers*

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[5] The character Anies, recently out of prison, wants anal sex from Yo-Landi: "Wys hom punani, waars jou cookie thumper? / Gee hom punani, maar hy soekie bum bra!" (which directly translates to "Show him pussy, where's your penis? / Give him pussy, but he wants the bum bro!"). The music video shows Anies deny membership of the 28s, but by implication being a 28 member because of his preference of anal sex.

(2012), she remarks that the film "dramatizes clearly the schism in white consciousness that occurs as a result of the spiritual emptiness of being blank" (Richardson 2013). At the beginning of the film, Brit and Candy, two white college girls sitting through a lecture on Reconstruction and civil rights, experience their white identity as negative, and though they are privileged, feel pain that can be described as genuine and true (Richardson 2013). As Richardson argues, white liberal identity continually strives to 'not' be something (not racist, not homophobic, not sexist), while knowing the crimes inflicted upon others by whites and their ancestors. However, the girls feel the need to be active, not passive, so joined by two others, Cotty and Faith, they go off on spring break – a place without the feelings of a guilty identity (Richardson 2013), described by Faith as "the most spiritual place", sealed off from the rest of the world order. They are joined by Alien, an unapologetic white man, whose unabashed adoption of blackness in his cornrows, gold teeth and vernacular makes his whiteness all the more aggressive (Richardson 2013). He does not try to make himself invisible in the face of black culture, even though his childhood friend Archie refuses to do drug business with him, seeing it not as conquering turf (Alien's perception), but a "continuation of white thievery and greed" (Richardson 2013). Alien shows frustration that his assertion of authority is inextricably bound to the history of white oppression (Richardson 2013), and therefore maintains a white masculinity which unambiguously steals from black culture. Richardson (2013) explains that the characters react differently to their lack of a sense of white ethnicity. Alien adopts blackness in order to escape invisibility. The girls act like they have no particular identity, being "the same as everyone else" on Spring Break (Richardson 2013). Both of these strategies reinforce whiteness as the norm, and are therefore problematic. When analysing Ninja's performance of white masculinity, it becomes clear that Ninja chooses a similar approach to Alien's – unapologetically, aggressively making his whiteness visible, creating an identity reflecting a cultural 'melting pot' where many if not all South African cultures coalesce and clash. Ninja and Alien's aggressive appropriation of blackness may be a result of a feeling of invisibility, of blankness, of white normativity; and thus they perform what Rosmarie Garland Thomson (1997) calls 'freakery'.

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Freaks, in the description of Thomson, display bodily anomaly and difference, against which a normalised, universal identity can be constructed (1997: 64). The freak can be compared to the fool of ancient times, occupying a role as subordinate and flattering other, and thus losing humanity and causing the body to become "pure text" (Thomson 1997: 64). Additionally, the freak can be seen as an ambivalent figure, with the freakish body positioned as "both wondrous and repellent" (1997: 136). This points to a counter-narrative of the ideal American self in the form of "physical difference or the mark of distinctive individual or collective history" (Thomson 1997: 137). The juxtaposition of 'freaks' with those considered to be normal is a typical strategy in othering those who differ from conventional Western beauty standards (Thomson 1997: 64). Freaks can also be compared to the slapstick comedians of early cinema, who were seen as expressing the "underside of American values and behaviour, the opposite pole from order and decorum" (Sklar 1975: 104). Bazin remarks that slapstick is "the dramatic expression of the tyranny of things" (1971: 112). In *Gummo*, where the characters are surrounded by filth and disorder, the role of slapstick can be clearly read as such (Smit 2007: 80), in the peculiar and freakish society which is put on display, with characters ranging from white trash, mentally challenged people, little people and crossdressers (Smit 2007: 45). They are variously disabled and poor, living in rundown, dirty houses and don't seem to be occupied in anything productive – characters who stand in opposition to the idealised white American – able-bodied, heterosexual, industrious, upwardly mobile, clean, white (Smit 2007: 66). This can be traced to Die Antwoord's Afrikaner working class aesthetics in the style of Roger Ballen.

Sean O'Hagan, who interviewed Ballen in 2015, comments that the photographer represents marginalised poor whites as either actors or props, in which freakishness can be perceived and "exaggerated by the theatricality of the settings and their abject or plaintive poses" (2015). The term 'white trash' has become rather fashionable to an extent, celebrated, and an identity available for consumption (Smith 2004: 375). The record-breaking popularity of reality television shows *Duck Dynasty* (A&E 2012-) and *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* (TLC 2012-2014) displays the white trash television phenomenon, where several television networks launched reality shows which gave

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viewers "an addictive mix of schadenfreude, existential horror [and] anthropological fascination" (Broderick 2014) when watching poor white families struggle with modern life. The episodes feature the cast engaging in 'hillbilly' activities, such as the family in 'Honey Boo Boo' eating "sketti", a microwaved mixture of ketchup and butter poured over spaghetti (Broderick 2014) and working class people in a trailer park having to shower using garden hoses in *Welcome to Myrtle Manor* (Deggans 2013). The photography of Roger Ballen can be said to put up South African white trash up for consumption, albeit in a different, more unsentimental way. O'Hagan remarks that because Ballen uses the poor, the mentally ill and the marginalised as "characters, or metaphors, in his ongoing psychodrama", problems of representation persist (2015). They are, in essence, represented as working class, white trash, South African freaks.

This gives deeper significance to Ballen and Korine's collaborations with Die Antwoord, whose self-identification as 'white kaffirs' is equivalent to identifying as 'freaks', distorting whiteness into something unsettling. This is perhaps obviously referred to in the very title of *I Fink U Freeky*, and the following lyric "and I like you a lot" shows that being a freak is a positive thing to Die Antwoord. A freakish identity is an ambivalent identity; a freakish body is a phenomenal and repulsive text; and has the potential to create a counter-narrative of the white self.

> I'm old enough to bleed
> I'm old enough to breed
> I'm old enough to crack a brick in your teeth while you sleep
> Yo-Landi's song in *Umshini Wam* (Korine 2011)

In *Umshini Wam*, Ninja and Yo-Landi can be compared to the characters of Solly and Tummler of Korine's film *Gummo*, in their roles as hillbillies – central figures in Korine's work accentuating his aesthetics of backwoods primitivism (Smit 2007: 79).These characters also echo the deathliness associated with whiteness, with Solly and Tummler not only killing cats, but finally also Jarrod's brain-dead grandmother, by turning off her respirator (Smit 2007: 77). Their violent inclinations can be argued to function as reflective of American society, which was founded upon conquest and

violence (Smit 2007: 77). Ninja and Yo-Landi's meagre lifestyle, general idleness and murder of the two men can similarly be seen as a reflection of white identity in post-Apartheid South Africa, being outcasts plagued with spiritual poverty and residual violent inclinations. However, as the hillbillies in *Gummo* remain innocents despite their threatening behaviour, fools who create productive ambiguity (Smit 2007: 77), so do Die Antwoord. Yo-Landi's rather childlike line at the end of *Umshini Wam*, "I think that God's forgiven us" after their killings of the two men and jubilant getaway with the stolen wheelchairs and holographic rims illustrate Korine's framing of them as naïve innocents. This equivocal expression of notions of guilt and innocence is a continuation of the notion of Die Antwoord as freaks, to be read as ambiguous texts.

Smit notes that in *Gummo*, Korine paints American society as a place with a 'freakish' population, where freakishness becomes indicative of normalcy (2007: 76). She argues that Korine's employment of "physically different people" effects a defiance of classification and presents problems for interpretation – the characters have "more dimension to their personalities than their status as different or freakish" (Smit 2007: 77). Die Antwoord's placement of their identities within the realm of freakery may function to subvert their whiteness, in order to interrogate their identities outside the realm of white privilege and the history of white crimes against humanity. By displacing their own humanity, they displace their whiteness, and become freakish texts (Smit 2007: 76) to read *outside* the context of racial complexities. In *Julien Donkey-boy*, there is a scene where Julien, a young white schizophrenic male, discusses spiritual ideas and then performs a rap with a multi-racial (black, Hispanic, Native American, white and black albino) group of residents in a home for blind people (Smit 2007: 143). Smit comments that the racial difference in the group becomes less noticeable in the face of the shared disabilities of the members (blindness and Julien's schizophrenia) – they are all freaks (Smit 2007: 144). Korine's and Die Antwoord's placement of male white characters as freaks thereby others them, and destabilises notions of white male normativity (Smit 2007: 145). However, in *Umshini Wam*, these are not the only strategies used to subvert notions of white hegemonic masculinity.

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Ninja is portrayed rather wretchedly in *Umshini Wam*, falling out of his wheelchair twice, playing dead, and closing his eyes childishly as he shoots his gun at the first man. Yo-Landi is rather the active instigator, urging Ninja to get up and inciting him to "make a move", "take this shit to the next" and "wake up". Indeed, she is talking for most of the first half of the film, whereas he tacitly accepts the circumstances and quietly berates Yo-Landi for "always [moaning] the whole time about everything". They play a slow, laborious game of basketball in their wheelchairs and shoot guns aimlessly into the distance. Ninja's lack of drive and apathy can be read as vulnerability, commenting on the "supposed helplessness felt by white Afrikaans males under the new democratic dispensation where they have been stripped of their power and feel victimised under affirmative action" (Barnard 2012: 34). This parody of white masculinity may connote an inability to defend against a backlash to established ideals of white Afrikaans masculinity in South Africa, communicated through this parody of white masculinity, which only changes when turning to violence (Barnard 2012: 32-35). As soon as Ninja fires the gun, killing the oom, who may be said to symbolise 'old' notions of white Afrikaans masculinities, he changes to an exuberant participant in the quest to "take it to the next [level]". He leads Yo-Landi in their next kill, of a younger Afrikaans man who owns a shop with car accessories, from whom they want to steal holographic rims for their new wheelchairs. This time, he shoots without reluctance or provocation. This may be understood as Ninja regaining strength and agency within 'new' notions of masculinity, by violently rejecting previous conceptions of masculine identity which uphold hegemonic masculinities and subordinate other masculinities.

Another manifestation of Ninja as 'new' man can also be seen in the symbolic passivity of the father in *Baby's On Fire*, where Ninja takes on the role of the patriarch, forbidding his 'sister' Yo-Landi to have boys over and attempting to kill all of her suitors. Ninja hereby performs familial patriarchy, as suggested by Trujillo as a way of exhibiting hegemonic masculinity. This is also shown in the lyrics of *Ugly Boy*, a love song in which he promises to take care of his "girl", presumably Yo-Landi, but it could also be the other woman in the music video, played by Cara Delevigne, whom he playfully interacts with. He carries both of them on his back in separate scenes in the music

video, and Yo-Landi also sits on his lap, in a patriarchal position. Also in the video, Ninja and Yo-Landi's adoptive son, Tokkie, stands with his arms protectively around the shoulders of Sixteen Jones, their daughter (Ryder 2015). These are all manifestations of familial patriarchy. However, when Ninja attempts to exercise control over Yo-Landi's body as subjugated female in *Baby's on Fire*, he is not successful. It is noteworthy that he only succeeds in threatening the suitors, not actually physically harming them, and that at the end of *Baby's on Fire* he is thwarted by Yo-Landi, who throws him in the face with a brick while he holds a gun to her lover's head, allowing her lover to escape. He comically looks up at her with a bloody mouth, quickly going from ruthless killer patriarch to overpowered weakling (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Ninja as killer patriarch and Ninja as overpowered weakling. W.T. Jones and Terence Neale (dirs.), *Baby's on Fire*, 2014. (Screen shot by author) (Jones & Neale 2014).

Ninja thereby constructs an identity that "allows him to form contingent coalitions with other dominant and marginalised subjects" (Calhoun 2005: 274). In other words, his exaggerated triumphs over his enemies and assertions of power, juxtaposed with degrading himself as a white male, simultaneously emasculates and remasculinizes his identity (Calhoun 2005: 274). In the processes of creating a cultural narrative in which he is a freak, using abjection to Other himself, he both subverts and sustains notions of hegemonic masculinity. The final way to perform hegemonic masculinity as noted by Trujillo, illustrates this interpretation clearly.

4.4 Canine Masculinity and the Abstinence from Heteronormativity

Ninja's hung like a fokken horse
Yeah girl! I'm a freak of nature
Sign my name on your boob, fuck a piece of paper
If you feeling me: cool. Not feeling me: fuck off!
(Evil Boy)

Performing heterosexuality is the fifth way to maintain dominant notions of hegemonic masculinity. In *Baby's on Fire*, Ninja has scantily clad women all around him: lying with him in bed while another woman performs a striptease, wrestling in a kiddie's pool while he watches and on his arm as he gets out of the car. Although he does not engage with them sexually, they affirm his heterosexuality just by their presence, being objectified by him. In *Pitbull Terrier*, in which Ninja equates himself with a dog, wearing a rather lifelike pitbull mask, he sings "Pussy, for bad boy/ No pussy, sad boy". At the beginning of the music video, he is walked like a dog by a young boy, who promptly loses control of him. He then proceeds to a warehouse where he sees two models doing a photoshoot in feline costumes, one painted pure white, and the other pure black. He chases them into a decrepit building and first jumps at the throat of the white cat, ripping it apart, leaving her with a very bloody neck. He then looks at the black cat, who is shown backing away as if he is coming towards her, and then a torrent of thick white liquid (read: semen) is cast on her body. The blood and also the semen affirm an assertion of dominance over another subordinate body – Çakirlar argues that ejaculation "reiterates the discursive imagery of heterosexual coitus which is presumed to impregnate meaning by 'striking', or fucking, the so-called passive, feminine signifiable" (2011: 93). However, in *Pitbull Terrier*, Ninja ultimately does not succeed in overpowering or 'striking' any of the female characters. The two temporarily overpowered cats, joined by an otherworldly Yo-Landi, stand up again and perplex the canine Ninja, and again Yo-Landi thwarts him by leading him away from the 'pussies', into a street, where he is run over by a bus. This can be read as a failure to participate in the performance of heteronormativity. In the end, Yo-Landi brings the run-over, bleeding Ninja back to consciousness by spitting in his mouth, performing the role of feminine saviour.

This stands in contrast with Yo-Landi's repeated lyrics that place her in the role of 'damsel in distress' (singing "save me" or implying that she needs him to 'take care of her' in *Pitbull Terrier*, *Enter the Ninja*, and *Ugly Boy*). Nancy Guevara has stated that women are "typically depicted in secondary roles as cheerleaders or bystanders rather than as producers or active participants" (1996: 51) in the world of hip hop and rap. In Die Antwoord's work, Yo-Landi does take on the role of cheerleader in some videos, but this is subverted through Yo-Landi's sexual association with other men in their music videos, and some videos in which Ninja doesn't appear, most notably *Cookie Thumper*. It may be argued that he still directed both *Cookie Thumper* and her other 'solo' performance, *Rich Bitch* (Holnaaier & Jones 2011), but it seems at least in their own narratives that Yo-Landi takes the active role of production in their music (William Morris Entertainment Enterprises, 2010). Furthermore, Yo-Landi taking on the role of the saviour of Ninja in *Pitbull Terrier* subverts notions of hegemonic masculinity. Ninja is placed into the secondary position here, passive rather than active, an object to be rescued. It may be argued that this suggests a more egalitarian form of masculinity, in which women are seen not as passive objects, but as active participants and heroes, liberating men from the shackles of traditional masculinities. This is a marked difference between the usual subservient role of most women in hip hop and rap, and presents a subversion of the heteronormativity within hegemonic masculinity.

Another interesting aspect of heteronormativity that I would argue is subverted by Die Antwoord, lies in their performance of a fraternal relationship between Ninja and Yo-Landi. They take on different social roles towards one another in their music videos, but never is that relationship sexual. This desexualisation is significant because in their refusal to be called a 'couple' is an undermining of the heteronormative ideal. The fact that they have a child together who appears in many of their music videos, makes this a mysterious performance. In an interview where they answer the question whether they are in a relationship, Yo-Landi says, "I ask him the whole time and he won't give me a kiss." To which he answers, "Fokkof" (Holnaaier 2011). Ninja abstaining from performing heterosexuality in their entire online video archive and in the formation of their public

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personas subverts hegemonic masculinity by a denial of successful heterosexual intercourse. In *Pitbull Terrier*, while the lyrics suggest sexual pursuit of "pussy", in the video his pursuit ends only in blood and semen, not in the fulfilment of the sexual pursuit described in the lyrics. Yet, earlier in the video, Ninja is shown to be pushing his pelvis into a man's leg, in an imitation of canine mating behaviour. This again undermines Ninja's performance of heterosexuality, as homosexual connotations are avoided in heteronormativity. If one considers the lyrics of the video, which principally deal with Ninja wanting "pussy", with the only overtly sexual behaviour in the video, which is homosexual in nature, *Pitbull Terrier* provides a clear subversion of hegemonic masculinity.

At the end of *Fok Julle Naaiers*, however, DJ Hi-Tek's spewing of homophobic obscenities stands to provide a powerful reiteration of hegemonic masculinity's rejection of homosexual identities. Hi-Tek, in front of a black wall with the words "moffie" (an offensive Afrikaans slur similar to 'faggot') and "4 hot bum sex call [the number of one of their newspaper critics]", starts rapping, almost verbatim, Mike Tyson's words when a spectator screamed "Put him in a straight-jacket" before the Lewis-Tyson fight. Tyson originally shouted "Look at you scared, like a little white pussy, scared of a real man" (Toback 2008), which DJ Hi-Tek partially repeats along with "I'll fuck you till you love me, faggot". These directly homophobic phrases were explained by Ninja in the video *FAGGOT*, saying that DJ Hi-Tek himself is gay, and he has made the slur "his bitch". Barnard argues that Hi-Tek represents a monstrous disruption of heteronormative masculinity, made literal by his contorted and grotesque masks and sometimes violently insistent claims to be homosexual (2012: 33). She argues that this act of deviance against heteronormativity can be seen as a production of discourse which challenges dominant hegemonic masculinities, especially in South African society (Barnard 2012: 33). On the other hand, it can also be argued that the words 'faggot' and 'moffie' and 'gay' are used by Die Antwoord in a mostly derogatory fashion, used to threaten and ridicule more than to empower. I would contend however that DJ Hi-Tek's rant constructs homosexuality as a threat to heterosexuality, which is a subversion of the hierarchical positions of sexualities in hegemonic masculinity – Hi-Tek's homosexual

masculinity becomes the dominant one which will subordinate the masculinities of others. Ninja's defence of and participation in what could be identified as homosexual behaviour, as well as DJ Hi-Tek's identification as homosexual thereby offers a disrupted hegemonic masculinity, one that may abstain from performing heterosexuality and engage in homosexuality.

The South African performance artist Peet Pienaar's work comes to mind when discussing the tensions within homosexual identities in the heteronormative society in South Africa. As a homosexual Afrikaner man, his performances often deal with his own position towards hegemonic masculinity, for instance *Formstance*, a piece where he was photographed nude with his penis tucked between his legs, which gives an appearance similar to a vagina – a direct comment on the way homosexual men are often treated as women (Buch 2010: 23). Another performance, in which he dressed in the Springbok rugby uniform (the national team's attire) and posed in an 'effeminate' way outside shopping malls, resulted in some female spectators to rub his thighs, attempting to sexually arouse him, and some men to throw him with bricks (Buch 2010: 25). These sexually and physically violent reactions towards a perceived violation of heteronormativity indicate a view of homosexuality as threat. Pienaar arguably uses the abject in a constructive way, in order to raise awareness of the audience's own attitudes towards homosexuality, while Ninja uses notions of the abject (Du Preez 2011: 104) in a more destructive manner, destroying traditional notions of white South African masculinity.

The abject, according to Kristeva, draws one towards a collapse of meaning, disrupting the boundaries of "identity, system, order" (1982: 2-4), and appears ultimately as a "rite of defilement and pollution … [persisting] as exclusion or taboo" (Kristeva 1982: 10). It may manifest as bodily fluids to be ejected, such as vomit, tears, saliva, faeces, urine, or semen (see Chow 2002). Bodily fluids are often featured in Die Antwoord's music videos, especially Ninja's bloody mouth, which can be seen in *Baby's on Fire*, *Ugly Boy*, and *Pitbull Terrier*. According to Sean Brayton (2007: 69), abject white masculinity has been popularised in films like *Fight Club* (Fincher 1999) and *Jackass: The Movie*

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(Tremaine 2002). It presents a self-effacing masculinity, produced as "a spectacle of emasculation that is also a reassertion of the masculine" by being "self-marginalising and therefore implausibly victimised" (Brayton 2007: 69). Ninja presents a marginalised poor white masculinity, which can be compared to South African performance artist Peter van Heerden's performance strategy of using strategic blasphemy and physical abjection, as seen in his 2008 performance installation 'Totanderkuntuit' at the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees - a predominantly Afrikaans arts festival (Lewis 2012: 7-8). Van Heerden also alluded to the 'white kaffir' narrative by having the phrase written on his chest while strapped, blindfolded, to a cruciform structure (Lewis 2012: 9). This "abjection of white masculinity", in his words, is not meant to praise its hegemony, but rather to ritually sacrifice whiteness (Van Heerden 2004: 38). Megan Lewis, in her analysis of Van Heerden's performances, notes that the reactions were often marked by rage, with spectators shouting accusations of religious blasphemy and racial betrayal: "God sal jou straf! Julle Duiwels sal brand!" ("God will punish you! You devils will burn [in hell]!") and calling Van Heerden and his performance partner André Laubscher "Retiefs" and "Kruger", referring to the men historically branded as race traitors for negotiating with the 'enemy' – the British and Black Africans (Lewis 2012: 21). They were also called "moffies" ("faggots") – perceived traitors to Afrikaner heteronormativity (Lewis 2012: 21).

These acts of 'volksverraad' (race betrayal) signify the point to the performance art for Van Heerden (Lewis 2012: 10) – to subvert notions of white Afrikaner masculinity in order to create a dialogue which can move 'old' notions of Afrikaner identities forward. Through his performance, Lewis writes, Afrikaners can "vicariously unburden themselves of the past through performance and … dialogue about new possibilities for their future as ethical participating members of a democratic, multicultural South Africa" (2012: 11). This is done through exploding icons of traditional Afrikaner identity, asking spectators to reconsider their own beliefs about South African history, racism, religion, white privilege, language, and Others (Lewis 2012: 14-15). Lewis's account of one of the performances in the installation (2012: 18) illustrates the strategies of abjection employed by Van Heerden to achieve this interrogation of white masculine identity:

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Sweepslag ("Colonial Whiplash") started as Peter birthed himself from a bag suspended in a tree like a womb – invoking the kunt in the title of the installation – and suggesting a parthenogenic rebirthing of the white Afrikaner male. Having grappled his way out of the plastic placenta in which he was suspended, he dropped to the ground, naked and bloody, his body viscerally abjected and without preassigned meaning. The image of a naked human form emerging from primordial ooze, before the social markers of rank, race, and identity have defined him, was striking. He became a primal man crawling blindly through the dirt, snorting and grunting like a wild animal, searching for language, meaning, and identity. Then, he gradually acquired a sense of time (several alarm clocks), clothing (underpants and khaki shorts), and two suitcases (the "baggage" of whiteness, masculinity, Calvinism, and Afrikanerdom).

Within this prelinguistic, prehistoric, preracial state, in which the self and the Other are indistinguishable, Van Heerden strips whiteness and masculinity of all symbolic power (Lewis 2012: 19). Abjection is therefore utilised as a performance strategy to re-examine identity and hegemonic masculinity in the sphere of the Afrikaner. Ninja also uses these techniques to parody hegemonic masculinity in the way Hutcheon (1985: 6) understands parodies - ironically inverting notions belonging to dominant masculine identities. It can be argued that Ninja's abject performances of white masculinity (as hillbilly, dog, freak) also function towards a revision of South African white masculinity.

Van Heerden argues that destabilisation of race, gender and class boundaries may occur when audiences are exposed to these "transformative acts of behaviour" (Van Heerden 2004: iii), which may place Van Heerden, as well as Ninja, who present their white, male bodies in public in order to confront spectators and initiate discourse (Lewis 2012: 26), into the roles of organic intellectuals.

4.5 Enter the Organic Intellectual

White trash reality television, according to Ryan Broderick, can be seen as a response to widespread economic tension – not only are middle class people watching it as an

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exploitative guilty pleasure, but working class people are watching these programmes to see families that actually look like them depicted on television (2014). With Oxfam reporting over half of South Africans living below the national poverty line and 25% of South Africans unemployed (Cole 2015: 4-14), white South Africans are increasingly moving to the fringes of society, as found by Dafydd Russell-Jones (2014: 52) in his case study of poor whites in informal settlements in South Africa. He found that it is especially white males in these situations (working class, homeless, and unemployed) who feel discriminated against (Russell-Jones 2014: 55). It is worth noting also that it has been argued that South Africa's gross inequality has shifted from being based on race to being based on class (Seekings 2007: 13). In the light of this information, the character Ninja becomes a voice of the working class white South African man, or rather, an organic intellectual.

Sean Patrick Hier describes the theme of 'intellectuals' in Antonio Gramsci's writings as an organisation of the production and maintenance of social order (Hier 2005: 41). Gramsci delineates two categories of intellectuals according to social function – traditional (thought to exist independently of ruling or dominant groups) and organic (the thinking, organizing 'deputies' of the different classes), which can exist both in ruling groups and subordinated groups in society (Hier 2005: 41-42). While traditional intellectuals are those generally found in the context of a university or institution of knowledge, organic intellectuals are defined by social function, not education (Hier 2005: 41-42). In the subordinated classes, organic intellectuals are rather involved in evoking feeling and emotion in order to create counter-hegemonies of the world the communities live, or rather want to live in (Hier 2005: 42). Nathan D. Abrams has argued that rap artists can be considered organic intellectuals because rap is a cultural arena of struggle, seeking to construct a counter-hegemony by staying neither inside nor outside hegemonic culture (1995: 9). It can be argued then that Ninja can be considered an organic intellectual, a spokesman, of the South African poor trash freaks – especially the men, who consider themselves subordinated. Ninja both represents and subverts dominant hegemonic masculinities through Die Antwoord's digital archive,

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creating an abject performance art which parodies dominant notions of South African white masculinities.

Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985: 551) have argued that "the political meaning of writing about masculinity turns mainly on its treatment of power". Ninja has been shown to simultaneously assert and relinquish, steal and distort his power as white male, thereby subverting various mechanisms of hegemonic masculinity. This may be read as a construction of counter-hegemony, with Ninja slipping through notions of heteronormativity and dominance by way of a cultural narrative that is resistant of definition.

The parodies of hegemonic masculinity that Ninja perform can be read as critiques, but they are constructed within dominant capitalist and ideological institutions and agendas which rap and hip hop often serves (Calhoun 2005: 289). However, while at the same time parodying it, Ninja serves as organic intellectual for the white South African male community, which often feels ostracised, whether that is from self-marginalisation (Du Preez 2011: 104) or simply the tensions which result from a post transitional era in South Africa. He succeeds in making the invisible visible, the ghostly alive, the normal 'freeky'.

CHAPTER 5

Zef: Performance Art?

This chapter will provide an account of performance art and video art and its practitioners in South Africa, leading into a reading of Ninja's performances of white masculinity as performance art. It will place the Zef counterculture as performed by Die Antwoord and especially Ninja within the genre of performance art and assess the possible merits of such a reading, especially through the perspective of a social critique of South African white masculine identities.

5.1 Performance Art and Video Art in South Africa

In the Western world, performance art has often been used as a medium for protest, for giving an arena to the disenfranchised (MacKenny 2001: 15). In the 2010s, Hatice Utkan reports, performance art is becoming a medium widely used for protesting events, as seen in artist Yasiin Bey (also known as Mos Def) undergoing force feeding procedures used on terrorism suspects in Guantanamo Bay in a video protesting the practice in 2013 (Utkan 2013). In South Africa, however, it did not gain prominence until the end of the Apartheid-era, with performance artists such as Peet Pienaar, Carol-anne Gainer, Tracey Rose, and Steven Cohen starting their work only after democracy was established in South Africa (MacKenny 2001: 15). Sue Williamson writes that since the 1990s, South African art institutions have been under pressure to change the reigning Apartheid-era images of stoic, staid museums serving white elitist audiences (Williamson 2009: 246). Events where the mixed-media work of young unknown artists and international artists were given the spotlight, drew younger and more diverse audiences, who were exposed, many for the first time, to video, installation, and performance art (Williamson 2009: 246). Therefore, performance art gained another function, of moving the South African art world into a future of more diverse art. Thematically, a lot of the performance art was focused on gender, complicated by race – for example Tracey Rose's *Span II* in 1997, where she sat in a glass display case, challenging notions of the male gaze and the white gaze (MacKenny 2001: 19); and

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Peet Pienaar's *Springbok Rugby Player* in 1996, where he posed in the rugby uniform of South Africa's national team, symbolic of Afrikaner masculinity, in order to critique white Afrikaner heteronormativity (Buch 2009: 24-25). The performances grew to be even more diverse in the 2000s. In 2002, Ed Young submitted a person as an artwork in an art auction in the piece *Bruce Gordon (Found Object [concept])*, which was an intricate and humorous work, critiquing the art world (Williamson 2009: 268). Mwenya Kabwe, Chuma Sopotela and Kemang Wa Lehulere alluded to their hybrid identities "part Chewa and part Bemba, half Swati and half Xhosa, half Irish and half Tswana", respectively (McKenny 2007: 112). Sopotela's unclothed body was painted black, Lehulere's feet were painted white and Kabwe wore a white wedding dress with an Afro, which expressed the "movement from self to other, from past to present, present to future, old to new" (Makhubu 2013: 43). Douglas Gimberg and Christian Nerf built a boat in the township of Gugulethu and sailed to Robben Island in the performance *Escape to Robben Island* in 2007, and Ralph Borland invented a protective suit for protesters (*Suited for Subversion*, 2002) which amplifies one's heartbeat, as a reminder of humanity to the opposing police forces (Williamson 2009: 280-282). The works of these South African performance artists show the wide-ranging methods with which they approach provocations into their audiences' views on current events, history and ideologies. As Kendall Geers, a performance artist whose performances frequently deal with guilt as a cultural force in post-Apartheid South Africa (Van der Watt 2001: 70) asserts, "I am not interested in passive viewers … I try to create pieces in which the viewer has to accept responsibility for their presence in the work of art … then the process becomes an active one" (as quoted in Williamson 2009: 248). Geers's comment here illustrates the way in which performance art in South Africa often serves as intervention, confronting audiences with their own constructions of post-apartheid identity.

A key moment in South African performance art was *Chandelier* (2001-2002), a performance by Steven Cohen, who has been described as a pioneer of performance art in South Africa (De Waal & Sassen 2003: 5). Dressed in a reconstructed chandelier as an icon of Western wealth, Cohen walked on high heels through a squatter camp in

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Johannesburg that was being demolished, and its residents thereby forcefully relocated (De Waal & Sassen 2003: 26). This work was described by David Bunn as bringing "the spectacle of the perverse into spaces and situations associated with the limits of the new democracy" (2008: 164). In other words, Cohen, a white man in a chandelier tutu, brought a spectacle of wealth into a space rife with poverty, which illustrates that democracy is not an all-encompassing solution to South Africa's problems. These forced removals which were common especially in the government under Thabo Mbeki evoke the innate fear "of the return of the ghosts of forced removals from the apartheid past" (Nuttall & Mbembe 2008: 20) in the South African subconscious. It was an important moment in South African performance art because of the way it interpreted the contested notion of 'home' as influenced by displacement and belonging (Farber & Buys 2012: 294). This notion of land and ownership remains a "highly emotive issue" in South Africa after three centuries of colonialism and white minority government which caused most farmlands to be owned by white people (Reuters 2015). In the light of South Africa's preoccupation with space, who it belongs to, and the spatial and social traumas of apartheid, it was a daring feat by Cohen, who took enormous personal risk as inhabitants responded, some violently, some defensively (Farber & Buys 2012: 294-295). This element of risk continues in the video artwork that developed out of *Chandelier*, *CHANDELIER PROJECT* (2002). At the end of the video, the photon lights which illuminate the chandelier shine bright as darkness falls over the scene of destruction, making Cohen a figure of light against the harsh background of a place which didn't have electricity in the first place (De Waal & Sassen 2003: 26). This illustrates the risk of representation – the white Cohen is the only beacon of light, emphasizing his privileged position as white man in South Africa. Cohen was aware of the layer of radical ambiguity of *Chandelier*. "If I lift my arms commandingly I appear to be directing the destruction" (De Waal & Sassen 2003: 27), as a white demonic god whose colonialist project is still at work. The video artwork, or "digital painting" (De Waal & Sassen 2003: 27) forms another experience of the performance. Cohen (cited by ARTsouthAFRICA 2015) professes that the video has become even more relevant with time because the issues addressed by the artwork, "discrimination, dislocation, inequality and racial confrontation", have increased and multiplied. The video artwork

can be seen as functioning to question, provoke, and articulate new notions of home, in the line of Horsfield's (2006: 8) conception of video art's function.

Video art is a medium that was largely unexplored in South Africa before William Kentridge, whose deliberately primitive, charcoal drawing animation videos, notably the 1989 series of nine short animated films called *Johannesburg, 2ⁿᵈ greatest city after Paris*, were made as artists started exploring video art (Elliot 2010: 51). Shortly after the end of apartheid, at the 1995 Johannesburg Biennale, video art was well represented, and South African video artist Santu Mofokeng's colonisation-themed projection of archival footage of black people dressed in Victorian fashion (Silva 1998) made an impression. In the 2000s, more explorations in video art emerged (Williamson 2009: 270-279), such as works by Kathryn Smith (*Jack in Johannesburg*, 2003), Berni Searle (*Home and Away*, 2003), Churchill Madikida (*Virus*, 2005) and Andrew Putter (*Secretly I Will Love You More*, 2007), showing journeys through notions of space and time. Kai Lossgott explores green politics through experimental video art, such as the 2010 stop frame animation *Read these Roads*, which draws connections between Table Mountain's hydrology systems, Cape Town's water supply system, and the human body's biological systems (Ardia 2014). Soweto-born Mohau Modisakeng was commissioned in 2013 by business heavyweight Samsung and South African events company Artlogic to create video art for a screening at the sixth annual FNB Joburg Art Fair (National Arts Council 2013), moving the medium into the mainstream commercial realm.

However, video art is remarkably hard to come by online, essentially due to financial considerations – the artworks are usually sold in small, limited editions, so that supply will never exceed demand and the work holds its value for collectors who purchase copies (Fineman 2007: 1; Singer 2013). However, in contrast to these videos which are "screened occasionally in whitewashed galleries or in the homes of private collectors", some video art is being made that are specifically intended to be viewed online, using online digital technology (Fineman 2007: 2). Nathaniel Budzinski (2013: 68) writes that there are a few varieties of online distribution, for instance Mark Aerial Waller's

temporary online exhibition of a series of pseudoscience educational 'webisodes', *Time Together* (2012). The groups AutoItalia and LuckyPDF started making online video artworks with a carnivalesque atmosphere in 2007, and many institutions have taken advantage of the new digital opportunities and providing showcases to countless artists, creating valuable online archives for public viewing (Budzinski 2013: 68-69). Assembled collections such as Ubuweb, Vdrome.org, Videoart.net and Rhizome.org represent the "contemporary fascination with resolution, the lively, fragmenting afterlife of the copy, and the ever-more-precise mimicry enabled by the supposed total recall furnished by the likes of YouTube" (Budzinski 2013: 69). In other words, within the abundance of moving images in online video art archives, traces of wider shifts within moving image work are arising, towards the issue of attention. Die Antwoord's online video archive of performances has had a lot of success in this regard. When their first album O was made available as a free download on their website, it was an early indication that their art is geared towards a mass audience, but their videos are where the real accomplishment lies. The internet thrives on distraction – but while it has never been easier to broadcast one's work, it has never been more difficult to get people to watch it (Budzinski 2013: 69).

In the same vein, the South African audience might not be one that is exceedingly receptive to performance artists' work. While recognition of performance art by South African art authorities has seen some growth, notably in the form of the Standard Bank Young Artist of the Year (SBYAY) awards' category of Performance Art being instated in 2013 (McGroarty 2013), the first winner of the award, Anthea Moys has lamented South African audiences' obliviousness to what performance art is: "South Africans are interested in rugby more than art. Performance art is still being defined" (as quoted in McGroarty 2013). It seems that South African audiences still have a ways to go to properly appreciate performance art. In addition, Hayley Kodesh reports that "creating art for arts' sake" is impossible for South African performance artists "because they are too busy trying to make a living" (2006: 166) – a sentiment which has been echoed by Steven Cohen, who says that there is virtually no support, financial or otherwise, for South African artists (as quoted by Murinik 2004: 77). With little audience appreciation

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and no money or support, it's not difficult to see that South African performance artists struggle.

However, in 2014, an article featuring prominent South African performance artists was published in the respected *Mail & Guardian*, one of South Africa's primary weekly newspapers (Jason 2014), perhaps an indication of an increase in public interest and even understanding of performance art. The article lists ten young performance artists that are noteworthy, such as Igshaan Adams, whose work explores intersections in religion, spirituality, and race; Carla Fonseca, who investigates gender structures and rape in her performances; Gerald Machona, whose work includes examinations into xenophobia and nationhood, led by 2015 SBYAY performance art winner Athi Patra-Ruga. His ongoing *White Women of Azania* series feature an intersection between fashion and performance and deal with issues like sexuality race, and utopia (Jason 2014). He says that performance art is loaded with concerns of space, "whereby one can't perform in certain places because they are reserved for someone else. So I love going into public spaces and being in the face of that power and speaking truth to that power" (as quoted by Jason 2014). Following this, it can be argued that the spaces which performance art and video art occupy have hegemonic and ideological meaning in themselves. Die Antwoord's defiance of gallery space and movement towards an online archive of video performance art has given them a space where they have the freedom to broadcast their views of identity to a mass audience. Their purposeful use of music in this capacity is also significant. Their Zef music, which can be described as a hybridised form of South African hip hop, expresses "the marginalised, complex, and elusive identity of post-apartheid society" (Chruszczewska 2015: [sp]). Hip hop and Zef both function as sites of "identities-in-translation" (Longinovic 2002: 7), frameworks to reinterpret identity (Chruszczewska 2015: [sp]). In this way, Die Antwoord reconfigured a space for performance art to reconfigure South African identities. The Brother Moves On, a hip hop group which is also mentioned in the *Mail & Guardian*'s list of prominent South African performance artists, similarly blurs the genres of music, theatre and performance art, according to 2014 SBYAY winner Donna Kukama (Jason 2014). The Brother Moves On makes "transitional music for a transitional generation", performed in

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various alternative spaces, such as churches and derelict buildings (Jabbas 2012). They have been acclaimed for their live performances and installations which critique racialised identities in post-Apartheid South Africa, seeking to fuel dialogue: "this generation is mumbling we need to speak up" (as quoted in Young 2011). The Brother Moves On and Die Antwoord's choice to use hip hop music in their performance art allows them to make use of the discursive practice that is hip hop, which "provides opportunities to contextualise and negotiate identities operating through means of musical and verbal discourse as well as visual representation" (Connell and Gibson 2001: 3). In other words, renegotiations of identities are facilitated by Die Antwoord through their self-aware use of hip hop in their performance art.

The notion of risk is central to performance art (as expounded in Chapter Two). In South Africa, despite (or perhaps because of) many difficulties, performance artists who are committed to commenting on their social contexts do so fearlessly, often taking extreme risks . This can be seen in Tracey Rose's video *San Pedro V – The Hope I Hope* (2005), where she painted herself bright pink, played the Israeli national anthem, and urinated against the wall between Palestine and Israel (Williamson 2009: 254); as well as Peet Pienaar's *I Want To Tell You Something* (2000), where he proposed to broadcast live the removal of his foreskin by a black surgeon: "by showing the performance live on the Net, in front of an audience, I am highlighting the strange tension that exists in this country between tradition (traditional concepts of masculinity) and technology (new concepts of masculinity). By auctioning the foreskin I am exploring how new concepts of masculinity are built around money and capital worth as opposed to the tradition and physical" (Pienaar, as quoted by Enwezor 2004: 37). In the face of the high stakes in post-apartheid South Africa and the explosiveness of daily cultural debate (Poplak 2010), Die Antwoord's social commentary is also delivered quite fearlessly, through a confrontational (and controversial) parody which deconstructs and reconstructs South African identities, showing it in a constant state of flux (Chruszczewska 2015: [sp]). A major channel of reconstruction lies within Die Antwoord's use of the notions of freakery, the monstrous, and the abject.

5.2 Abject Performance art and Identity

Much of the post-transitional art work in South Africa shows a move towards more personal issues, interrogating identity through a focus on the body (Enwezor 2004: 35). This can be seen in both visual and performing arts.

Jane Alexander's visual artwork *Butcher Boys* (1985-1986) comes to mind here, a sculpture depicting apartheid's monsters (Enwezor 2004: 42). The monstrous body has been the subject of many of her works, such as *Dog* (1984-1985), a stonily detached interpretation of a hybrid human and dog; and *Untitled* (1985-1986), a deformed seated figure with discoloured skin. *Butcher Boys*, like the others, is unsettling in its depiction of bodily trauma and disfiguration of humanity (see Figure 5). The work consists of three frontal seated figures, deathly pale and taut, with Minotaur-like horned heads and no mouths. It can be read as a depiction of the condition of alienation under apartheid (Enwezor 2004: 42). It can also be read as a portrayal of South African white masculinity – virile, cold, evil, and disfigured; a monstrous masculine force with a "threatening potentiality, as if at any moment the monsters of apartheid's past might again waken in the dusk of reason's termination" (Enwezor 2004: 42). The physicality of Alexander's sculptures strengthens the disquieting aura of her work.

In performance art especially, the body is of primary focus because of its immediacy, which contributes to the liveness of the performance event. In performance, the body is read as text, within and through discourse, revealing the body as "the only *apparent* base from which notions of 'identity' (such as 'race', 'sex', 'gender', 'class' or 'sexuality') can be read" (Harradine 2000: 69). The notion of performance is built upon the traces and echoes of the body, such as its sounds, movements, and even its absence (Harradine 2000: 69). The body is always performing – it performs its own presence and physical status – and thus it "can reveal something of the ideological and discursive systems that produce and inform that body in the first place" (Harradine 2000: 69). This notion can be seen in Brett Bailey's activation of the *Butcher Boys* sculpture in his theatre production *The Prophet* through The Dead, characters "plastered with reeking

mud … and [wearing] cow horns on their heads in association with the hundreds of thousands of cattle that died, with Christian concepts of demons, and with Pan – that classical god of panic and unreason" (Bailey 2003: 194). The wild, frightening, monstrous physical appearance of these characters place them within a framework where they can critique South African identity as non-human creatures, moving and speaking in an unearthly way (Bailey 2003: 160).

Figure 5 Jane Alexander, *Butcher Boys*, 1985-1986. Mixed media, life size. National Gallery of Arts. Cape Town, South Africa (Artthrob 1999).
Figure 6 The Juju from Brett Bailey's play *The Prophet,* 1999 (Bailey 2003: [book cover]).

The original *Butcher Boys* sculpture was transformed in this activation – the demonic otherworldliness was activated by The Dead's deathliness and supernatural presence,

thereby giving another meaning of colonial tragedy.[6] In short, the performance artist's body can be used to interrogate socio-political discourse around notions of identity. A powerful mode of engaging the body's potential for expressive performance, is physical abjection, frequently used by South African performance artists like Peter van Heerden and Tracey Rose to convey their ideas, which often relate to identity. Rose's 'rainbow nation' ice sculpture, made from her own urine, emphasizes the body "in all its degraded and brutalized forms under apartheid" (Enwezor 2004: 36). She uses her bodily functions to make meaning of her body itself as well as the social context her body functions in. Van Heerden does the same in *Totdieanderkuntuit*, in a bloody birth from a trash bag, depicting the transitional Afrikaner white male (Lewis 2012: 7-8). While he crawls around in the dirt, naked and spat out from the trash bag, his body functions outside of accepted bodily norms and thus becomes a text for the audience to read. His identity attains a sense of vacancy, and is therefore ready to be read as a text. In performance art, physical abjection functions as a forceful tool for making meaning through the body.

Die Antwoord have also made use of *Butcher Boys* in their work (*TEN$ION Trailer*, Jones 2012), as seen in Figure 7. They have been accused of appropriation of other artists' work often, perhaps most famously by their former collaborator Wanga, who claimed that Die Antwoord stole creative material from him, including the 'Evil Boy' sculpture (Casper the Friendly Ghost with an oversized phallus) and other artwork (Blignaut 2013). When Die Antwoord directly referenced Alexander's work in the trailer for their album *TEN$ION* by imitating the deathly white and grey bodies, as well as the horns and sealed mouth on Ninja, there were similar accusations (Jones 2012).

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[6] *The Prophet* is based on the legend of Nongqawuse, a 14-year-old Xhosa prophetess who reportedly had a vision in 1856 that the Xhosa people would regain their former glory if the Xhosa killed all their cattle and destroyed all their crops. As a result, 400 000 cattle were slaughtered and 40 000 Xhosa people died of starvation (McGregor 2009). What is referred to here is the death and suffering caused by the Apartheid and colonial monsters, *Butcher Boys*, interlinked with the death and suffering caused by The Dead speaking to Nongqawuse as a reference to the diseased human spirit who listens to The Dead more than those alive.

Although Brett Bailey also referenced the sculpture in his 2007 performance at the Cape '07 festival, *Three Witches*, where the reincarnated three 'Boys' walked on the roof of Lookout Hill (McIntosh 2007) with no repercussions, Alexander took up legal representation against Die Antwoord and they withdrew the video from their YouTube channel (Jones 2012).

Figure 7 Yo-Landi getting ready to rip Ninja's heart out. Watkin Tudor Jones (director), *TEN$ION Trailer*, 2012 (Screenshot by Author)(Jones 2012).

However, as Chris English comments in his video *Die Antwoord and Appropriation* (2012), Die Antwoord added layers of meaning to Alexander's artwork through the subtle changes they made. While Ninja's body was almost identical to the figures in *Butcher* Boys, Yo-Landi, on the other hand, appeared as an evil pixie with sharpened teeth, plunging her hand into Ninja's chest and removing his beating heart, then taking a bite of it. Through this added layer of meaning, they made clear an intention to destroy these monsters of the past by both becoming and dislocating the monstrous.

This intention can be seen through their usage of abjection in other videos. In *Pitbull Terrier* (in which Alexander's *Dog* can arguably be seen as an influence), there are several examples of abjected bodily fluids: spit, blood, and semen. The doglike spit and later blood from his victims around Ninja's mouth indicate a savage, uncontrolled kind of violence which negates notions of humanity, leaving him free to create an identity outside of categorisation, similar to Van Heerden's work. By abjecting himself in this

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way, complex notions of identity – whiteness, masculinity – are also abjected, and as Claire Scott argues, there is then a space to rearticulate a counter-narrative of what it means to be white (and male) in South Africa (Scott 2012: 758).

In the trailer for *TEN$ION* and *Pitbull Terrier*, Ninja shows a monstrous body: discoloured, lean and taut, with animalistic facial features. The similarity within both of the videos lies in Ninja's performance of the monstrous. In both videos, he becomes the monster, (albeit with more exposition in *Pitbull Terrier*) but at the end this narrative is disrupted when Yo-Landi kills the monster by respectively ripping its heart out in the trailer and by luring it in front of a bus in *Pitbull Terrier*. In the latter, Ninja is also brought back to life and humanity through Yo-Landi's own abjection of spit in his mouth. Her otherworldly appearances as a winged, sharp-toothed pixie in the trailer and an urban mystical witch in *Pitbull Terrier* contribute to the 'futuriste' theme that Die Antwoord employ in many of their lyrics and music videos: "If you don't know what I'm saying, don't worry about it. We're in the fucken' future now. Die Antwoord is here" (*Straight from the horse's piel*). This may indicate a counter-narrative which tells a story of destruction of traditional, outmoded notions of South African identity and a presentation of new, alternative, even alien notions.

Ninja's abject performance of the monstrous body gains more significance in the light of Die Antwoord's online performance art. The abject articulation of their counter-narrative within their conceptual dimension of ideas draws out strong responses from viewers: "WHY DID SHE SPIT IN HIS MOUTH? WHYYY???" (Kavin sk, comment on *Pitbull Terrier*), eliciting an element of risk accompanied by digital liveness. Therefore, the abject is used by Die Antwoord to both rearticulate notions of white South African identity and to place their works into the context of online video performance art.

5.3 The Zef Man

Claire Scott argues that as performance art, Die Antwoord "offers an interesting point of departure for an engagement with the complexities of South African identity construction

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and performance" (2012: 748). In Watkin Tudor Jones' career, he has had quite a few personas within The Original Evergreens, Constructus Corporation, Max Normal, and Max Normal TV. He has identified as The Man Who Never Came Back, MC Totally Rad, Yang Weapon, Wad:e, Max Normal, Jones Junior and Waddy (Barker 2010).

Figure 8: Watkin Tudor Jones and his Various Personas.
1. Rupert England, *Portrait 1 of 9 of Waddy Jones*, 1996.
2. The Original Evergreen in 1995 (designers), Electrotrash: Before Die Antwoord there was…, 2010.
3. Max Normal in 2002 (designers), Burgo's Music blog: The 30 South African bands you need to hear, 2007.
4. Constructus Corporation in 2003 (designers), Jango: Constructus Corporation page, [sa].
5. Watkin Tudor Jones, Anri du Toit and daughter Sixteen in 2004 (designers), Obrigado Magazine, [sa].
6. Max Normal.TV in 2007 (designers), Archived Max Normal TV Interview page, 2007.
7. Constructus Corporation in 2003 (designers), Tumblr, [sa].
8. Max Normal.TV in 2008 (designers), Zef to Death at Tumblr, [sa].
9. Max Normal.TV (designers), Trix Online, 2008.

In Figure 8, the different personas are presented visually. In these photos, Watkin Tudor Jones can be seen in different guises, with marked physical differences. Aside from the choices in clothing, which range from marijuana-smoking hippie to middle class office man to gothic gentleman to colourfully cheeky teenage rapper, as well as the hair and beard styling choices, another element becomes apparent: his skin (see Figure 9).
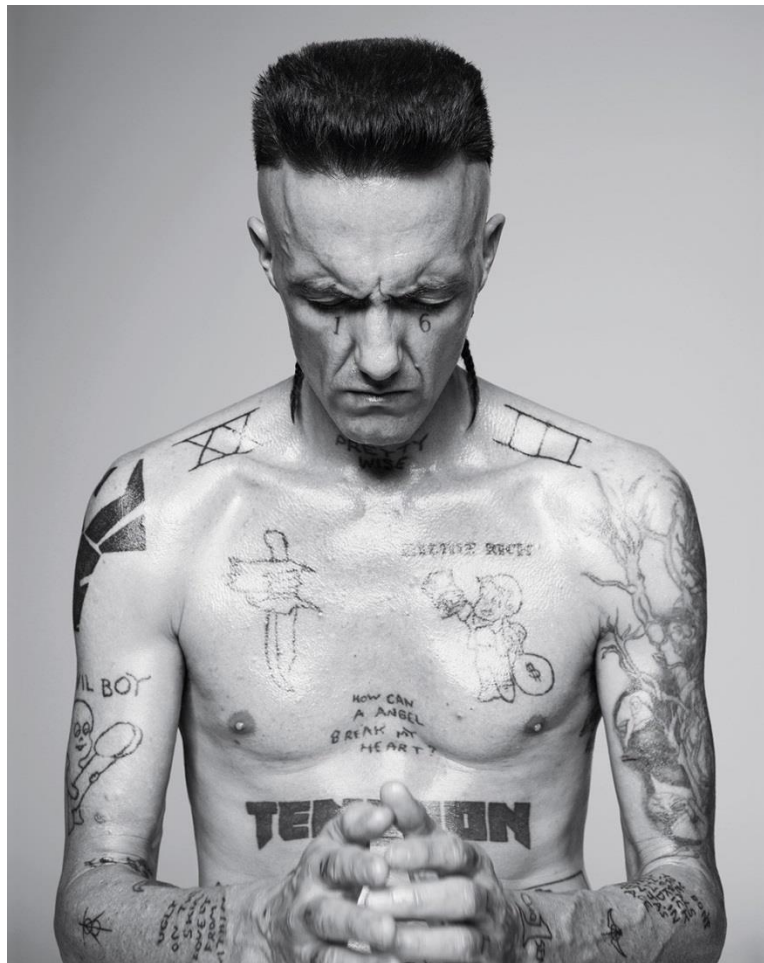

Figure 9: Pierre Debusschere, *Ninja*, 2015 (Myers 2015).

While he already had some tattoos in 1995, he has added quite a few more 'tjappies' in 'stoeka' style, meaning tattoos that are hand poked, similar to prison style tattoos (Murphy, quoted by Kinsman 2015). His tattoo artist, Capetonian Tyler B Murphy, says that these 'stoeka tjappies' are a phenomenon that come from the roots of hip hop in Cape Town (Kinsman 2015). Watkin Tudor Jones has been a part of the South African hip hop scene for twenty years. His various guises are proof that Watkin Tudor Jones

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has used hip hop to renegotiate his own identity, which can be argued to be indicative of a larger movement towards renegotiation of white masculine identities in post-transitional South Africa.

This renegotiation is facilitated by the elaborate parody that is Zef. Ross Truscott argues that there is a widespread pattern of Afrikaner self-parody in post-apartheid South Africa (2011: 97). This self-parody of white identity can be equated to the emergence of the Zef counterculture, in the form of *The Most Amazing Show*, Jack Parow, and of course, Ninja. These are all white, male performers who to some extent perform self-parody, both transgressing and fulfilling the sanctions of the post-apartheid white man, by simultaneously identifying with problematized features of white identity and negating these features through parody (Truscott 2011: 98). In Ninja's case, this means aggressively portraying the South African white man as freak, as monster, as spectacle, as joke. In *Straight from the horse's piel*, a type of 'Frequently Asked Questions Answered' video, Ninja does what looks like improvised rap with what looks like two working class white men on either side. Twice, at the beginning and end of the video, they start laughing at him. The laughter emphasizes the parodic joke of Ninja, who portrays that which is ridiculed. Laughing at Ninja allows the spectator therefore to continue being a white South African, even if it is only as an ironic double (Truscott 2011: 101). Ninja amplifies problematic features of white South African masculinity, such as privilege, racism, ownership, misogyny, appropriation and identity, into an aggressively outrageous spectacle. This allows him and his audience "to assume the very position of that which has been problematized, creating space for an ironic 'afterlife' for what has been forbidden" (Truscott 2011: 101). In this view, Ninja's parodic performance of white South African masculinity may serve as a move towards a 'post-racial' future, while still maintaining racialized privilege (Truscott 2011: 103). It is a way to still identify as a white South African male, with all the privilege that entails, while holding antiracist ideals as part of a post-apartheid conscience.

However, as Kaja Silverman puts it, "To judge someone for unconscious impulses is absurd, since these impulses would not be repressed if they were not as abhorrent to

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that person's consciousness as they are to our own" (2008: 124). Zef may be viewed as a new revolutionary stance for the white man in contemporary South Africa, the descendant of the "rotting corpse of the settler" (Fanon 1963: 93), who aggressively not only disassociates himself from the "rotting corpses" of his past, but also violently revolts against the imposed silence of his present. The new masculine identity that is created is one not of white privilege, but one that may disrupt racial and cultural norms.

Put simply: Ninja, who is the epitome of Zef, externalises the ugly thoughts of the South African white male through Zef self-parody, heightens them to freakish spectacle, and thereby creates a channel of relief from these burdens of the past, present and future on white identity.

5.4 Futuriste

There is an overarching notion in the conceptual dimension of ideas of Die Antwoord, which can be identified in the word 'Futuriste'. Applied to Ninja, this becomes an endorsement for futuristic notions of the white South African male. In Afrikaans, the suffix '-iste' (instead of the correct English suffix '-istic') makes the word into a plural noun, which translates into 'Futuristics', 'Futuristic people' or 'believers in the future' – sending the message that Ninja and Yo-Landi's performances are from the future of revised white identities. Ninja uses the abject to play out being a monster of South Africa's apartheid past, and also to proceed towards what can be seen as the future of South African white masculinity, liberated from, but still challenged and created by, the past. Ninja's usage of Zef counterculture also contributes to this intention, by using a word which had previously fallen out of use by South African Afrikaans (and English) speakers, and remaking it into something which is arguably more representative of contemporary white South Africans – as Yo-Landi says, poorer, but cooler (as quoted by Hoby 2010). There have been some crisis tendencies because of white South African males' loss of power after apartheid, but also a shift towards racial and gender equality and this is the new white male identity worth advocating.

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Die Antwoord is therefore a hybrid, fluid mixture between something 'real', a joke, and a 'genuine expression' of the members' roots. Their parody of South African white cultural identities can be seen when looking past the surface, working against Adorno's concept of the 'culture industry' which keeps people passive and politically apathetic (1975: 12). It shocks people into consciousness through transgressive performance art. By representing both the monstrous and hopeful side of white South African men through freakery, they can bring catharsis to their audiences, who both witness and partake in their own distress, releasing strong emotion afterwards (Scheff 1979: 62). This is because of their engagement in risk within the digital archive. The efficacy of their online video performance art is a direct result of the space they have created on the 'interweb'.

Die Antwoord, being an irritant against the culture industry and destroying the Sacred, the Serious and the Sublime in South African cultural identity, combine high art and popular culture, revealing South African white culture's inner psychology, raising self-awareness in audiences. When watching Die Antwoord's work, viewers risk exposing themselves to these ideas, which may lead to critical engagement with sensitive issues and also confrontation in comment sections.

Using Afrikaans within their work, Die Antwoord also becomes active in the ongoing process of bastardisation (Breytenbach 1999: 176) in South Africa, embracing the interwoven and intricate state of South African identities. They have the potential to force Afrikaners, who just want to move on and be accepted without facing their problems (Marlin-Curiel 2001: 162) to confront their monsters, rejecting ideas of rainbowism and embracing notions of new ethnicities.

It is very important to initiate transformation within masculine identities in South Africa. Hegemonic masculinities are in constant evolution, affected, destabilised and disrupted by socio-economic circumstances. The damaging effects of hegemonic masculinities in South Africa are shown in everyday manifestations of structural violence and crisis tendencies. Ninja, as a representative of South African identity in mass media, engages with and exhibits hegemonic masculinities in his performances, emasculating and

remasculinizing himself. Through disrupting notions of hegemonic masculinities, especially through his abstinence from performing heterosexuality and heteronormativity, he breaks the dominance of certain hegemonic masculinities and prompts alternative performances of masculinity.

Ninja also disrupts notions of whiteness through his self-identified 'white kaffir' counter-narrative. He disassociates himself from white privilege and associates with the working class identity as portrayed by Korine and Ballen, presenting himself as the Other, in a grotesque performance of whiteness. His association with prison culture, which in South Africa exists outside of racial context, emphasizes his orientation according to class. He attempts to make whiteness hyper-visible through aggressive appropriation and freakery, expressing "the tyranny of things" (Bazin 1971: 112) in South Africa. He also uses the abject to renegotiate South African identity and hegemonic masculinities, as hillbilly, dog, freak. While being an organic intellectual for the white South African male community who often see themselves as ostracised, he also parodies it. Thereby he creates a counter-narrative which is inside and yet outside of South African white hegemonic masculinities, providing a means by which to critique it.

Die Antwoord's work follows the lead of other South African performance art, serving as an intervention, confronting audiences with their own constructions of identity. Although it is not unproblematic, Ninja's performance art can be described as criticising stagnant notions of white masculine identity, and contributing to ideas of progress in South Africa, moving South African white masculine identity towards a more equal, more open future.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In this study, the digital video archive of Die Antwoord was analysed. A focus on the character Ninja facilitated a reading of South African white masculinity within their work, which was positioned as online video performance art. This provided a greater understanding of their work as transformative identity discourse.

> "Parody or Performance Art? Whatever it is, Die Antwoord does it right."
> (Maharaj 2014)

From the above quotation, it seems that there still are many questions about what exactly Die Antwoord is, and what their work is. These ambiguities, as mentioned in Chapter One, emphasizes their equivocal identity. They are able to avoid defining themselves and their work, which facilitates a reworking of identity and create disruptive art. The form their work takes, online video performance art, is an innovation in itself, renovating the way in which the internet (or 'interweb') can be used to express and exchange ideas. Ninja's parodic performances elevate the work to an "instrument of change" (Chambers 2010: 72), where a renegotiation of white South African masculine identities become possible.

It therefore seems that Die Antwoord allow audiences to question within the "playgrounds" they create to "fuck around in". The ideas they express may be as directly confrontational and crude as the 'Wat kyk jy' ('What are you looking at') tattoo on Ninja's penis, but when seeing it as a parodic performance art of masculinity, it becomes valuable for interpreting post-transitional South African white identity. As Ninja says, "You know … when you haven't changed your underpants, and it's smelling funky? South Africa's pretty fucken funky" (News24 2010). In venturing to proverbially change the sullied underpants of South African white identity, Ninja's performance art is

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inevitably provocative to the point of being offensive: "We zef, which is like saying 'I'm a piece-of-shit scumbag, I'm that person that you hate'" (Ninja, as quoted in Myers 2015). It shows the monstrous, freakish underbelly of white identity in order to prepare it for total transformation. It contributes to making whiteness visible, restricting its normative power and showing it as something abject, to be reviled. While his performance also may serve as an instrument to voice the frustrations of working class whites in South Africa, its parodic form also allows it to form a social critique of these perspectives.

6.2 Chapter Summary

This dissertation has explored how the online video performance art performed by Ninja of Die Antwoord creates discourse concerning white South African masculinities through the digital archive.

Chapter One introduced Die Antwoord and Ninja and provided a context for the study. It described the main ideas of the study – Ninja, South African white masculinity, and performance art, and expressed the motivation for the study. It presented the main aims of the study and provided an outline for the chapters in the rest of the study. A comprehensive clarification of concepts was also included, describing the notions of identity, masculinity, South African whiteness, Zef, culture, representation as well as performance art and video art.

Chapter Two's main aim was to delineate the concept 'online video performance art' so as to give substance to the classification to Die Antwoord's work as performance art. In order to do this, a comparison was drawn between performance art as it was at its conception and performance art as it is understood and performed in the 2010's. A reference to the performance art pioneer Marina Abramović's work gave rise to the notion of risk, which was related to audience perception and investment in order to emphasize how performance art functions to destroy the "Sacred, Serious and the Sublime in Art with a capital A" (Goldberg 1980: 30) as the Futurist Manifesto proclaimed. This made the connection with Die Antwoord's work to risk. Dixon's notion

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of digital performance and presence, as well as the notion of digital liveness as described by Auslander, were used to describe audience participation and exposure to risk within the comments on YouTube videos of Die Antwoord. Some comments on Die Antwoord's videos were related to South African perspectives, which revealed the effects of representation in Die Antwoord's case and gave rise to the possibility of the renegotiation of cultural identities through art.

In Chapter Three, the concept of Zef as rude, resilient, authentic instrument for expression was explored. It was contextualised within the history of Afrikaans music by relating it to two other musical phenomena: the Voëlvry movement and the Fokofpolisiekar phenomenon, both controversial in their time within the Afrikaner community. Die Antwoord's reconfiguration of identity was thereby framed as an effect of their usage of Afrikaans and their engagement with whiteness, which create valuable commentary on contemporary experiences of being white in South Africa. Their strategies of critique, being the usage of rap and hip hop, and the creation of a Zef identity, were described as making whiteness visible and discomforting, unsettling norms and racializing whiteness. Die Antwoord's performance of identity was described as racechanges, simultaneously reinforcing and challenging fixed notions and narratives of race, and portraying new ethnicities. The photographer Roger Ballen's influence on Die Antwoord's aesthetic, particularly in their abject portrayal of whiteness, was related to the notion of disordered, challenging, glaringly visible Zef identities, through which white South African identity can be reworked.

Chapter Four initiated a framework of South African conceptions of masculinity, referring to structural violence, hegemonic masculinity and the 'crisis' of masculinity which has been posited in gender discourse. These notions were discussed in order to position South African masculinities as disturbed and fragmented in the post-transitional era, with governing patriarchal and heteronormative ideals and some crisis tendencies. Ninja's performance of hegemonic masculinity was found to be heightened, perhaps on the level of a parody, and connected to notions of freakery and white trash through Harmony Korine's films and Roger Ballen's photography in order to illustrate this

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reading. Ninja's performances of heteronormative white masculinity were complicated by Yo-Landi's performances in relation to him. Additionally, his performances of the abject were shown to facilitate a re-examination of white masculine identity, as utilised by male Afrikaner performance artists Peet Pienaar and Peter van Heerden. The chapter concluded with a positioning of Ninja within the role of organic intellectual, a voice for the South African poor white trash freaks, in particular the men who feel discriminated against and subordinated. Ninja's parodic performances of hegemonic masculinities were shown to construct a counter-hegemony, resisting definition and slipping through notions of heteronormativity and dominance.

In Chapter Five, a historical account of performance art and video art in South Africa was provided. An examination of the thematic content and creative approach of the artists revealed that there are certain ideas frequently expressed in South African art, certain risks taken and a few problems faced by South African performance artists. This was shown to correlate with Die Antwoord's feats and challenges in the South African context, and also the challenges faced by all online video art works. Additionally, it was shown that Die Antwoord shares some of the thematic content and artistic approaches with other South African artists, specifically through their interrogation of identity through physical abjection. Watkin Tudor Jones' various personas were shown to represent the fragmented nature of white masculinity in South Africa, which led to the reasoning that his parodic performance is in effect self-parody. The chapter concluded with a view of the future, performed by Ninja in a performance art parody of the white monster of South Africa's apartheid past and simultaneously, a provocative portrayal of a 'futuriste' white masculinity in South Africa.

6.3 Contribution of study

The value of this study lies in its ability to improve the understanding of performances of South African white masculinities in contemporary South African visual culture. By focusing on the performance of the character Ninja, specificity is contributed to the field of scholarly research, particularly within whiteness studies, concerning Die Antwoord.

The framing of Die Antwoord as performance art not only brings a perspective which until this time has only been suggested, but also offers an approach to their work by means of which one can venture into the depths of meaning-making in their work. Within the characterisation of 'online video performance art' there is also a contribution to the research areas of the archive, risk, performance art, video art and digital liveness.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

There are a few avenues surrounding the research conducted in this study which can be identified as potential research questions for further investigation.

Because of this study's focus on the character Ninja, his partner Yo-Landi Vi$$er was only mentioned in discussion of her contribution to his performance of white masculinity. A potentially fruitful study could be conducted into Yo-Landi's performance of South African white femininities. Die Antwoord's live performances may also provide an avenue of study that is currently unexplored. There is also a potential research opportunity in exploring Watkin Tudor Jones and his various personas within the framework of whiteness and gender studies, a notion which was introduced but not explored fully by this study.

The history and practice of performance art in South Africa has not been fully investigated as of yet, and should provide a fruitful avenue of study. The same counts for video art produced by South African artists. The digital archive, while indicating all information currently existing in online digital videos featuring Die Antwoord in this study, has significance within the framework of online video sites such as Vimeo and YouTube, and would be an interesting subject for study.

One major performance of Die Antwoord which fell outside the scope of the study because it is not available in their digital video archive, is in the 2015 Neill Blomkamp film *Chappie*, in which Ninja and Yo-Landi play a version of themselves. This film would

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make an interesting study of the continuing performance of Die Antwoord within the full-length motion picture medium.

6.5 Conclusion

In this study, I argued that a reading as performance art of Die Antwoord's online digital archive, in particular through Ninja's performance of South African white masculinity, provides a greater understanding of their work as identity discourse. To investigate this reading, the term online video performance art was formulated, and Die Antwoord's online digital archive was explored through this framework. I read and interpreted notions of South African white masculinity within their work, and highlighted how this reading provides an understanding of their work as an intervention, renegotiating stagnant notions of white South African masculinities through parody and performance art.

Based on what had been discussed and demonstrated in Chapters One to Five, I then discussed the contributions of the study within the fields involved in the research. I also outlined potential research questions for further investigation concerning Die Antwoord and South African visual culture.

Within this study, I accomplished the goals I set in Chapter One: I analysed the music videos, short film *Umshini Wam*, interviews and other online videos in Die Antwoord's digital archive. These analyses were rooted in a reading of Ninja as representative of South African white masculinities. Within the conceptualised framework of online video performance art, I demonstrated how a reading of Die Antwoord's work as performance art can serve as South African identity discourse. The implication of this reading was discovered to be a transformative reconfiguration of South African white male identities. Zef, when employed as performance art on the 'interweb', can form a powerful expression of South African white masculinities, and no one does it better than Ninja.

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