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THREADS OF AMBIVALENCE:
REDRESSING SELECTED ASPECTS OF AFRIKANER FEMALE IDENTITIES
THROUGH ART-MAKING

by

LINDA RADEMAN

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Magister Technologiae (Fine Art)
in the
Department of visual culture
Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture
University of Johannesburg

November 2017

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Co-Supervisor: Vedant Nanackchand
DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is, apart from the recognised assistance and unless otherwise indicated, my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree Magister Technologiae (Fine Art), in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, University of Johannesburg. It has not been previously submitted by me to any other institution or university for examination or to obtain any other diploma or degree.

_____________________
LINDA RADEMAN

Signed on this, the ______ day of ____________________, 20________.
ABSTRACT

This research examines how Afrikaner women’s identities have been compromised by means of gendered othering, resulting in their apparent silence and lack of agency in recorded Afrikaner histories. My study is framed by a consideration of the Calvinist bias within Afrikaner nationalism during the apartheid era, and the resulting patriarchy prevalent at that time. This legacy affected the role of gender, religion, and social disparities in Afrikaner society up to and including the era of my childhood in the 1960s and 1970s. Conflicts resulting from the role and treatment of women under Afrikaner ideology are a particular concern in this study and inform my art practice.

I suggest an ‘alternative archive’ as a framework to capture subconscious, previously unrecorded aspects of Afrikaner female identities through art. I demonstrate how memory and engagement with family photographs could be viable methods of enquiry into the reconstruction of personal identity, with particular reference to the work of artists Karin Preller and Antoinette Murdoch.

My practical work engages with memory by sewing or suturing photographic and recollected traces of my childhood together. In this way I create metaphorical constructions of identities that shift between past and present as I try to come to terms with my ambivalence, a condition in which I am proud of my heritage yet reject its Calvinist, patriarchal influence on my life. I refer to multiple subjectivities as well as transformative notions of identity within a new conception of democracy and, in so doing, contend that an identity of ‘becoming’ helps to redress the hegemony of Afrikaner patriarchy imposed on generations of Afrikaner women.
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For my mother, who climbed her own Drakensberg bare-souled.
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1. INTRODUCTION

HOW we know is intimately bound with WHAT we know, where we learned it, and what we have experienced.

This study was motivated by a statement made by historian and academic Hermann Giliomee at a conference, *The Rise and Fall of Afrikaner Women*, at the Spier Estate in Stellenbosch in August 2003, where he shared his “surprising discover[y]” concerning the absence of women in history as “the biggest untold story of the Afrikaner people”.¹ Even though several female historians² have focused recently on the “compensatory history”³ and supplementary histories of Afrikaner women, women seem to be viewed in Afrikaner nationalist histories in one of two ways (Conradie in Blignaut 2013:598). They are either presented in a way that serves the ideals of Afrikaner nationalism or they exist only as a lacuna; in other words, there are certain dominant renditions of Afrikaner nationalist history where women simply do not feature. Through the suggestion of an ‘alternative archive’,⁴ I would like to redress these silences by giving (my) voice and reconstructing examples from my own experience as a tribute to some of the unrecorded and neglected personas of Afrikaner women.

1.1 Background to this study

Nelson Mandela (quoted in Faber & Van der Merwe 2003:5) expresses the view that the records and memories of individuals are of inestimable value in rebuilding the past, as the recording of history has often been steered by the convictions of those in power, while the voices of ordinary people remained mute. Mandela reminds us that it is essential to seize these stories, so that an altered history may be written. In light of this statement, my research arises from a personal need to revisit the ‘muted’ histories of my past in order to recreate my memories through ‘suturing’, both metaphorically and physically reconstructing my personal responses to patriarchy⁵ in my practical work. Thus, while I support Mandela’s view,

---

¹ The South African historian FA van Jaarsveld (1981:69) also identifies the gaps in the Afrikaner history of women but, as Pieter


³ Blignaut (2013:617) defines them as scholars who are “making up for the previous neglect of women’s lives through a thorough understanding of the face of Afrikaner women in the ‘body politic’” (see fn 2 above).

⁴ By alternative archive I mean to say that historians and formal archivists are not necessarily the only archivists, but that artists and writers, for instance, could create an alternative method of record-keeping. I will unpack this notion in Chapter 3.

⁵ Defined in Merriam–Webster online dictionary as “1: a social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line; broadly :control by men of a disproportionately large share of power 2 :a society or institution organized according to the principles or practices of patriarchy”.

---
I concentrate not on the larger struggle for democracy and equality taking place at the time, but on my gendered experiences instead.

Leon de Kock⁶ (2001:281) talks about South Africans having “sutured identities”,⁷ as opposed to being a unified nation with common national beliefs and aspirations—or as Breyten Breytenbach (in De Kock 2001:263) puts it, we are sewn together from a “glorious bastardisation”. De Kock (2001:289) explains that our South African shared collective or representations of ourselves will always carry the mark of the seam, and that “we” is a dubious classification, stitched together with deep contradictions of signification. In this study I adopt De Kock’s analogy of different sutured identities and apply it within an Afrikaner female context. We, too, are not “one, seamless open society” (De Kock 2001:283) but, rather, a site where seams and boundaries prevail. In view of such complexities of identity construction, I include Brenda Schmahmann’s (2004:24) endorsement of Rosemarie Betterton’s view that contemporary women’s opinion on autobiography echoes “unfinished business”, which hovers between the past and the present, constantly working on an identity in progress. Anne McClintock (1995:314) explains that female autobiographers frequently disclose themselves through their associations with others, typically an individual, family or community, with the result that they construct their identities through others, in contrast to “the individual heroics of the [male] self-unfolding in solitude”. This is certainly true in my experience as, while engaging with my identity through family connections and personal interactions, I was abundantly aware that everything I experienced was impacted by the influence on my family of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC).

This study is thus informed by my own experiences within a narrow-minded, Afrikaner, Dutch Reformed community in the 1950s and 1960s. My rejection of inflexible control and an authoritarian attitude has created in me a perceived sense of otherness that evokes feelings of not quite belonging, yet, paradoxically, of not being able to negate my Calvinistic roots. The ambivalence I feel towards my Afrikaner identity manifests simultaneously in my pride and odium, and it is in this fractured association that I subscribe to what Nikos Papastergiadis (1995:9) refers to as “decentred selves” and “multiple subjectivities”. I embrace his notion that concepts of purity and exclusivity within a particular racial identity may now be replaced by a sense of heterogeneity without it being a threat to the fullness of selfhood.

---

⁶ Leon de Kock is an author, scholar and academic who is currently serving as a senior research associate at the University of Johannesburg and remains professor emeritus in English at Stellenbosch University (De Kock [sa]).

⁷ De Kock (2001:281) introduces the notion of South Africans still having “sutured” identities post-1994—in other words, multiple cultural identities which parade as being “patched together” to form an overall identity. He also argues (2001:264) that although heterogeneity is expected in an international arena, it is still mostly an unresolved disparity in South Africa. He refers to the representational suture as an attempt to close the gap between the disproportionate (in his view inadequate) voices given to historic cultural diversities (in his case, academic writing in different languages), in order to realign these differences (De Kock 2001:276). I will apply this sentiment to the disproportionate voice afforded Afrikaner women prior to 1994.
1.2 Aims and objectives

My first aim is to explore aspects of personal memory and to visually investigate selected photographs as a means of responding to the negative as well as positive influences of the patriarchal Afrikaner ideology that shaped my identity during the 1960s and 1970s. Through these visual analyses, I give voice to subdued aspects of my past by mending the frayed identities and stitching up the gaps and anomalies of my childhood memories, in order to come to terms with the ambivalence and uncertainty that followed me through my early years. My research thus constitutes a therapeutic journey, by subverting the stereotypical Afrikaner female identity to catalyse my artistic response towards an emergent contemporary female identity.

My second aim is to establish the importance of an alternative archive, which proposes that artists and writers, for instance, could create an alternative method of record-keeping, with a view to exposing certain aspects of identities. Through an acknowledgement of this alternate reading, the history of previously marginalised groups or archival gaps could be redressed and transformed.

In order to realise the above aims, I apply notions of identity from constructivist theorist Stuart Hall (1994:392), who suggests that identity is “not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture … [b]ut, like everything which is historical … undergo[es] constant transformation”. In this notion of ever-fluctuating identity I include Ernestino Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s (1981:22) acknowledgement of “multiple subjectivities”, which suggest that a female individual can simultaneously participate in various social discourses (e.g., mother, wife, politician, friend, etc.), denoting a multiplicity of identities as opposed to a one-dimensional, stereotypical identity. Historic Afrikaner (female) identities, instead of being rigidly typecast, could be seen as elements from which post-apartheid identities are derived. I therefore endorse Christi van der Westhuizen’s (2013:ii) suggestion that Afrikaner (female) identity has become receptive to a variety of interpretations that draw on democratic discussions as well as on apartheid notions of gender—which during apartheid was as separate and unequal as was the notion of race. In this regard Lou-Marie Kruger (1991:28) talks about the “double-edged sword” problem of the constitution of women’s subjectivity. Kruger contends that although certain (subservient) roles were invented for Afrikaner women within nationalism, these same women were willing participants in accepting their designated roles within nationalism. I investigate the ambivalences of past as well as current Afrikaner female identities, including the contested construct of the Afrikaner volksmoeder, in order to identify the possible covert lack of acceptance of a prescribed stereotypical identity that appeared to be accepted while I was growing up. I am suggesting that the acceptance of multiple interpretations of identity could free contemporary Afrikaner female identity from “fixed meanings” and “certain closure” in the journey of identity construction, and I share the notion that identities are always in the process of

8 ‘Matriarch’, ‘mother of the people’ (approximate translation), the stereotypical Afrikaner woman.
“becoming” as well as “being” (Hall 1994:393). Studies on the historic role of the volksmoeder ideal (or Afrikaner female identity) have addressed the topic in discourses ranging across political agency (Vincent 1998), race, gender, and sexuality (Van der Westhuizen 2013), welfare (Du Toit 2003), literature (Hofmeyr 1987; Kruger 1991) class (Brink 1990; Vincent 2000, 1998), and femininity (L and S Viljoen 2005). Other than Liese van der Watt’s (1996) research on the history of the Voortrekker Monument tapestries, less information exists in the area of the visual arts. In this research I attempt to redress the ‘untold stor(ies)’ of Afrikaner women that have impacted on contemporary Afrikaner identity construction by considering an alternative archive through visual art.

This brings me to my third aim, which is to produce a body of practical work in which processes of suturing and ‘re-construction’ are used as critical metaphoric engagements with personal memory. My purpose is to question, subvert and deconstruct prevailing cultural stereotypes in an attempt to define my current, emerging, identity by re-engaging with my past. I suggest that an alternative archive is present in my artworks, which act as a framework to capture and expose subconscious, previously unrecorded aspects of my Afrikaner female identities through art. Although I cannot speak for other Afrikaner women, I do observe and refer to certain ‘silent’ traits I experienced within my family.

To achieve these aims I propose to demonstrate how memory and engaging family photographs could be viable methods of enquiry into the reconstruction of personal identity. A further objective would be to locate certain historic roles of Afrikaner female identities within the principles of Afrikaner patriarchy, and to establish what part such multidimensional ideologies played in gender, religious, and social disparities during the 1960s and 1970s.

1.3 Method

For this study I employ a qualitative research paradigm, including critical literature surveys of relevant texts and critical visual analyses of selected artworks by two contemporary South African artists, Karin Preller and Antoinette Murdoch.

This study is underpinned by a feminist approach in art, which seeks to negate the perceived blindness of female experiences within the dominance of a masculine value system (Norma Broude & Mary Garrard 1982:5), as well as redressing the historic inculcation of sewing and embroidery as merely a ‘craft’ (Parker & Pollock 1981:69) practiced by women within the confines of domesticity.

My research will be conducted from a constructivist theoretical perspective (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:1–31), that is to say, I consider the diverse meanings of individual experiences and socially and historically constructed significances as they relate to my research question. My research also incorporates constructivist identity theory, which posits that identities are non-essentialist constructs; that they are never
constant or stable, but always being re-conceptualised. Identity in a new conception of democracy
acknowledges “pluralism of subjects” (Laclau & Mouffe 1981:22), as well as being a “production, which is
never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (Hall
1990:222). I suggest that emerging Afrikaner female identities are multifaceted, unfinished, in progress,
 adapting to changing social, moral and self-actualisation needs, in contrast to the restricted, suppressed
identities afforded women under a patriarchal system. The method I employ is narrative which embraces
Arthur Bochner’s (2001:153) suggestion that in this method “…it is not the “facts” themselves that one
tries to redeem through narrative tellings. Rather, it is an articulation of the significance and meaning of
one’s experiences. It is within the frame of a story that facts gain their importance”.

In Chapter 2, I introduce the thread connecting Afrikaner nationalism, patriarchy, Calvinism, and the DRC
in the last century. I highlight certain divergent aspects of Afrikaner female identity in the late nineteenth
and early twentieth centuries, which contradict the notion that Afrikaner women of the time were mostly
homogeneous in their perceived silence.

Chapter 3 undertakes a visual analysis of selected artworks by artists Antoinette Murdoch and Karin
Preller. I have chosen artworks by these artists specifically for their subtle unhinging of the blind
acceptance of social, historic, gender, and religious structures prevalent in Afrikaner culture. Preller’s
representations of family photographs and her interrogation of her Afrikaner childhood is of relevance to
my engagement, through photographs, with memory and its reconstruction. In the artworks selected for
discussion, Murdoch focuses on the underlying need for freedom of personal expression and rejects cultural
and gendered expectations regarding her behaviour and appearance. Of specific interest are the pieces in
which she constructs ‘clothing’ using ‘textiles’ made from non-traditional materials (tape measures, facial
tissues)—materials that are used in her art-making to confront the issue of patriarchal dominance. Within
this context, the episodic\(^8\) nature of Murdoch’s, Preller’s and my work will be investigated for the meaning
that each re-narration creates with a view to providing a synergistic context for my research and art
production. I investigate how autobiographical memory can be incorporated through systems of suturing as
a curative approach, by mending existing frayed identities and stitching the gaps and anomalies, in order to
understand how these concepts can be incorporated into my art practice. Chapter 3 also investigates the
presence in the artworks of Preller and Murdoch of the proposed ‘alternative archival’ as a strategy towards
filling the gaps in the historiography of Afrikaner record-keeping.

\(^8\) “The memory of events, times, places, associated emotions and other conception-based knowledge in relation to an experience”
(UCSF Memory and aging center [sa]). Episodic memory alludes to the memory of an incident or “episode”. These kinds of
memories permit us to travel back in our minds in time to an incident from the recent or remote past. Episodic memories include
various specifics about these events, such as what happened, and when and where it happened.
Chapter 4 addresses the ‘threads of ambivalence’ present in my artworks. From my standpoint as a feminist and a South African, I examine/investigate the value/significance of suturing as a way of confronting the negative influence of patriarchy that prevailed in the past/that I experienced during my youth, and I salute and celebrate ordinary Afrikaner women, overlooked in a historiography that is predominantly male. I conclude by arguing that artworks can ‘speak’ to redress archival lacunae, to reveal the “untold stories” of ordinary women in our history, thereby liberating Afrikaner female identities as a foundation for future contemporary discourse.
2. THE IMPACT OF AFRIKANER NATIONALISM, PATRIARCHY, CALVINISM, AND THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH

2.1 Introduction

The ideology of Afrikaner nationalism is embedded in a common history, religion and language, which made it a unifying force from the beginning of the twentieth century until the abolishment of apartheid in 1994. This chapter comprises a brief discussion of the doctrine of Afrikaner Christian nationalism during the twentieth century. Pursuant to the political dogma are its prevailing patriarchal ideologies and the role of the DRC’s Calvinist underpinning in society, which reinforced the suppression of Afrikaner women. I begin this chapter with a short overview of the social and political development of Afrikaner nationalism to explain the hegemony of patriarchy under this system. I next consider the role of Afrikaner women and the complexities of female identities within this historical construct, which I argue can be identified as ambivalent. I investigate how Afrikaner women appropriated or rejected the myth of the volksmoeder and how they, in my view, in spite of heroic endeavours ultimately surrendered to a patriarchal system which did not support them socially, politically, educationally or financially. In the conclusion to this chapter I respond personally to this historical information in so far as the permeation of a restrictive patriarchy and the female invisibility that characterised society during my childhood resulted in a feminist response present in my body of artworks.

2.2 Afrikaner nationalism and its religious underpinning

Nationality subsumes or expels differences to present itself as uniform. (Hall 2000a:22).

This section considers Stuart Hall’s (1992:6) premise that heritage is always presented by the force and authority of those “whose versions matter”. I acknowledge (but reject) a past reality in South African history that derives from a male-dominated voice, which has recorded its own nationalist interest of “divine sanction, manifest destiny, cultural brotherhood and racial distinction, patriarchal power, entitlement to the lands, and a single, unifying language” (McClintock 1991:106).2

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1 Here I follow Afrikaans author and academic Alette Delport’s (2005:221) notion of her identity as ambivalent: “One part does indeed revere my honourable Afrikaner roots, whilst the other wishes to reject any identification with the smug, prideful and self-centred Afrikaners of the Apartheid era.” I also refer to Afrikaans writer and poet Antjie Krog’s dichotomous point of view, evinced in her dedication in the front of her book, Country of My Skull (2002:iii), which is an account of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission: “[F]or every victim who had an Afrikaner surname on her lips.” As a white Afrikaner woman, Krog responds to the interconnectedness between victim and perpetrator and the nation to which she (we) belong(s).

2 I acknowledge that the history that unfolds and forms the backdrop to this study is from the perspective of the colonising voice and the ‘assumed authority’ of the system I was brought up in, the same system I now reject.
I begin my discussion by explaining how a unified sense of Afrikaner identity appears to have developed in the aftermath of the Boer defeat in the Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902. This aspect is important to my study, as the resulting social, economic, moral and political circumstances appear to have contributed towards the subordinate position which defined Afrikaner women throughout the twentieth century. The scorched earth tactic followed by the British forces in the war laid farms to waste and destroyed the livelihood of the rural population, hastening the urbanisation which had already started when war broke out. A large section of the newly impoverished Afrikaner people migrated to towns, where they joined the ranks of unskilled urban labour. The standard of living of many Afrikaans-speaking whites was noticeably lower than that of their English-speaking counterparts, and was exacerbated by the reality that in some cases they had to compete with black people for jobs as unskilled labourers (O’Meara in Vestergaard 2001:21). Having been divested of their identity as farmers and landowners, they needed now to find emotional, political and financial unity, thereby to rebuild their sense of identity and pride. Anne McClintock (1991:106) and Saul Dubow (1992:210) propose that the aspiring urbanised Afrikaner middle-class of shopkeepers, clerks, teachers, intellectuals and petit bourgeoisie with their limited prospects, in an effort to elevate their social standing, began to identify themselves as the forefront of a new Afrikanerdom. Their sense of solidarity in difficult circumstances provided a major stimulus for the expansion of Afrikaner nationalism as a campaign of the masses, and themselves as the chosen ambassadors of the national volk.

The Union of South Africa came into being on 31 May 1910, under the (Union of) South Africa Act, 1909, which was passed into law in September 1909 by the British parliament at Westminster. In terms of this Act, the four in southern Africa were combined to become the four provinces of a brand new unitary state. The new entity was created as a Dominion of the British Empire. As such it was governed under a form of constitutional monarchy, with the Crown represented in South Africa by the Governor-General, while effective power was exercised by the Executive Council, headed by the Prime Minister. Louis Botha, the former Boer general and Anglo-Boer War hero, was the first prime minister of the Union of South Africa.

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3 In my opinion, the Afrikaner identity prevalent from the time of the Voortrekkers to the South African War was characterised by resourcefulness, perseverance, and an all-encompassing belief in the rectitude of their actions and the support of the Almighty. Similar attitudes were widespread during my formative years.

4 There is no exact equivalent for ‘volk’ in English and the word is normally translated as ‘people’ or ‘nation’. O’Meara (1983:xv) states that not only does it imply both these meanings, but, as used in the “nationalist dictionary”, the term came to signify both ethnicity and organic unity not conveyed in either of the English terms.

5 The South Africa Act, 1909, brought together the Cape Colony (a colony of Britain since 1814, and twice occupied by her before that); Natal Colony (proclaimed a British colony in 1843); the Orange River Colony (the former Boer republic, the Orange Free State, occupied in 1900 and annexed in 1902); and the Transvaal Colony (formerly the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek, occupied in 1900 and annexed in 1902). The Act entrenched the Cape’s qualified franchise in that province but made “Native affairs” a matter for the national government, effectively handing the white minority power over Native (African), Asiatic (mostly Indian) and “Coloured and other mixed races” (Union of South Africa 1910 [sa]).
Louis Botha was a founder member of the political party, *Het Volk*, in the Transvaal in 1904. As a party, *Het Volk* aimed for self-government, conciliation, and the acceptance of those who had surrendered or had served with the British during the war. In 1906 the Transvaal was granted self-government. Elections (all-male, all-white) were held there the following year and Botha became prime minister of the Transvaal Colony when his party won. When the Union of South Africa was established in 1910, he was asked by the Governor-General, the Viscount Gladstone, to form a government, and he was appointed its first prime minister. Following the establishment of the Union, four parties—*Het Volk* (Transvaal), the *Afrikaner Bond* and the South African Party (Cape) and the *Orangia Unie* (Orange Free State)—merged to form the pan-Union South African Party (SAP). The SAP promoted conciliation; its aims were to unify Afrikaners and people of British descent into one nation, and to develop the Union as part of the British Empire (South African Party (SAP) 2011).

Genl JBM Hertzog, having entered politics as organiser of the *Orangia Unie* in 1906, was appointed minister of Justice when the Union of South Africa was established. Despite being a member of the Union government, he was vehemently nationalistic and opposed Botha’s policies of national unity (Union of South Africa 1910 [sa]). Hertzog advocated the separate but parallel cultural development of English- and Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans, and insisted on the equality of the two official languages, English and Dutch. He came into increasing conflict with Botha and Smuts over his views, which resulted in his secession from the SAP and formation of the National Party (NP) in 1914. The main aim of the NP was to obtain political freedom from Britain. Hertzog’s policies were aligned towards a Christian, Afrikaner nationalism, and his followers were Afrikaans-speaking white people (National Party (NP)).

The outbreak of World War I (1914–1918) caused the SAP reconciliation to disintegrate and showed how deep the divisions were between English and Afrikaans-speakers, loyalists and nationalists. The decision of the Union government to support Britain in the war by sending a force to German South-West Africa to neutralise local radio stations there, triggered open rebellion among the more militant Afrikaner nationalists. The rebellion was successfully quelled but “it stimulated Afrikaner nationalism [and] republicanism, and led to a rightward swing [in] white South African politics” (Wessels 2015); the rise in popularity of the National Party and its ascendancy in the 1924 general elections can, to some extent, be attributed to the rebellion.

The NP first came to power in a coalition with the Labour Party (LP) in 1924, with Hertzog as prime minister (Labour Party (LP) [sa]). Melvin Goldberg (1985:126) suggests that this alliance created a mutual understanding (in opposition to the power wielded by capitalist mine owners and former Unionists), which resulted in the laying down of principles for the later mobilisation of Afrikaners. Goldberg (1985:126)

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6 Afrikaans was recognised as an official language only in 1925. In s. 1 of the Official Languages of the Union Act, No. 8 of 1925, Dutch was “declared to include Afrikaans”.

explains that when the NP/LP introduced what they termed the ‘civilised labour policy’, for example, they favoured jobs for the unemployed and for the unskilled Afrikaner males on the railways and in the private sector. (No jobs were generally reserved for Afrikaner females.) Secondly, by imposing bilingualism in the civil service, the way was paved for the preference of Afrikaans as the national language in the years to come.

Another factor influencing the patriarchal dominance emerging in the nationalist movement in the first half of the twentieth century was the founding in 1918 in Johannesburg of the Broederbond. In 1921, this society became a covert movement, dedicated to the identity crisis in which the newly urbanised Afrikaners found themselves. Only white Afrikaner males, twenty-five years and older, who endorsed the Protestant faith, and who accepted South Africa as the only fatherland, were eligible for membership. McClintock (1993:68) explains how this tiny white brotherhood rapidly flourished into a secret, countrywide “mafia” that came to exert enormous power over all aspects of nationalist policy. The gender bias of the society is accurately contained in its name: the ‘fraternal fellowship’.

In 1934 Hertzog merged the NP with Smuts’s SAP, to form the United Party (UP). A faction of the NP who were against the fusion broke away to form the Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party (GNP, Purified National Party) under the leadership of DF Malan, the leader of the NP in the Cape. Opposition to South Africa’s participation in the Second World War caused a split in the UP, and Hertzog returned to the NP in 1940, which then was named the Herenigde Nasionale Party (HNP, Reunited National Party), with Hertzog as leader and Malan as his deputy. The Afrikaner Broederbond threw its weight behind the HNP and its members dominated the party. The HNP went on to win the election in 1948 in coalition with NC Havenga’s Afrikaner Party, with which it amalgamated in 1951, to become known once again as the National Party (National Party (NP) 2011).

Subsequently, Afrikaner nationalism, as supported by the Broederbond, would be at one with white male interests, white male aspirations and white male politics. Furthermore, the Broederbond exercised a significant influence on schools and parent committees, agricultural bodies, church councils, hospital boards and committees of the National Party. Every South African prime minister during the apartheid era came from the ranks of this organisation, and all but two of the 1980 South African Cabinet were Broeders (Pirie, GH, Rogerson, CM & Beavon, KSO 1980:97). Effectively, the national Afrikaner identity that grew

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7 The Afrikaner Broederbond was created “to further Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa—to develop an Afrikaner economy, to maintain Afrikaner culture, and to obtain control of the South African government” (Levy 2011).

8 In 1993 the name was changed to Afrikanerbond and it was decided to end the policy of secrecy and to admit women and other races as members (Levy 2011).
out of such historical and cultural contexts was based on principles of Calvinism⁹ and systems of patriarchal authority, introduced to South Africa with the arrival of the Dutch East India Company from 1652 on, and of the French Huguenots¹⁰ in 1688.

In the aftermath of the South African War until his death in 1943, Gustav Preller the newspaper and magazine editor, author, scriptwriter and literary critic was part of the male Afrikaner intelligentsia as well as the central organiser of the Second Language Movement which formalised modern-day Afrikaans. Combining all these endeavors, his uppermost aim was the popularisation of history (Hofmeyr 1988:522). The literary writer PJ Nienaber (in Terblanche 2016) suggests that Preller was the first Afrikaans historian. In her essay *Popularising history: the case of Gustav Preller* (1988:521-535), Isabel Hofmeyr proposes Preller as hugely responsible for the cultural fabrication of nationalism through his written and specifically visual versions of how he portrayed the past to make popular sense and memorability thereof. An example here would be his making of the film *De Voortrekkers* in 1916, which was a film about his historical reconstruction of the Great Trek of 1836. After making the film, he “adopted magic-lantern slides” (*ibid* 1988:525) as a permanent feature of the many public lectures he gave. As he was appointed state historian from 1936-1943 (Hofmeyr 1988:525), one can understand how for approximately the next seven decades the stored identity of Afrikanerdom was one of extreme Calvinist nationalism (as taught in the National Christian Education system to be discussed in this chapter in footnote 14).

Dubow (1992:210) is of the opinion that “[d]eeply encoded patterns of paternalism and prejudice are an essential part of the Afrikaner nationalist tradition”.¹¹ This Calvinist doctrine suggests that all males, including husbands, fathers, the clergy, represent God on earth (Vestergaard 2001:20). One of the main precepts of Calvinism is that God holds people answerable for things over which they have no control, ascribing guilt to the innocent through the actions of Adam and Eve, and believing that mankind is ‘born into sin’.¹² Robert Ross (1987:203) proposes a distinction “between the elect and the damned, the order of grace and the order of nature”, which was introduced by Calvinist conceptions of man and his place in the

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⁹ Calvinism, also known as reformed theology, is a branch of Protestantism that was developed by John Calvin (1509–1564), a French theologian who believed that God, by His sovereign grace, predestines people into salvation; that Jesus died only for those predestined; and that it is impossible for those who are redeemed to lose their salvation (Slick [sa]).

¹⁰ The Huguenots were French Protestants who followed the Reformed tradition. (The word Huguenot is of uncertain origin.) Louis XIV of France issued the Edict of Fontainbleau in 1685, revoking the Edict of Nantes; this ended the recognition of Protestantism in France, forcing the Huguenots to convert to Catholicism or flee. Unknown numbers of Huguenots fled to surrounding Protestant countries. A small number of Huguenot refugees, some 178 families, arrived at the Cape between 1688 and 1691 (Viljoen [sa]).

¹¹ Patriarchy was, in fact, the norm for both Afrikaner and British cultures during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, so was therefore inherent in the development of Afrikaner nationalism.

¹² For example, the King James Bible states in Ps. 51:5: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” In the response to question 60 of the Heidelberg Catechism (a Protestant confessional document in the form of one hundred and twenty-nine questions and answers that was published in 1563) man is stated as being “continually inclined to evil” (Hexham 1980:199).
order of the cosmos. Ross (1987:203) continues that the “elect” supposedly has a social position of responsibility to implement the will of God in the world, a view which culminated in the Afrikaners’ belief that they, as a people, were placed by God at the southern tip of Africa to fulfil His purpose. It is this self-elected importance that bolstered the Calvinist, Dutch Reformed Church’s role in the governing of the land, particularly after 1948, when the National Party came into power with Christian Nationalist Education system (the system under which I was schooled) as its adopted stance.

Charles Bloomberg (1990:1) proposes that one of the ideas of Christian nationalism was the notion of the “chosen-people-with-a-sacred-mission” and that, in essence, Christian nationalism is a theological defence of Afrikaner nationalism and of Afrikaner hegemony in politics. According to Christian nationalist beliefs, God created the Afrikaner nation for a special mission, and their history is predetermined as opposed to being fortuitous (Bloomberg 1990:26). Christian nationalist doctrine also took the view that God was responsible for the Boer victories, for example their victory over the Zulu warriors in the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838, which led Afrikaners to believe they were empowered to deploy authority over the ‘heathen’ (Bloomberg 1990:27). To support this school of thinking, the Federal Council of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) stated in 1935 that:

The Church is deeply convinced of the fact that God, in His wise counsel, so ordained it that the first European inhabitants of this southern corner of darkest Africa should be men and women of firm religious convictions, so that they and their posterity could become bearers of the light of the Gospel to the heathen races of this continent, and therefore considers it the special privilege and responsibility of the DRC in particular to proclaim the Gospel to the heathen of this country (Bloomberg 1990:27).

If Christian nationalism, as Bloomberg suggests, is in essence a theological defence of Afrikaner nationalism and of Afrikaner hegemony in politics, one can deduce the Christian nationalist system corroborated the subjugation of Afrikaner women’s opinions politically, socially and educationally.

The DRC mostly supported the Kuyperian belief system, which has ramifications for its treatment of women and women’s expectations, because Abraham Kuyper pronounced the status of women inferior and

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13 This notion is derived from Eph. 1:4, 5, 11, where it is argued that certain individuals are predestined and others not and that if one is not one of those predestined, one is eternally damned.

14 The Christian National Education system originated in 1902 when Afrikaners rejected the secular state-controlled schools of State Commissioner, Sir Alfred Milner, and started their own schools. CNE was designed to support the apartheid system by schooling children to become passive citizens who would accept authority unquestioningly (Van Eeden & Vermeulen 2005:181, 185).

15 Referring to Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), conservative Dutch statesman, historian, theologian, philosopher, writer and professor–educator, who considered women inherently inferior to men. According to him, feminism was “nothing but an attempt to retard, falsify, and bastardize” a creature given, a “fixed ordinance” of God. The “chief cause of feminism,” Kuyper claimed, was that “so many men remained unmarried” (Bratt 2013:363).
apolitical. He developed an outline of what he called the ‘natural woman’ from the Bible. This woman was politically uneducated since “her strength naturally lay in her lower body”, while God bestowed His grace of mental capabilities on man (Landman 2005:sp). Kuyper was of the opinion that “it was unnatural for women to vote, since it was ordained in the Bible that the head of the family (‘gesinshoofd’) should vote on behalf of the whole family” (Landman 2005:sp). Marijke du Toit (2003:168) remarks how very few opportunities wives had in this Calvinistic society in the years between 1904 and 1924 to make their own decisions about financial and property issues. Roman–Dutch matrimonial law awarded husbands matrimonial power, which gave them “guardianship” over their wives, in terms of which they could deal with assets from joint estates as they pleased (Du Toit 2003:168). These laws might have been amended gradually towards the mid-twentieth century, yet even as late as the 1970s the DRC’s marriage vows still expected women to solemnly swear to love, obey, and serve their men and to promise never to leave them.

If religion, according to Emmanuel Kant (1724–1804) (in Kinghorn 1994:395) is the form of a declaration of the moral logic and sensibility of human activities, it would seem that the autocratic outlook of the Calvinists obscured a certain logic and sensibility, and rather steered towards a sense of fundamentalism. This fundamentalism of the DRC became apparent in 1935 when the first volume of the seminal Afrikaans work, Koers in die Krisis 16 was published in Stellenbosch. This book prescribed what the ideal Calvinist society should be like, and it became a blueprint for the future, which included racial segregation and Christian National Education (Hexham 1980:196). CN Venter, author of the Afrikaans journal Woord en Daad of 2 February 1961, accentuated the importance of Calvinism and stated that the Dutch Reformed Church was the backbone of Afrikanerdom (Hexham 1980:197).

Isabel Hofmeyr (1987:95) suggests that there never was an “organic Afrikaner identity rumbling through South African history mysteriously uniting all Afrikaners into a monolithic volk”. However, Benedict Anderson’s (1991:5) concept of nations as “imagined communities” where every member “lives the image of their communion” was a true reality imagined by those in power during my formative years. In this instance Ernst Gellner (1964:169) emphasises the same sentiment as Anderson that “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist”. I accept this premise of a nationalist identity under patriarchy and agree with Anderson’s construct of an “imagined” Afrikaner community. I therefore highlight the following statement by Bloomberg (1990:18): “In practice, critics argue, Christian-Nationalism commits the ultimate abomination of idolatry by making a fetish of the nation.” It is the ambivalent position of the Afrikaner women within this “fetish” that forms the core of my research and which is introduced, in historical terms, in the next section.

16 Koers, meaning ‘direction’, was the influential magazine and theoretical mouthpiece of the Federation of Calvinist Student Associations (Dubow 1992:211).
2.3 **Volksmoeders and their role in Afrikaner nationalism**

This section serves to locate the diverse historic roles of Afrikaner female identities within the principles of Afrikaner patriarchy and to establish what legacy such multidimensional ideologies played in gender, religion, and social disparities during the 1960s and 1970s. I include here a consideration of the complexity of certain ambivalent female identities in the last 100 years of South African history. For example: Was the stereotypical *volksmoeder* merely a symbol of piety and obedience or was she wittingly or unwittingly voicing her own opinion in defining Afrikaner nationalism? I include Laclau and Mouffe’s (1981:22) acknowledgement of “multiple subjectivities”, where the female individual identifies herself as the participant of various discourses, which by implication denotes a complex conglomerate of identities as opposed to one stereotypical, silent one. However, I suggest that in spite of heroic feminist deeds performed in an intrepid spirit, the historic Afrikaner female identity ultimately remains mostly absent on a personal level as well as from the pages of an Afrikaner history, as a result of the patriarchal master narrative present during the nineteenth century. I investigate how Afrikaner women appropriated or rejected the myth of the *volksmoeder* and how they, in my view, ultimately buckled under a patriarchal system which did not support them socially, politically, educationally or financially. My aim here is to add my voice to those women already addressing the perceived silence of female Afrikaner identity, and in the process to redress my own mute circumstances of the 1960s and 1970s under male domination. By doing this I aim to demonstrate that heritage can also be presented by a female version of histories that ‘matter’.

2.4 **“Mum’s the word”** (McClintock 1991:109)

Afrikaner pride was at an extremely low point after the South African War (as explained above) and in the attempt to unify as a nation and develop a new opposing culture, the *volksmoeder* was created as a national female figurehead. She was created in the image of the heroic Voortrekker women**17** and their resistance to British domination. She was a metaphoric symbol of purity, a sacrificial lamb, and was an archetype widely accepted as the recipient of a variety of women’s restricted social roles, such as mother of the children and wife to the husband. She was seen as personifying desirable ‘natural’ womanly attributes, specifically the mothering of her family, her nation and her culture. This religious and theological ascribing of natural attributes to women can be found in the work of author, religious minister and loyal Calvinist, Willem Postma (Kruger 1991:200), who advocated that their mothering role was most significant for women as their inherent ability to nurture had been bestowed upon them by God, whereas Elsabe Brink (1990:291) and Louise Vincent (2000:61) believe that these roles were created specifically for women by men. After

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17 After the annexation of the Natal Republic by the British in 1842, Susanna Smit, wife of the preacher Erasmus Smit and sister of the Voortrekker leader Gert Maritz, vowed that the women would walk back over the Drakensberg barefoot rather than live under British rule (Van Heerden 1989:257; Kaalvoetvrou … [sa]).
1902 Afrikaner wives and mothers were elevated as holy in their adversity, and respected for their victimisation, and through this process became a symbol of hope to the defeated nation.

The *volksmoeder* is identified by the conventional, conforming and submissive being who puts the needs of her family and country before her own needs. Christina Landman (2005:148, 151) refers to the way men perceived women as inferior beings on the political and economic front, which Landman believes has become a ‘truth’ ingrained as a stereotype of the Afrikaner women’s identity. As the symbol of idealised femininity and as the mother of the nation, the *volksmoeder* was eternally branded in 1919 as the logo of the first successful and erudite Afrikaans women’s magazine *Die Boervrou*, which was inspired by a poem by Jan Celliers: “Ek sien haar win, want haar naam is—Vrou en Moeder”18 (Brink 2008:7). Postma and historian Eric Stockenstrom published books 19 in 1918 on what the role of the Afrikaner woman should be within her culture and religion. It could be argued that this construction of womanhood was deliberate propaganda, as it was during the same decade that the National Party and the Broederbond were founded and the *Vrouemonument* (National Women’s Monument, discussed below) was erected. I agree with Brink (1990:291) who explains that men created the attributes and iconic status of the *volksmoeder*, whereas women ultimately passively accepted their expected role.

In contrast to the above, Emily Hobhouse (in Brits 2016:188) states that she was aware, as a result of her exposure to the fate of Afrikaner women during the Boer War, that women had little control over their own lives, and that they were often victims of decisions and actions of men who had no intention of relinquishing their position of power—but also [my emphasis] that women had the will and the strength to change their circumstances.

Thus, in spite of the submissive role of the volksmoeder explained above, there seems to have been an active attempt at female identity construction by the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging (ACVV, Afrikaans Christian Women’s Society). Although this group supported the idealised tenet of motherhood introduced in the DRC magazines during the late nineteenth century which unified religion and identity, the women’s society they formed was entirely separate from the DRC’s all-male ranking. Between 1904 and 1920, the ACVV established itself as an independent organisation, in which its female members did not refer only to the notion of *volk* but attempted a certain autonomy in the decision-making processes about their own families. For example, the ACVV’s regular article in *De Goeie Hoop* in 1910 reflected public discussions, which included women, about children’s education. By 1910, such public opinions about education started replacing the letters previously published about “women’s moral duty in purely religious terms” (Du Toit 2003:164).

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18 “I see her triumph, because her name is—woman/wife and mother” (my translation).

An example of their impact is seen in an incident referred to by Du Toit (2003:166), who describes an occasion in 1908 when the ACVV leaders invited members of the DRC synod and their wives to join them for an evening of talks on the role of women. The newspaper *De Zuid-Afrikaan* (12 December 1908) responded negatively to the invitation, opining that female members should not speak in public. Instead, church ministers were to converse on their behalf. In an essay in the same publication by the *Christelijke Jongelings Vereniging* (Christian Young Men’s Society) of Worcester in the Cape Colony (in Du Toit 2003:166), the writer asked whether women should be allowed to speak in public, and answered “met nadruk neen en nogmaals neen” (emphatically no and no yet again). Such views were reinforced in the church, where biblical prescriptions such as *vaderlijke heerschappij* (fatherly authority) were promoted, linking the divine with men. For women, according to *Het Gereformeerde Maandblad*, December 1907 (in Du Toit 2003:166), worshipping God entailed obedience to men, and that included silence in public. Du Toit points out that while ACVV members mainly adhered to their traditional roles, they did interrogate their expected roles of silence, and outspokenly delivered their “moral guardianship in the public spaces of newspapers and cultural magazines”. Brink (1990:291), on the other hand, refers to the women of the ACVV and all submissive women as “man-made”, as she believes that it was men who created and sustained the concept of the *volksmoeder* through which these middle-class women could be controlled “by giving them a well-defined but circumscribed position in society” (1990:273). Her “striking find” was “the near total absence of female voices … in the construction of the ideal of Afrikaner women” (Brink 1990:281). Although I commend the public attempts of the ACVV women to begin interrogating submissive aspects of the idealised *volksmoeder*, they do not seem to have pushed the parameters on any other level.

Another example of an undertaking that didn’t comply with the patriarchal system was the formation, in 1911, of The Women’s Enfranchisement Association of the Union (WEAU) to work towards gaining the vote for women. Vincent (1998:1, 9) argues that, because of this organisation, Afrikaner women had a significant presence in the South African Legislative Assembly. She believes that leading Afrikaner women canvassed “vociferously for their own enfranchisement” (1998:9) and, in so doing, provoked adverse reaction regarding the ‘proper’ role of women in the establishment during the 1920s. *Volksmoeders* were not only mothers of their home and families, they were also mothers of their nation, Vincent believes, and therefore ideally positioned to boost their role as Afrikaner nationalist suffragists. In 1930, the Hertzog election committee granted the vote to white women on condition that they supported his re-election. The women of the WEAU fought for the vote to be awarded to them “on the same terms as men” (Vincent 1998:2). However, their enfranchisement on the same terms as men would have led to an increased number of black voters, in the Cape, if all women were included. By enfranchising white women only, “the total percentage of black voters [was reduced] to eleven percent of voters at the Cape and just under five percent nationally” (Vincent 1998:2). Cherryl Walker (1990:8) feels that Afrikaner women were reluctant to
address “the principle of male hegemony” as a result of the potential coloured and native majority, should they have been afforded their vote. She believes they silently observed while “Hertzog now emerged as the central figure in the campaign”. The irony is that by pursing and accepting their own enfranchisement, they merely perpetuated the male dominant, racially divisive structures. However, once their vote was obtained and during this time of their apparent iconic achievement, they allowed their political structures to dissipate and somehow amalgamate with the National Party. This act of surrender signified the end of Afrikaner women as active political forces, thereby seemingly selling out to the nationalist regime. As a result of their perceived heroic deeds for political gain, Gaitskell and Unterhalter (1989:60) coin these volksmoeders “cultural hustlers” and “women themselves as silent as in their stereotypical portrayal.”

An earlier example of Afrikaner women exhibiting action rather than the prescribed passivity occurred after the 1914 Rebellion, when some 3000 women, including 600 delegates from all over the country, marched to the Union Buildings on 4 August 1915 to request the release of the former Boer general and Anglo–Boer War hero CR de Wet and 118 men who had received jail sentences for taking part in the Rebellion (Afrikaner women march … [sa]; 1914-Rebellie … 2014). Sandra Scott Swart (2007:42) identifies this early volksmoeder as a rebel who, by instigating and participating in an all-women demonstration, questioned the classification of ‘citizen’ as being only white, male and middle-class. Postma (in Brink 1990:280) misconstrued the women’s initiative by saying that “love called, and love obeyed”; in his view the women did not argue or stop to consider the consequences or calculate the cost or trouble of their actions, and they were motivated irrationally, solely, by love. Yet, even though it was mainly older, powerful matriarchs (mostly the wives of generals) who took part in the mass Boer women’s march of 1915, and lower class or working women were not represented, they did play a part in advancing the nationalist cause for all Afrikaner men and women. Scott Swart (2007:55) says of them:

their positions remained framed by their role as women rather than their positions as citizens … through the idioms of both femininity and republic freedom, simultaneously insisting on and performing citizenship … [they] began to self-consciously help to define [their] nation.

Their female act of rebellion signifies their not-so-silent participation in support of national politics. However, the fact that this act was undertaken to free a man from political internment, and not themselves from their own patriarchal stronghold, ultimately underscores the notion of the volksmoeder as someone who sacrificially mothers and supports “her family, her nation and her culture”. Thus far the women’s movements may be commended for speaking in public (despite biblical injunctions to the contrary) and for

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20 Gaitskell and Unterhalter (1989:62) are of the opinion that the concept of motherhood was one of adjustment, relative to the disparate stages of nationalism. In their view, women were seen as silent victims after the Anglo–Boer War, but between the two world wars they were “perceived as far more active and mobilising. The home was focused on as women’s appropriate arena for fostering Afrikaner national identity through their child-rearing and domestic responsibilities” (ibid 1989:62).
their efforts in trying to obtain the vote. Still, their efforts were mostly unsustained, as they continued to be as powerless to make independent decisions about their own personal circumstances as they had always been.

As a gender symbol the *Vrouemonument* (National Women’s Monument) is particularly equivocal. The monument was erected in Bloemfontein in 1913 and symbolises the graves of 26 370 women and children who died in the British concentration camps during the Anglo-Boer War. It is an obelisk about 36 m high, built of sandstone; raised on a plinth against the obelisk are two bronze figures of women, one with a dying child on her lap; to the left and right are plaques in bas relief, the whole being enclosed in low semicircular walls on either side (Vrouemonument … [sa]). Cloete (1992:50) states that this monumental “phallic symbol” unintentionally became a symbol of outright male success. Hexham (in Brink 1990:279) suggests that even the date chosen for the celebration of the Afrikaner women commemorated by the *Vrouemonument* served a blatant political purpose, as the opening of the monument took place on 16 December 1913, the Day of the Covenant. McClintock (1993:72) proposes that the *Vrouemonument* immortalised Afrikaner womanhood as neither an activist nor political statement, but as “suffering and self-sacrificial” in its message. By portraying the Afrikaner nation symbolically as a weeping woman, McClintock (1993:72) proposes that the male embarrassment of military defeat could be overlooked, and the memory of women’s essential efforts during the war was “washed away in depictions of feminine tears and material loss”, thus making the women bear the loss rather than the men. Brink (1990:290) believes that the suffers of Boer women in the concentration camps provided further opportunity to intensify their heroic actions for political ends, yet, ironically, Marion Arnold (1996:34) suggests that the elevation of the sculpted women on a high base (a device typical of ‘monumentalising’) actually reduces the power of the figures to convey suffering. Because the sculpted figures have been placed on a pedestal, there is no

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21 The known number of mortalities in 1913. With more sources available for research, a figure of 34 051 was put forward in 2013 (Nasionale Vrouemonument … [sa]).

22 Termed ‘refugee camps’ by the British, the first camps were established in September 1900 to accommodate families of neutrals or those who had voluntarily surrendered. However, before the end of the year the system of camps was extended as a component of the British ‘scorched earth’ policy, which had as its objective to cut off food and support to Boer combatants. As many as 40 towns were razed and 30 000 farms destroyed; crops were burnt and livestock was killed, maimed or driven off. The people living on the farms, white as well as black, were forcibly removed to the camps. There were eventually some 46 camps for whites and 66 for black people. Poor administration in the camps, especially initially, led to problems such as insufficient rations, inadequate shelter, contaminated water, and overcrowding; diseases, including pneumonia, measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria, typhoid, and dysentery, broke out, resulting in high mortality, particularly among children. Exact figures cannot be given because camp records were deficient (or, in the case of blacks, virtually non-existent) but the most conservative estimates put the figures at over 26 000 Boer women and children and upwards of 14 000 black people (Second Anglo-Boer … [sa]).

23 The Day of the Covenant traces its origin to the Battle of Blood River, fought on 16 December 1838 between a large number of Zulu warriors led by Dingane’s generals, Dambuza and Ndlela, and a small wagon commando of Trekkers, led by Andries Pretorius. Before the battle the Trekkers prayed for God’s help, promising to commemorate the day as a day of thanksgiving if they succeeded. The Zulu force was repelled, with many dead, and the Day of the Covenant became a religious holiday in South Africa until 1994, when it was renamed the Day of Reconciliation (December 16, the reflection of … [sa]). Because this day specifically commemorated a male battle, it undermined the recognition of women.
intimate, direct connection at eye level between the viewer and the raised figures, only a sense of detachment engendered by having to look up.

It is ironic indeed that no women at all took part in the committee for a women’s monument. JJ Oberholster’s *Die Nasionale Vrouemonument* in 1961 lists the names of the 51 council members—all male, as Cloete (1992:49) comments—who served on the various committees or were involved in some way in the unveiling ceremonies. Emily Hobhouse was invited to speak at the unveiling but fell ill while travelling to attend the ceremony, and her inaugural speech in support and acknowledgment of Afrikaner women was delivered instead by Charles Fichardt.24 Cloete (1992:49) quotes from a passage towards the end of the speech:

They (the Boer women) have shown the world that never again can it be said that woman deserves no rights as citizen because she takes no part in war. This Statue stands as a denial of that assertion. Women in equal numbers to the men earned the right … [to citizenship].

Hobhouse’s speech, which appears, in retrospect, to provide a lone voice advocating recognition and future autonomy for women,25 was ironically omitted by Nicolaas van der Merwe from his book, *Die Nasionale Vrouemonument*, published circa 1956.26 Her sentiments were likewise ignored in Oberholster’s commemorative booklet—Oberholster (in Cloete 1992:51) concluding that “upon completion of the Memorial it was felt that it would really be complete only once a statesman, a warrior and a man of God lay buried there”.

In spite of it professedly being a monument revering the courage of women and mothers, three men are buried in the enclosure of the National Women’s Monument. They are Martinus Theunis Steyn (d. 1916, President of the Orange Free State from 1896 to 1902); Christiaan Rudolf de Wet (d. 1922, Boer general, hero and ‘bittereinder’ in the Anglo–Boer War, and a rebel leader in 1914); and John Daniel Kestell (d. 1941, prominent DRC minister, nationalist and author, and the driving force behind the Helpmekaar-

24 Charles Gustav Fichardt (1870–1923), cricketer, businessman, and politician, a founder member of the National Party in 1912 and of SANLAM in 1917. Fichardt became acquainted with Emily Hobhouse during the Anglo–Boer War and went out of his way to assist her in her endeavour to visit the concentration camps and burnt-out farms of the Transvaal and OFS (Charles Fichardt [sa]).

25 It is also striking that Emily Hobhouse, an Englishwoman, spoke up in support of women and their emancipation. Hobhouse was critical of the (male) sculptor, Anton van Wouw’s first attempt at portraying the two sorrowing women and dying child; she felt that he failed to capture the pain of a mother whose grief was beyond tears, saying of the figure that it appeared “soulless and expresses nothing” (Brits 2016:201).

26 (Van der Merwe, NJ. Sa. (c. 1956). *The National Women’s Monument*. Bloemfontein: Sentrale Pers.) The reason for the omission may have been that Hobhouse in her speech also remembered the thousands who died in concentration camps for black people, referring to “that community of interest, which, binding all in one, roots out racial animosity”, and she inconveniently (one imagines) called on her audience to “[not withhold] from others in your control, the very liberties and rights which you have valued and won for yourselves” but to recognise “that liberty is the equal right and heritage of every child of man, without distinction of race, colour or sex” (National Women’s Memorial … [sa]).
beweging\textsuperscript{27} in 1915 and Reddingsdaadbond\textsuperscript{28} in 1938). The three men were staunch friends in life and known as the ‘Vrystaatse Driemanskap’ (the statesman, the soldier and the spiritual/cultural leader), heroes of Afrikaner history. Their interment in this space is discordant and it largely dilutes the heroism and courage of the women of the Anglo–Boer War who are commemorated there. It is strange that no women rejected the intrusion or voiced an opinion about the irony. It appears to be an indication of their disempowerment that they seem simply to have accepted their mute role in the nationalist machine. Not only is there no record of women uttering any adverse opinion, there is also no record of their silence or mute acquiescence, which cuts them out of this chapter of history.

Two very different women’s organisations that were started in the 1930s present another contrast. The \textit{Suid-Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie} (SAVF), a middle-class charity organisation with strong links to the \textit{Broederbond} and the DRC, continued to propagate the ideals of the \textit{volksmoeder}. By contrast, the members of the Garment Workers Union (GWU), which was started around the same time as the SAVF, were working-class women. These women, who worked in the garment factories in order to help support their families, did not as readily accept their advocated role, providing a wider working-class perspective on the narrow definition of the \textit{volksmoeder}. Brink (1990:291) believes that the GWU of the Transvaal formed a stronghold of alternative thinking on the position of women in society for a short period of time before the Second World War. By 1926 fifteen per cent of all white women, according to the census figures, were working outside the home, mostly in South Africa’s growing clothing and garment industry (Vincent 2000:62). During this time, the Transvaal branch of the GWU, consisting predominantly of Afrikaner women, became a powerful voice in the South African labour movement (Vincent 2000:62). Vincent (2000:67) comments that “unsurprisingly, working class Afrikaner women did not readily surrender the image of themselves as resourceful, proud and morally unimpeachable”.

Brink (1990:291) is of the opinion that both middle- and working-class women recognised the notion of the idealised \textit{volksmoeder}, but for different reasons. The \textit{volksmoeder} icon resonated with middle-class women as it secured their roles as wives in society, as well as providing them with a purpose and a sense of belonging. Brink (in Du Toit 2003:156) indicates that these middle-class women were closely affiliated to the bastion of Afrikanerdom, the Dutch Reformed Church. This particular concept of the \textit{volksmoeder}

\textsuperscript{27} The \textit{Helpmekaar-beweging} (‘Help One Another Movement’) collected money to pay the fines of the leaders of the armed rebellion, in 1914, against the Union government’s invasion of German South-West Africa, and to pay compensation to people whose businesses or property had been damaged during the rebellion. (De Wet, for example, was sentenced to six years in prison and fined £2,000, and Kemp to seven years and £1,000.) By the end of 1917, all the debts had been paid (Kestell 2009).

\textsuperscript{28} The drought of 1933 and the Depression of the thirties created a serious poor-white problem. The \textit{Reddingsdaadbond} with its motto, “\textit{n Volk red homself}”(“A people saves itself”), was started by JD Kestell in 1939. It was a people’s organisation founded on Christian national principles to mobilise savings and purchasing power for the benefit of the poor. Members each contributed a monthly subscription of six pence. One third of the funds went towards administration, one third for the payment of a life insurance policy or savings plan for each member, and the remaining third as commission for the person who collected the funds. The \textit{Reddingsdaadbond} helped establish hundreds of Afrikaans businesses, which created jobs for Afrikaners, especially in towns, including Federale Volksbeleggings and the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut (Reddingsdaadbond [a])
forced working-class women to be on the defensive. The GWU formed a stronghold of alternative ideas, such as women earning their own living and thereby being in charge of their own finances. Brink (1990:290) suggests that they did at least attempt to redefine the concept of volksmoeder in terms of their own economic circumstances. This endeavour lasted only until the beginning of the Second World War. Semi-skilled office work, which was not unionised, seems to have taken over factory work in the mid-twentieth century (Brink 1990:291) and the GWU consequently was dissipated by circumstance.

Despite the apparent silence of women in Afrikaner history there has been some recent acknowledgment of women’s written contributions on social and religious experiences, as noted by Pieter Conradie (1996:69). Landman (quoted in Conradie 1996:68) states that recent studies of rare texts written during the first quarter of the twentieth century expose personal guilt expressed by these women and “reflects their restricted role in their religious and social culture”. During this time the poetry anthologies of men were published whilst “women’s contributions did not represent an oeuvre or genre as such” (Conradie 1996:69). Women’s poetry was considered personal, with no motivation for publication, as the publishers were mostly men. There are almost no diaries or artworks recorded by Afrikaner women that were published in the early twentieth century.29

Marie du Toit published Vrou en feminist (Woman and feminist) in 192130 to disprove Kuyper’s appropriation of woman as pious biblical beings. It was the first book in Afrikaans to use the word ‘feminist’. She declares (in Landman 2003:3) that the Afrikaner woman’s social and political agenda should include equal education opportunities for boys and girls; laws that permit married women to have a say over their children; the abolishment of the exploitation of the female workforce; and equal pay for equal work. Landman (2003:3) adds, however, that Du Toit’s book was promptly suppressed and thus had no effect on the status of women in the church or the state. Although strong females in the political sphere were rare, there were indeed figures such as Mabel Malherbe, the staunch nationalist and editor of the first Afrikaans magazine for women Die Boervrou in the 1930s which combined her two interests: Afrikaner nationalism and women.31

Several feminist historians have undertaken the investigation of the silence of the Afrikaner woman from a personal level, as well as in the context of national history, with varying opinions. I agree with McClintock’s (1993:71) notion of the volksmoeder as less of a biological fact than a social category and view this icon as paradoxical in that “on the one hand, ‘the volksmoeder’ recognizes the power of (white)

29 Johanna Brandt’s The Petticoat Commando or Boer women in secret service, was published in 1913 by Mills & Boon in London. More recently, in 2007, The war diary of Johanna Brandt was edited by Jackie Grobler and published by Protea Boekehuis.


31 In spite of her not being able to join the National Party for the first 16 years of its existence, Malherbe was an avid admirer of Hertzog and supported the party since its inception in 1914 (Kruger 1991:9). Malherbe constantly brought up issues of suffrage at various congresses of the Women’s National Party (see Masters dissertation of Lou-Marie Kruger in the volksmoeder discourse regarding Mabel Malherbe’s role in Die Boervrou (1919-1931).
motherhood; [and] on the other hand, it is a retrospective symbolism of gender containment, including women’s defiant power within a symbolism of domestic service”. In spite of their intermittent resistance, I am of the opinion that *volksmoeders* ultimately succumbed to patriarchal dominance.

In response to the historic Afrikaner female invisibility and lack of agency I would like my research to serve as an additional voice to add to the subversion of stereotypical Afrikaner female identities. I acknowledge that the *volksmoeders* were ultimately presented as ‘man made’. However I salute their intrepid, rebellious, resourceful, and heroic attempts to make a difference, despite the fact that their deeds were never suitably recorded, and they themselves never received any emotional, historic or public reward or independence. I therefore address certain complexities of Afrikaner nationalism, which presented the existence of several generations of ambivalent female identities, as opposed to the stereotypical silent one alone. It is in my artwork that I hope to add to the awareness of the ‘unspoken’ stories of my generation.

### 2.5 The unravelling consequences in my early years

I was raised in the Afrikaner nationalist ideology, which encompassed patriarchy as a social order and the strict Calvinist doctrine within the Dutch Reformed Church as overarching parameters of daily life. Conservative values such as the pivotal importance of the nuclear family and the significance of being white were revered. As a child it was difficult for me to question the supremacy of Christian nationalism, since one of its patriarchal principles was precisely *not* to dispute authority, an expectation which permeated all aspects of life—at home, at school, in church and on all social fronts.

An event that occurred during my childhood kindled my rebellion against patriarchal authority. I lived for the first 10 years of my life with my divorced mother and my brother in a lower-middle class suburb called Primrose East in the east of Johannesburg. I perceived the power and gender bias of my culture and religion as something palpable and inescapable. (This was during the 1950s and ’60s.) My mother looked after her younger brother, as their mother had died giving birth to him. To us as children, he was our hero, seated on his Triumph Bonneville, with his leather jacket and Nikon slung over his shoulder. Despite him being already grown up my mother still provided for him and took care of him. The dominee put an

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32 An example of these untold stories would be the artist’s book *Maria’s Story. Vlug, Brand, Dood* in 2014 by Maureen de Jager. Maria, the artist’s great-grandmother, would have been an elderly lady — and the war a seemingly distant memory — when she wrote her story in 1943, yet the vivid immediacy of her memoir suggests a trauma relived almost daily. The word ‘dood’ (death) appears 55 times in its 56 pages. *Maria’s Story* comprises three hand-bound books contained within a solander box, in a limited edition of 5 sets, with 1 artist’s proof.

33 A certain stream of Christian nationalist history believes that God made the Afrikaners his chosen people by guiding them through enormous suffering at the hands of the British, and by entrusting victory to them in their battles against the black heathen (Moodie 1975:10). Whether this is true or not, it is undeniable fact that privileged whites wittingly or unwittingly exercised their domination over people of other races during the apartheid era.

34 A dominee is a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church.
uncompromising stop to this. He arrived one night in the middle of the week—the usual time for ‘huisbesoek’ was the last Friday of the month—to tell my mother that it had come to the church’s attention that she, a divorcee, had men’s shirts hanging on her washing line. As a good Dutch Reformed Church-going congregant, my mother said immediately that it would not happen again. She did not attempt to explain or to defend herself against the accusation, in case she was seen as challenging the authority of the church and hence, of Afrikaner culture. For a couple of years after that our favourite uncle’s visits were few. I experienced the incident as a tearing or unravelling of the fabric of my family. The scattering of our family and the fact that I had witnessed the subjugation of my mother to the unreasonable demands of the church awoke in me the first stirrings of revolt against the patriarchal dominance prevalent in the Afrikaner community. The rigour and judgemental vigilance of the DRC was everpresent in my family situation during my youth.

The DRC’s obligatory rites and rituals, connected with christening, communion, marriage and funerals, are still laid down, as is its patriarchal stance which, amongst its many prescriptions, advocates that only male offspring should inherit from their parents. The might of culture and religion, and their underlying gender bias, offered mostly boundaries, and created feelings of inadequacy, marginality and obedience.

Attending compulsory church services as a child was, for me, never an enlightening experience. Nor was it negotiable until catechism had been achieved at about 16 years of age. The catechism test had to be written because without the certificate of membership one could not belong to and be accepted by this powerful establishment, or be married, buried or have one’s children christened in church, within the sight—under the scrutiny—of the Calvinistic God. A seemingly constant message of reprisal and atonement was delivered to us, the submissive congregation, from a much-higher-than-eye-level pulpit, always only by a male minister. The polarities created by the arrangement of pulpit and pews (high–low, one–many, standing–seated, speaking–silent, active–passive, important–insignificant) accentuated the feeling of being talked down to. I vividly remember my constant fear of retribution, and the feelings of inferiority I suffered as a result of the imposition of my ever-present sin-induced guilt.

In 1945 my parents met and married, and in 1948 experienced the triumph of the National Party. My father, a staunch Christian nationalist, perhaps to bolster his own patriarchally induced sense of success and affluence, exercised his male-as-the-head-of-the-household prerogative and insisted that my mother stay at home, disallowing her a working career or, at that point, children (which only happened eight years and

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35 A house visit, accompanied by prayers and a mini-sermon. In the Dutch Reformed Church a tenth of a family’s monthly income was to be pledged to the church, and this was collected by the ‘dominee’ when he came on ‘huisbesoek’.

36 Female ministers, deacons or elders were not permitted during this time. Yolanda Dreyer was the first woman to be ordained in the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika, and that only in 1981 (Landman 2003:3).
two nervous breakdowns later). They were divorced shortly after my birth, and my mother spent the next several years trying to live up to the expectations and demands of the DRC, which for its part disapproved of her divorced status, which lasted until my teens. She never wavered in her silent obedience towards the DRC. Therefore, growing up, my understanding of being female was one of subservience and obedience to the Afrikaner Christian male fraternity.

As children growing up during the 1960s and 1970s we were unknowingly contributing towards and reinforcing this patriarchal Afrikaner, nationalist policy. Calvinist slogans and social views widely propagated during my youth were those coupled with Christian National Education, being the ‘dangers of liberalism’ as well as the ‘swart-, rooi- and Roomse gevaar’37. Jonathan Janssen (2009:70) refers to how the family, church and school contributed to the conveyance of this (patriarchal) strategy. He explains this transference of inherent knowledge by citing Lambley (in Janssen 2009:70):

The Afrikaner child, like children everywhere in their different communities, is brought up on Afrikaner values and perspectives of life. But, unlike other children, the Afrikaans child finds these values expressed uniformly at every level of society … at school he hears this from his teachers, he reads it in all his books. At home his parents reiterate the same values … if there is any conflict between school and home it is usually over [the] degree of adherence to the same values, not over different sets of values.

Our school textbooks repeated established master-symbols, which presented the notion of Afrikaner immutability (Du Preez, in Cloete 1992:45). Some of these symbols are: authority is not questioned, the Afrikaner has a special relationship with God,38 the Afrikaner has a God-given task in Africa, South Africa belongs to the Afrikaner. This continuous repetition supported the “imagined” identity built on a shared tradition and culture. McClintock (1990:199) reiterates the conveyance of inherent knowledge: “This does not mean that nations are allegorical phantasmagoria of the mind, but that they are intricate social fabrications invented through daily contest—in newspapers, schools, churches, presses and popular culture.” This underlying communication was evident in the founding of Nasionale Pers in 1916, as the media powerhouse until the late 1990s. It was the media spokes-entity of the Afrikaner nationalist *volksbeweging,*39 supporting the prejudiced viewpoints of the National Party (O’Meara 1983:101, 106). For example, on the eve of the inauguration of the Republic on 31 May 1961, the leading Nationalist

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37 White Afrikaner people were constantly reminded that ‘die swart gevaar’ (the threat posed by black people), ‘die rooi gevaar’ (the Communist threat) and ‘die Roomse gevaar’ (the threat from the Roman Catholic Church) were the primary dangers of the Christian nationalist doctrine.

38 André du Toit (1983) does not agree with this tenet and says that not all Afrikaners saw themselves as ‘chosen people’, but he accepts this as a myth of the Calvinist origins of Afrikaner nationalism and racial ideology. Du Toit (1985:210) states that this paradigm can be traced to the writings of David Livingstone in the 1850s, and that it is rooted in his own appropriation of a divine calling, as opposed to any first-hand knowledge of early Afrikaner beliefs.

39 Volksbeweging’ is a national or people’s movement. There is no direct equivalent for ‘volk’ in English and the word is usually translated as ‘people’ or ‘nation’.
newspaper, the *Transvaler*, triumphantly announced: “Our republic is the inevitable fulfillment of God’s plan for our people ...” (Bloomberg 1990:xxi).

Having received my schooling in the Christian National Education system, I do not recall any particular woman from history being revered, other than Racheltjie de Beer.⁴⁰ It was not a system to glorify the entrepreneurship of women politically, socially or artistically. As Conradie (1996:68) says: “Within the Afrikaner history characterized by wars, strife and survival, males seem to be the sole actors.” Conradie (1996:68) is also of the opinion that the recorders of history, the educators and teachers, were mostly male, which is the reason why Christian National Education paid homage to the male warrior and pioneer, while the female contribution was amplified within the context of motherhood as inferred from the Bible.

The NP’s favouring of Afrikaans-speakers and of job provision for unskilled Afrikaner males on the railways and on the mines, started in 1924, culminated in my formative years, the 1960s and 1970s, as affirmative action programmes for Afrikaner males under the patriarchal doctrine of the time. As Vestergaard (2001:21) states of the Afrikaners (mostly males) during the 1960s and 1970s: “[T]hey staffed the government, received special funds for education, and were given preferential treatment in the awarding of business contracts.” Gender discrimination persisted until the 1990s and was an intrinsic part of the nationalist ethos, as Nazir Carrim (in Schmahmann 2015:35) affirms about the position of white women after the Nationalist Party election in 1948:

> White women did not have access to all jobs that men had access to, were not paid the same salaries as men, could not own property without the consent of men and were treated legally as ‘minors’, [being] dependent on the income, authority and consent of a ‘white’ male presence.

It is within this powerful machine of Afrikaner patriarchy that my own religious, social, cultural and gendered identity struggled. I fully understand Melissa Steyn’s (2004:xiv) statement that one of the most difficult things for her has been to break “the law of the father”, learning to stand up to the men who in her (and my) cultural background were the seat of authority.

In my experience, it seems that Afrikaner women have been regarded by historians either as symbols to promote the purposes of Afrikaner nationalism, or else their roles remained unrecorded in authoritative nationalist versions of traditional Afrikaner history. In my research, I attempt to address the gaps, anomalies, threads of ambivalence, and silences of and about Afrikaner women that I have experienced, to

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⁴⁰ Racheltjie de Beer, so the story goes, was an Afrikaner child in the 1840s, who gave her life to save her little brother when they were caught in a snow storm (Heldedade ... [sal]). The first irony in this tale of heroism is the presence of yet another woman sacrificing herself for a man (or boy, in this instance), which seems to endorse the underpinnings of patriarchy. The second irony is that the story was never recorded on paper but was passed down only by word of mouth. (There’s a good chance that the story is just that, a story.)
form a part of the emancipation and liberation of Afrikaner women at large. I would like this study to redress the selected aspect of the silence of Afrikaner female identities during the 1960s and 1970s through my art-making, and therefore to be a part of an inclusive history or alternative archive. In doing so I wish also to reject what Blignaut (2013:615) refers to as “supplementary history”, and instead create a form of what he calls “compensatory history, making up for the previous neglect of women’s lives through a thorough understanding of the face of Afrikaner women in the ‘body politic’ ”.
3. MEMORY AND THE ARCHIVE: KARIN PRELLER AND ANTOINETTE MURDOCH

[O]ur recourse to this past [childhood and family] is a way of reaching for … the story that is deep enough to express the profound feelings we have in the present. (Kuhn 2002:1).

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I investigate the role of memory and challenge the idealised memories created in family photographs through the analysis of selected artworks by Karin Preller and Antoinette Murdoch. In order to redress the negative historic aspects of gendered othering within Afrikaner Calvinistic patriarchy, I consider how the perceived suppression of female identities within South African culture is addressed in the artworks selected. Preller is included for her depiction of aspects of cultural exclusion through her painted and drawn reproductions of family photographs from her childhood. These images subliminally display the patriarchal values that pertained in the 1960s and 1970s and that resulted in muted female identities. Murdoch is considered for her portrayal of Afrikaner Calvinist women as victims, consumed by weeping and sacrifice. Her works express this construct metaphorically, and are produced inter alia by means of stitching, using waste materials and mixed media installations.

To begin, I explain the importance of an ‘alternative archive’ as a framework for my discussion. I then briefly explain the function of memory and the importance of photographic representation in remembering and reconstructing the past before applying these ideas to my analysis of selected works by Preller and Murdoch.

3.2 The alternative archive

Memory and family photographs can act as indicators of identity; for this reason, both are considered here for their archival properties. I am using the term ‘archive’ as a record of identity which includes a reservoir of personal information, and not as “a place in which public records or historical materials are preserved” (Merriam–Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus (Online)). My aim is to look past the archive as a physical record and rather to engage with what Caroline Hamilton, Verne Harris, and Graham Reid, South African editors of Refiguring the archive (2002:8), suggest as “the idea of the taken-for-granted … ‘archive’ that is the foundation of the production of knowledge in the present, the basis for the identities of the present and for the possible imaginings of community in the future”. I suggest that historians and formal archivists are not necessarily the only archivists, but that artists and writers, for instance, could create an alternative
method of record-keeping towards certain identities. Through an acknowledgement of this alternative reading of record-keeping, the history of previously marginalised groups or archival gaps could be redressed and transformed.

Jacques Derrida, as cited by Hamilton et al (2002:38), presents an archive as a construct mostly devised by those in power, to produce both social categories as well as modes of thought, indirectly creating an archival gap for groups or individuals who are not represented within those power structures. The oppressor in this instance refers to the point of view arising from the rigid, male, hegemonic, master South African narrative of the 1960s and 1970s. Hamilton et al (2002:9) remind us that, as explained by Michel Foucault, archives are both “documents of exclusion and monuments to particular configurations of power”. These documents of exclusion, for me, present an opportunity to tackle the gap of mute Afrikaner female identities during the past century. Although Foucault is talking here about the colonial archive, I would like to include and address a personal archive of gender omission, which can be incorporated with Bogues’s (2012:36) suggestion of a different archive, namely the “archive of the ordinary”, which he refers to as the remarkable actions of the “everyday” processes and people that seek to disrupt any dominant order. In this regard Ann Stoler (2002:92–95) has ascertained an “archival turn” in the humanities, identifying a “move from archive-as-source to archive-as-subject”. With reference to Bogues’s and Stoler’s approach, selected artworks by Preller and Murdoch will be examined for their disruption of the dominant, patriarchal order of the day by revealing their opinions through everyday processes.

In his chapter “The power and the limits of archiving”, Achille Mbembe (in Hamilton et al 2002:20) refers to the South African archive as a product of judgement, which arises as a result of the decision-making process about what to archive and what to discard. For Mbembe (2002:20), “[t]he archive is, therefore, not a piece of data, but [of] status”. In order to dissolve the discriminatory nature of the South African archive, I include the contemporary art-making processes of Preller and Murdoch, to identify aspects of Afrikaner female identities detectable through what I detect as surreptitious archiving in their works. I suggest these attempts to ‘present another side of the story’ fulfil the function of redressing Afrikaner women’s exclusion from our historiographic record-keeping.

1 The notion of the alternative archive has been proposed by Hamilton et al (2002), Foster (2004), Jansen (2015) and Bogues (2012).

2 Foucault, in Archeology of knowledge (1972), suggests that the archive is not a simple establishment but rather the law of what can and cannot be said. In Archive fever: A Freudian impression (1995:4) Jacques Derrida and Eric Prenowitz state: “There is no political power without the control of the archive, if not of memory.” From these two statements one can deduce that archiving is not a neutral operation, but one loaded with different agendas depending on the viewpoint of the archiver.

3 I am here referring to Giliomee’s (2003) speech and sentiment, as discussed in the introduction to this study, that the history of Afrikaner women is “the biggest untold story of the Afrikaner people”, as well as referring to my own upbringing and circumstances.
In his essay *An archival impulse* (2004), art historian Hal Foster discusses a trend in contemporary art to produce works that mirror collections of data. Foster (2004:5) suggests that this artwork “not only draws on informal archives but produces them as well, and does so in a way that underscores the nature of all archival materials as: found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private”. Such archival artworks can take on many forms, but for the purposes of this study I am interested in social archives such as the ongoing photographic series *Living Rooms*, 2013, by Candice Jansen, a South African photographic documentarian. In her work she records interior spaces of homes on the ‘Cape Flats’ as “living archives”, which she considers as “monuments to a bygone era that have shaped architectures of memory for families as well as for the city [of Cape Town]” (Centre for Curating … 2015:6). Her work raises issues similar to those found in the examples from the work of Preller and Murdoch, which have been selected for discussion below. These I believe reveal an archival identity of personal exclusion that expresses their dissatisfaction with the overbearing male, Calvinist narrative of their upbringing.

Together with the archive I consider the role played by memory in these works, in particular how memory can ‘construct’ rather than merely recall the past.

### 3.3 The role of memory in photographic records

I am particularly interested in what part personal memory—and its connection to the family photograph—plays in either the fragmentation or unity of cultural memory. The process of personal memory retrieval does not merely address the history of a particular individual, but also reveals the relationship between personal experience and the historic collective. Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka (1995:125) propose that the specific essence and identity that a person derives from belonging to a distinct society and culture is observed as a result of socialisation and customs. According to Nietzsche (in Assmann 1995:126), cultural memory is a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behaviour and experience in the interactive framework of a society through generations in their repeated societal practices. For the purposes of this discussion I concentrate on the way Preller and Murdoch disrupt the notion of cultural memory as a collective concept; on how they instead reveal their individual opinions about female omission in Afrikaner cultural customs and in religious rites, particularly as regards marriage and the expected role of women.

Martin Conway (2005:594) proposes that human memory is a major component of the self and that it has often been recognised that memory may be altered, distorted, or even fabricated to support current aspects of the self, which is referred to as “self-coherence”. I am of the opinion that self-coherence is a vital element in redressing Afrikaner female identities, as it functions through the personal reinterpretation of

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4 Such as the work of American artist Mark Dion, who appropriates archaeological methods of collecting and exhibiting objects in order to dispute the authoritative role of the empirical voice (Mark Dion [sa]).

5 The collective (colloquial) name for a number of townships outside Cape Town where the majority of coloured and African people live.
historic records in order to re-evaluate what has already been historically recorded. Annette Kuhn (2007:284) also suggests that working with memory undercuts assumptions about the transparency or the legitimacy of what is remembered. Memory cannot be taken as the ‘truth’ but must be seen instead as evidence or material for possible interpretations.

Kuhn labels her method of unpacking memories as “memory texts” (2002:5). She sees these “texts” as the connections between memory and the past, memory and time, memory and place, memory and experience, memory and images, and memory and the unconscious. In other words, there is always an intertwining and overlapping between the personal and the collective. An important observation Kuhn makes is that memory texts include both the criticism of culture as well as the construction of culture, as they bridge the gap between those who remark on the construction of culture and those who actually do the constructing (2002:8). In keeping with Kuhn’s suggestion that the past is always mediated and rewritten and consequently far from neutral (2000:186), I propose that memory and photographs may expose silence, absence, and conflict, probably more than the presence of representation. Consequently, as well as the construction and criticism of culture arising from “memory texts”, I would like to consider how family photographs are able to support such interpretations by revealing the complexities of patriarchal dominance/manipulation in depictions of Afrikaner women. Preller’s drawings and paintings discussed below are of significance in this regard as she reconstructs borrowed family photographs, which expose a personal slant on memory, images and the unconscious. I unpack my own reconstructed memory texts in a discussion of certain of my artworks in Chapter 4, which specifically includes the criticism of culture within the family photograph.

3.4 The sub-text of photographic representations

John Tagg (1988) refers to reading beyond the perceived transparency of the captured moment in time as the “burden” of photographic representation. Hirsch (1997:51) suggests that the “ambiguity that results from the still picture’s absent context all help[s] to perpetuate a mythology of the family as stable and united, static and monolithic”. Absent context is made up of the visual components of a photograph that are not obvious at first glance, but that require a deeper insight than merely a transparent reading. It is the absent context behind the familial gaze that forms an integral component of addressing the photographic representation as burden. The familial gaze stems from a reciprocal collaboration within family photography between the viewer and photographer:

The family look, then, is not the look of a subject looking at an object, but a mutual look of a subject looking at an object who is a subject looking (back) at an object. I am subjected and objectified (Hirsch 1997:9).
Roland Barthes (1981:34) proposes that not only as we pose, but also when we read photographs, we appropriate particular masks, and that these masks are social projections containing symbolic presence, which elicits a variety of specific individually projected interpretations onto the images. For Barthes (cited in Hirsch 1997:86), familiality can be understood as such a mask. Familiality can be read as the reconstruction and redressing of private as well as familial memories through family photographs of an individual, which reach beyond the personal and cross over into cultural and historic domains. This familial scrutiny becomes the politics between site and sight, which is the act that signifies the transference between object and subject, and the intersection of personal projections.

In order to investigate ‘absent context’ as referred to above by John Tagg, the photograph’s context of production within memory texts needs to be looked into. The context of production consists of the where, when, how, by whom, and why the photograph was taken (Kuhn 2002:8). Investigating the context of production produces a better understanding of the complexities involved in the act of looking at images, including photographs.

As an example of an ambiguous reading of a photograph’s context, I will refer to a family photograph published in De/Die Huisgenoot during the early years of the twentieth century.

De/Die Huisgenoot,\(^6\) launched in 1916, was a publication that “articulated the gendered ideals of a racialised Afrikaans domesticity” (Du Toit 2001:80), and that appeared “intent on cultivating a particular notion of family” (Du Toit 2001:83). Readers were encouraged to submit snapshots and Du Toit writes that “amateur photography drew people from across the country to contribute to a public, yet familial visualisation of volk”. Photography’s “status as conveyer of truth … made this a versatile technology for memory-making and the construction of ‘Afrikaner’ selves” (Du Toit 2001:111). (The “truth” conveyed by the photographs published in De Huisgenoot at this time was the fact of Afrikaner poverty. The ravages of the Anglo–Boer War caused many Afrikaners to lose their means of subsistence; that crippling war was followed a mere twelve years later, in 1914, by the outbreak of World War I and the Rebellion.) Du Toit refers to the emergence of an Afrikaner and nationalist “imagewor(l)d” (2001:81), a play on words which acknowledges Deborah Poole’s (in du Toit 2001:81) notion of an “image world”, and which “seeks to emphasise the interaction of word and image”. This continuous overlapping of personal imagery presented with its own narrative in a public space could be read as an attempt at identifying and uniting domesticity with the shared background and history of Afrikaner identity.

\(^6\) “‘Huisgenoot’ (plural: ‘huisgenote’) translates as ‘home/house companion’ or as ‘family member’” (Du Toit 2001:84). The Dutch definite article ‘De’ in the title of the magazine was subsequently changed to ‘Die’ and dropped in 1977. De Huisgenoot was founded in Cape Town in 1916 and was originally created out of the need for cultural solidarity. Louise Viljoen and Stella Viljoen (2005:92) maintain that during this early idealistic phase of the magazine, the family is thought of as male-centred with the father as head of the family and identities of women and femininity were represented as being sober and God-fearing (Viljoen & Viljoen 2005:92-93).
The ambiguities that result from the still picture’s absent context are illustrated in Figure 1, *Mnr en mev Byneveld*. The photograph, originally published in *Die Huisgenoot* in 1921, was one of many published in the magazine in the years 1916 to 1927, but is here reproduced from Du Toit’s paper (2001:83 (Fig. 3)). Superficially it lies within what Barthes (1981:26, 49) refers to as the “studium”.7 As a family photograph it can be read at face value with no overt meaning or poignancy, “a kind of general … commitment, … but without special acuity” (Barthes 1981:26).

The elderly couple appears to be posing for a formal portrait. The old man stands, hat in hand and dressed in a suit, while his wife in a floral-print dress sits on his left. The background is a patterned studio backdrop. Other than the hat which Mr Byneveld holds in his hand and the bonnet that rests on Mrs Byneveld’s lap, the photograph offers no hint of personal possessions. No familial gesture of endearment is visible, and the expression on the subjects’ faces is somewhat serious. The photograph was originally published with a caption that stated: “Mnr. en Mevr. Byneveld. Hierdie portret is geneem kort voor die dood van die man van moeder Byneveld. Sy lyk byna nog net soos sy op hierdie portret is”8 (Du Toit 2001:80). A brief accompanying article mentioned the widow’s impoverished circumstances. Du Toit (2001:78) suggests that the “husband’s bared head was a respectful plea from the grave for charity towards

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7 The “studium” refers to the range of meanings available to anyone viewing the photograph; the immediately obvious that can be taken in at a glance, without ‘thinking’. It is the ‘face value’ of a photograph. (The opposite of “studium” is what Barthes terms the “punctum”, a reading that exceeds the obvious and which has the ability to disturb or to take the viewer by surprise. This will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4.)

8 ‘Mr and Mrs Byneveld. This portrait was taken shortly before the death of the husband of mother Byneveld. She still looks almost exactly as she is in this portrait’ (my translation).
his wife”. If that is the case, one may infer that Mrs Byneveld is being presented as a victim, bereft of a future and not in control of her own circumstance. The image was shot from a slightly higher-than-eye-level vantage point, a factor which emphasises the humility of the photographed couple, who are portrayed looking up towards the viewer, a mien suggestive of begging.

Barthes (in Sekula 1982:91) suggests that within the character of the photographic image, there exists a “floating chain of significance, underlying the signifier”,⁹ which he calls the “polysemic” nature of the photograph. Sekula (1982:84, 91) explains that only by inserting the photograph in a concrete discourse can it produce a contextual result. I adopt his notion that the reading of all photographs expresses an intention, on the part of the photographer, the subject or the viewer (or all of them in concert), to promote a particular cause or point of view, and that all messages are therefore manifestations of individual interest, witting or unwitting. This interest relies on an accumulation of circumstances and preconceptions for its readability.

The publication of this photograph in the media appears to have been calculated by the Bynevelds, the photographer and Die Huisgenoot itself to elicit a particular response. Although apparently motivated by concern for the unfortunate widow, the photograph also reveals a sub-text embracing a patriarchal stance.

In the following examples I comment on the deliberate as well as subconscious manipulation and re-contextualising of artworks which raise aspects of the presence of patriarchy and its restrictive influence on the religious and social roles of Afrikaner female identities.

3.5 Karin Preller

Karin Preller (1962—) is an Afrikaans-speaking female painter who reflects on the discomfort and disruption of seemingly nostalgic memories of her personal narrative in the years between the 1950s and 1970s, which she does through deliberate techniques of image selection, cropping and blurring. The surfaces, which initially present as photorealistic paintings journalising personal accounts of the family album, expose their possibilities as signifiers of uncomfortable complicities which perhaps belie the presentation of what Preller calls her “charmed life”, a reference to her privileged upbringing in white middle-class suburbia during the apartheid years (Preller 2017b:1). Preller (2017b:3) states that her canvases deal primarily with the “laboured surfaces” between painted and photographic layers, as well as the indirect recording of privilege and “whiteness”. I would like, however, to attempt an alternative interpretation of some of Preller’s canvases, to reveal a third layer of meaning which I believe signifies an aspect of a personal Afrikaner female identity.

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⁹ According to De Saussure (1983:67), a sign is a recognisable combination of a signifier (the form the sign takes) with a particular signified (the concept it represents).
Because these images are sourced from photographs it is important to consider the implications of the photographic medium and the semiotic complexities raised by Barthes. Preller suggests (2010:2) that it is at the interface of the trajectories of each medium (painting and photography) where possibilities for critical intervention and affect arise. I will not be considering the unmasking of “uncomfortable complicities” of the canvas surfaces and their potential as signifiers (Preller 2017b:2), but will instead attempt to address the subliminal psychological motivation for certain of her represented images. Preller (2001a:64) concedes that vision and the visuality of her subject matter are as important as the painting process itself in reading her paintings. Within this ‘visuality’ it is important to acknowledge Tagg’s (1993:2) reasoning that as soon as a photograph is taken, it is already distorted or loaded. He posits, therefore, that a photograph can never be fully recontextualised, making its association to any “prior reality” (1993:3) even more complex. He sees the photograph as “constitutive of a new reality” (Tagg 1993:5). I am suggesting it is also at the interface of the incubation period between photograph selection and Preller’s choice of its representation that critical intervention occurs, and yet another “new reality” is constructed.

Preller’s photographic choices, their painted representations, and her choice of subject matter appear to reveal a particular subconscious, symbolic exposure of her personal exclusion from the historical collective of the 1960s and 1970s. Images, including photographs and paintings, are seen through a lens that is, as Hirsch puts it, “informed and shaped by a variety of parameters—class, race, gender, sexuality, age [and] nationality” (Hirsch 1997:103). The same parameters are at work in Preller’s photorealistic paintings. Preller herself acknowledges that “[t]he images that we have of ourselves are ultimately connected with how we are seen by others” (Preller 2001a:67).

The first two images to be discussed are from Preller’s photocomic series, based on stills from popular, black and white photo-magazines of the 1960s and 1970s. The seemingly innocuous visuals that serve as source material exhibit a particular patriarchal attitude towards women as weak and submissive, forming an ironic aspect of the so-called “charmed life” of Preller’s youth in white middle-class suburbia (Preller 2017b:1).

Introducing Preller’s work at the opening of Incidentally, a group exhibition with Antoinette du Plessis and Lisa Allan that took place at the gallery ‘Platform on 18th’, Pretoria, from 3–26 April 2008, Louis Gaigher remarked on the eeriness of the stilted, theatrical white actors, twice removed and mediated, which closely resemble sleepwalkers, even the living dead (Preller 2008). Gaigher’s “living dead” calls to mind an image from “Vine en un barco negrero”¹⁰, a poem on (racial) slavery by the Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén, who writes of the slave body that is a “corpse [that] lives” (“vive el muerto”, ‘lives the (one who is) dead’). Bogues (2012:33, 34), commenting on Guillén’s poem, interprets the slave bodies in Guillén’s poem as

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¹⁰ “Vine en un barco negrero”, ‘I came on a slave ship’.
“living corpses”, bodies who “because of various historical and social conditions, were never seen as alive”, nor ever able to speak of their historical exclusion. Indirectly, I connect and equate racial slavery and female subservience. In my reading of Double Feature 244 (cooking for you) (Fig. 2) by Preller, there appears to be a connection between the lack of agency afforded slaves and the covert suppression of Afrikaner women who had no agency and no voice in a blatantly patriarchal society.

![Figure 2](image)

**Figure 2.** Karin Preller, *Double Feature 244 (cooking for you)*, 2005. Oil on canvas, 77 cm × 75 cm. Source: Preller 2005a.

*Double Feature 244* (Fig. 2) formed part of a joint exhibition titled *New Works*, with Keith Dietrich and Clementina van der Walt, at ArtSpace, Johannesburg, from 7 July to 9 August 2005 (Preller 2005a). The painting depicts an isolated photo-frame but also presents its own stand-alone narrative, by discreetly highlighting the helplessness of females and their dependence for their own self-worth on male approval. The “charmed life” of privilege (and patriarchy) is visible in the details of the middle-class interior—the candles included for dinner ambience, the ice bucket and bottle of champagne. Painted from a slightly elevated vantage point, the situation depicted is a non-confrontational, obliging and humorous example of the artist’s critique on the patriarchal status quo. The crocheted tablecloth that is included may very well
have been made by the woman depicted, accentuating her subservience and the role that was expected of a housewife in the 1960s.

Figure 3. Karin Preller, 'n Hoë sosiale lewe,11 2008. Oil on canvas, 60 cm × 40 cm. Source: Preller 2008.

In Figure 3, 'n Hoë sosiale lewe, the slightly skewed angle and low vantage point, looking up, suggest the overbearing social position of the male figure, whose raised hand is the focal point of the painting. The paintings and decorative plate on the wall behind him suggest a comfortable middle-class status of relative wealth, confirming that he is a ‘good provider’. The words in the thought bubble12 capture the patriarchal, judgemental view that goes with his status; his hypocrisy is exposed in his maligning of an unfortunate woman, while he himself drains the last of a presumably alcoholic drink. This painting was included in Preller’s exhibition titled Incidentally, referred to above.

In the two paintings discussed immediately above, Preller’s commentary on the pre-eminence of men in the social hierarchy of white middle-class (Afrikaner) society is clear and unambiguous. The women, by

11 ‘A high social life.’

12 ‘A high social life, lots of liquor … If she hadn’t started drinking, she wouldn’t have died in an accident’ (my translation).
contrast, are depicted as weak and submissive, appearing as if they have no independent viewpoint. Preller’s images thus appear to allude to their silence and exclusion from the Afrikaner historical narrative.

The second group of works to be discussed presents a less obviously gendered, more subconscious and more symbolic approach. These works are from Preller’s solo exhibition, *Stilled Lives*, at Lizamore & Associates, Johannesburg, from 3 to 26 September 2015 (Preller 2015). The series includes a number of drawings which create the illusion of family photographs but which are somewhat disconcertingly linked by the cropping of limbs or heads (Figs. 4–7).

**Figure 4.** Karin Preller, *Rienie and Karin, Montgomery Park, 1960s*, 2015. Charcoal and pastel on paper, 50 cm × 70 cm. Source: Preller 2015.


Preller, whom I interviewed in February 2017, says of her paintings and drawings sourced from photographs that she did not intend these works to come across as a sentimental re-capturing of family life (Preller 2017b). In this interview Preller explains that the painstaking process of painting or drawing itself, the “screen” consisting of the clinically reproduced photographic and painterly layer, “perhaps contributes to a distance, a kind of double remove, from the subject matter depicted”. The subject matter in her paintings and drawings sourced from photographs is intentionally blurred, which for Preller signifies “the loss and absence at the heart of every photograph” (Preller 2010:229–230).

In a media release by Absa for Preller’s exhibition *Family Album*, at the Absa Gallery, Johannesburg, 8 to 28 February 2001, Preller is quoted as writing (Absa 2001):

> By blocking out certain features, what is not represented perpetuates myths about what is portrayed. We compose photographs and project ourselves in terms of a preconceived idea of familial relations. In this sense, the family album is always about the family ‘romance’ and not about actualities.

The “family ‘romance’ ” refers back to the discussion above at 3.4, “The sub-text of photographic representations”. Hirsch (1997:47, 51, 119), quoted there, proposed that the double meaning arising from a reading of the absent context of the motionless snapshot preserved the myth of the family as a united and secure unit.

The cropped heads or limbs of the subjects in Preller’s images renders them anonymous and unsettling rather than comfortingly familial. Preller explains (Preller 2017b):

> The severing of limbs and heads can be read as an incompleteness, not only of memory, but also a vulnerability, a stronger feeling of loss and almost impotence at a past that can never be recovered or changed.

In an exhibition abstract for Preller’s exhibition *Snapshots* at the Gordart Gallery, Johannesburg, 22 July to 11 August 2007, Lisa Allan suggests that “there is perhaps also a darker side to the loss intimated by the cropped images, that is the amputation—literally and psychologically—of heads, arms and bodies. The figures are incomplete, memory is stunted” (Preller 2007). Allan’s suggestion applies equally to the drawings included here as Figures 4–7. Throughout this series of drawings, separation or the loss of personal connection appears to manifest indirectly as dissociation with Preller’s own past and a kind of objectification of the people in the images. I am suggesting that the negation of subjectivity which is signified via the decapitated figures and severed limbs, of the artist in particular, is an unconscious reflection of a possible silenced (severed) identity. It could be interpreted as her present self, feeling disconnected from a time when patriarchy reigned, when apartheid was the dominant political ideology and
when she, as a child, lived in ignorance of her compromised status. Mary Watkins and Helene Shulman (2008:64–66) argue that it is impossible to be connected to a world one fails to see. With reference to this assertion, I agree with Kuhn’s (2002:1) observation that the interpretation of family photographs is always about the present, rather than about the past, which in turn supports Hall’s (1994:21) theory of identity as a production always in process. The apparent dissociation one senses in Preller’s drawings could be read as an admission on her part, in the present time, that her identity might constantly be evolving.

The third group of paintings to be discussed consists of depictions of old or broken dolls. Two of the paintings in this group are, like Figs. 4–7 above, from Preller’s exhibition titled *Stilled Lives* (at Lizamore & Associates, Johannesburg, from 3 to 26 September 2015). The carefully chosen double-meaning of the exhibition title provokes a reading of hushed, stagnant projections as well as an understanding of the objects themselves as still lives. The paintings of the lifeless female dolls carry a plethora of layered interpretations and stand as metaphoric portraits evoking Preller’s childhood. Preller’s focus on dolls “becomes metaphoric of human relationships” (Preller 2015); of lives (possibly her own) dislocated from their past histories. (The nature of Preller’s subject matter as still life (moments stilled in time), or as [*memento mori*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memento_mori) (reminders of the fragility and transience of existence), is not what is highlighted in this study.)
Figure 8. Karin Preller, *Still life with baby’s head*, 2013. Oil on canvas, 70 cm × 60 cm. Source: Preller 2013.
Two of the paintings, reproduced as Figures 8 and 9, are of the same doll, painted at different times and from different angles. Figure 8, *Still life with baby's head* (2013) is from Preller’s exhibition *Just Above the Mantelpiece*, at ArtSpace, Johannesburg, from 5 June to 3 July 2013 (Preller 2013). The nameless, statue-like, limbless doll seems rather a distant, disengaging object (she stares directly in front of her without making eye contact with the viewer), possibly representing a fragment or a partial memory remaining from the artist’s past. Figure 9, *Karin’s doll* (2015)—from Preller’s exhibition titled *Stilled Lives*—features the same rather sad-looking, disembodied doll’s head in a closer view; the title labels it as a personal possession of the artist.

The illusion created by these glossy, shiny dolls as innocent referents is accentuated by their repetition in these two separate but similar paintings. Their superficial lustre invests an ambiguous reading of what lies beyond the surface. Their glossy appearance brings to mind the Afrikaans saying, ‘Bo blink en onder stink’, a sentiment which is repeated by the Afrikaans artist Conrad Botes (in Morris 2006:47): “The thing with the Afrikaner is that we’re always hiding things. And above the surface there is that pretence of

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13 ‘Glossy and shiny on the surface but rotten underneath’ (my translation).
righteousness.” The glossy exterior of the dolls in Preller’s paintings might unconsciously be highlighting the illusion of being superficially perfect, as was the expected behaviour of Afrikaner women of the time. Van der Westhuizen (2013:ii, 94, 102, 120) refers to this skin-deep perfection as “ordentlikheid”,\(^\text{14}\) which she describes as the “silence, self-sacrifice, servility, [and] sexual accessibility” (Van der Westhuizen 2013:ii, 94) of Afrikaner females.

\[\text{Figure 10. Karin Preller, Thomas Edison’s talking doll, 2015. Oil on canvas, 110 cm × 110 cm. Source: Preller 2015.}\]

Reproduced as Figure 10, Thomas Edison’s talking doll is also from Stilled Lives (Preller 2015). There is a dichotomy between the title and the lifeless, static and monochromatic appearance of the doll. The doll stares into space; she does not seem to be connected to the world around her. There seems to be no voice behind the painted voicebox. This ‘talking’ doll could be read as being representative of the ideal woman of the 1960s, saying only the ‘right’ things and limited by her ‘inherent capabilities’ of designated

\(^\text{14}\) Directly translated, ‘respectability’; *ordentlikheid* could, however, be read in this instance as being loaded with the additional meaning of being seen to be doing the ‘right’ thing, and behaving in the ‘right’ way.
womanhood. Perhaps Preller is allowing her to speak out now in a different way, almost as if she has been given a ‘visual voice’ to make up for her enforced silence.

In this regard Preller (2001b) states: “An image never fully ‘makes visible’ the narrative of which it is only the fragment. It can only create associations with what is not shown, opening up a space where memory is recovered, and altering the initial perception of the image”. Preller’s painted archive of the personal thus seems to reflect on the discomfort and disturbance of memories “not recovered”. (Also see Preller 2010:234, and 2001a:83, 87–88.)

To conclude the discussion of Preller’s selected artworks, I would like to draw attention to the subliminal characteristics of the past that I detect in Preller’s work, which are able to expose the silence and silenced Afrikaner female identities, and thereby suggest an alternative archive of the ‘ordinary’. It is through her choice of subject matter—Afrikaner couples and individuals in their domestic spaces, her decapitated portraits of family members, including herself—that Preller reveals the underlying suggested silence and subservience of Afrikaner women during the 1960s and 1970s: and it is through her depiction of the ‘everyday’ processes and people that she disrupts a dominant patriarchal order.

In the next section I explore the role of fragmented cultural memory in Antoinette Murdoch’s use of parody, to expose the effects of the patriarchal narrative that were present when she was growing up.

3.6 Antoinette Murdoch

Antoinette Murdoch (1972—) is an Afrikaans-speaking female artist who questions notions of identity by confronting “the rigid master narrative, intolerant of conflicting voices and identity” (Van der Watt 1998:1). Her method is to incorporate memories that form part of an Afrikaner nationalist discourse. Murdoch is one of the first female Afrikaner visual artists to explore debates on gender and culture that were raised by feminists in the West during the 1960s and 1970s. The strong patriarchal bias in South Africa, along with its international isolation during these years owing to apartheid policies, meant that the advent of the feminist movement in Europe and America was largely ignored in South Africa. Prior to 1994, South Africa was a socially and politically deprived country. Activism seemed a natural response of cultural pursuits in the late 1970s. Schmahmann (2015:35) notes that the 1979 conference, The State of Art in South Africa, and the Culture and Resistance festival of 1982, encouraged the view of art as a weapon of the struggle, which could have been the reason why activist art overshadowed feminist art. Although social and political dialogue was on-going all the way through apartheid, the emphasis was on righting political and social wrongs—that is, social and political activism was de rigueur in art-making. The focus only changed in the 1980s with the end of apartheid in sight and by the 1990s gender issues became important as part of a nation-wide search for identity in the ‘new’ South Africa. Gendered identity was a part of this.

Another reason for the marginalisation of feminism was the stigma of “elitism” that attached to feminism, which was perceived as a white, middle-class endeavour supported by Western principles. Murdoch had
just graduated and was beginning her career in the 1990s, which was, fortunately for her, a time when the South African art world was prepared to accept the kind of feminist work she wanted to produce in response to her Afrikaans upbringing. Her method of working was to elevate the ‘feminine’ domestic arts, for example sewing and the creation of utilitarian objects, to the level of ‘high art’.

Murdoch’s inclusion of needlework, in particular, responds to feminist defiance of the traditional employment of needlework to instil ‘femininity’. Needlework, embroidery and general stitching were quintessential pursuits of the Afrikaner volksmoeder who, as Du Toit (2003:155) states, was most often recognised as being confined to the domestic sphere. Feminist art employs domestic techniques in an ironic manner, indicative of their refusal to accept gendered norms and categories (Schmahmann, 2015:29). This approach can also be found in certain aspects of my own work, to be discussed in Chapter 4 below.

Murdoch’s use of technique as an act of rebellion is evident in her debut exhibition of sculptures, needlework and installations, *Trane trekkers*, which took place at the Johannesburg Civic Gallery in November 1996. ‘Trane’ are ‘tears’, and ‘trekkers’[^15] is a play on words, referring to the Voortrekkers, thus the title already indicates her discontent with her own culture and the sadness that results from this (which was also suggested by an installation made up of a row of rolled-up handkerchiefs at the same exhibition).

For her exhibition Murdoch produced a collection of wedding dresses made of facial tissues, through which she challenges the marriage rites of the Calvinist tradition, which require women to submit to male power. Marriage fixes the inferior status of women, the bride promising to love, honour and obey her husband till death do them part, thereby relinquishing any notions of self-realisation or independence. Murdoch’s wedding dresses confront the master narrative of Afrikaner nationalism, where a husband for instance had the marital power in all marriages in community of property until as recently as November 1984.[^16] This meant that he acted as his wife’s guardian while she was treated like a minor under the law.

[^15]: From ‘trek’, a long journey, especially a migration by ox wagon (derived from the Dutch/Afrikaans verb meaning to ‘draw’ or ‘pull’). ‘Trane trekkers’ can also be translated as ‘tear-jerkers’, excessively sentimental stories or films.

[^16]: The marital power of husbands was abolished by the Matrimonial Property Act of 1984 for all marriages in community of property after 1 November 1984. The Fourth General Amendment Act to alleviate previous discriminating laws against women was passed only in 1993 (Bregman Moodley Attorneys 2017; South Africa 1984 Matrimonial Property Act no. 88, s11(2), s12, and s14; Bronstein 1998:34–37).
The husband’s marital power meant he controlled the couple’s joint estate, and the wife could not enter into contracts or litigate without her husband’s assistance. Murdoch’s seemingly incongruous use of facial tissues to construct these dresses perhaps refers to hardship and heartache resulting in tears, which would seem to arise from the victimisation and subjugation of Afrikaner women. According to Brink (1990:273) such oppression is identified when “men in male-dominated societies control women by giving them a well-defined but circumscribed position within society, to which some status, honour and respectability is attached”. This role is typical of the volksmoeder construct.

The “purity” of Murdoch’s white dresses seems to suggest a dichotomous relationship with what the feminist Julia Kristeva terms the “abject” human body. Kristeva’s notion of abjection (1982:1–6) suggests

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17 Roman–Dutch matrimonial law gave husbands matrimonial power, giving them ‘guardianship’ over their wives, which meant they could treat assets from joint estates as they pleased (Du Toit 2003:168). (The marital power was not a consequence of the marriage rite (church), but of the marital regime/marital property system chosen by the couple (i.e. it was dependent on family law.)
that we reject our excretory bodies, whose oozing and leaking are viewed by us as signs of disorder, reminders of the borders and limitations of the physical body. Murdoch’s use of the white tissue paper could be understood as a layer of idealisation and as a concealment (‘cover-up’) of the abject body, which again alludes to the saying, ‘bo blink en onder stink’, as suggested earlier in this chapter.

In her solo exhibition titled “Gereformeerd II (Reformed II), at the Standard Bank Gallery in July 1998, Murdoch engaged with her Calvinist roots, commenting on the decaying identities within the essentialist notion of Afrikaner female identity. In one of Murdoch’s installations for this exhibition, she constructs a circle of praying hands made out of toilet paper (no visual available). This ritual representation, reminiscent of a laager or wagon wheel, encircles two photographs featuring reconstructions of Voortrekker women engaged in domestic activities. Of significance is her deliberate use of toilet paper as a medium within a religious context, an incongruity which accentuates “the potential emptiness of religious belief, especially when it turns into a mere habit, passed on as an unchanging tradition” (Van der Watt 1998:1). The association of toilet paper with the act of wiping the body seems to reflect Murdoch’s own desire for physical self-control and social decorum. Mary Douglas (2002:2) makes the statement that “[d]irt offends against order”, and that ideas on “pollution [can be] used as analogies for expressing a general view of the social order” (2002:3). Murdoch appears, here, to be reacting against the expectation of ‘purity’, required of Afrikaner women under Calvinist religious doctrine and patriarchal social norms.

18 Murdoch spent her formative years conforming to Afrikaner, Calvinist Christian ideals and spent a few years doing missionary work, until she severed ties with the church in her early twenties (Schmahmann 2004:57).

Okwui Enwezor (1996:5), commenting on Murdoch’s first solo exhibition, *Trane trekkers*, notes that she draws attention to “woman as tortured victim, consumed with repeated weeping and sacrifices”. The social
and personal sacrifices of women are raised in a slightly different way in another wedding dress installation, *Te kort skiet (To fall short)*, 2001–2, which refers to the sacrifices of limiting one’s food intake in order to become ‘acceptable’. Reproduced as Figure 12, this installation is from Murdoch’s joint exhibition *Eksie Perfeksie*, with Doreen Southwood, at Spark! in Johannesburg, from 17 April to 12 May, 2002. Murdoch comments here on the socially regulated expectation demanding that women conform, not only to social/behavioural constraints but also, through their physical measurements, to the ‘ideal figure’ promoted by the fashion, fitness, and advertising industries. The wedding dress, including the bridal train, is made up of cheap, plastic tape measures, woven into wire around a steel frame. Made life-size to the artist’s measurements (Schmahmann 2004:31), the dress implies a personal reflection on the part of the artist of ‘falling short’ of the patriarchally sanctioned ideal which is a construct of the master narrative of the time. The utilisation of tape measures may also allude to eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa or bulimia, that may afflict women desperate to attain the ‘perfect’ body, as defined by societal and patriarchal ‘norms’. By alluding to eating disorders and, by inference, to vomiting and purging, associated with these disorders, Kristeva’s notion of “abjection” is raised obliquely: the abject is kept out of view, in order to retain the ‘neatness and purity’ required of the ideal woman. The dress appears rigid and prescribed, which is the artist’s way of indicating patriarchal control.

Figure 13, *Eksie-perfeksie (Just perfect)*. Self-portrait, 2002, is from Murdoch’s eponymously titled joint exhibition with Doreen Southwood, at Spark! in Johannesburg, from 17 April to 12 May, 2002. The paper doll self-portrait was reproduced on the back cover of the exhibition catalogue and is a further example of Murdoch’s implied feeling of personal inadequacy within the patriarchal validation of physical

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19 In a letter published in *SA Art Times* in March 2017, Murdoch explains the reasons that led to her sudden resignation from her position as chief curator at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, which she blames on a lack of funding, budget cuts, inadequate security, and other problems experienced as a consequence of a lack of interest and cooperation from the Johannesburg Municipality, under which the gallery falls. Reading between the lines her letter is a curious cry at having ‘fallen short’ in her leadership endeavours to keep the gallery afloat.

20 But anorexia/bulimia is far more complex than that. It’s a life-threatening condition, treatment is often not successful in the long term, there’s a high mortality and high rate of relapse. It seldom is triggered by being overweight or a real need to lose weight; it is, rather, a manifestation of an existential crisis, of which self-loathing/self-destruction is a part, or about ‘taking (back) power/being in control’. Those who suffer from these disorders have often been victims of early sexual abuse, or have suffered a severe emotional crisis of one sort or another; they can feel powerless to control their own life, are often perfectionist personalities with a highly developed sense of responsibility/duty; at onset are often around adolescence, often conflicted about their developing bodies (body hair, breasts, menstruation), and ambivalent about their passage into adulthood; while desperate to be in control they also want to revert physically and emotionally to a child state; their body is the one thing in their life over which they can exert control (illusory control). The subconscious wish of an anorexia/bulimia sufferer is to disappear, literally, from his/her own life, to die. The view on bulimia and anorexia are purely from a personal perspective.

perfection. *Eksie-perfeksie* (2002) displays the same stance as the children’s paper-doll figures popular in the years between the 1960s and 1980s, but “her physiognomy is totally at odds with the long-legged and improbable slimness of female figures in such representations” (Schmahmann 2004:30). Of the inclusion of her own vital statistics at the foot of the cut-out, Murdoch says:

My work is very personal. It deals with very personal emotions … I’ve been putting small confessions in my work—like showing how much I weigh, because a lot of women will never do that (in Schmahmann 2004:30).

![Figure 13. Antoinette Murdoch, *Eksie-perfeksie (Just perfect)*. Self-portrait, 2002. Size unknown. Source: Murdoch 2002.](image)

A sheet of paper with four different outfits was issued with the paper doll. The outfits, which resemble the clothing in Murdoch’s wardrobe, are ordinary and conventional. The presentation of the outfits and the absence of exposed flesh seem to be a conscious effort to subvert patriarchal expectations and negate ‘the male gaze’ (which will be discussed in Chapter 4). Murdoch’s practice of including ‘small confessions’ is also a way of giving a voice to those women who would never dare admit to anything that detracted from
their desirable, patriarchally sanctioned, status. *Eksie-perfeksie* addresses the entrenched male expectations with which women are expected to comply—whether it be purity, submission or how they must look, all refer to stereotypes that permeate our culture.

Murdoch’s dress narratives and certain of her installations appear to draw attention to gender discrimination, the re-reading of cultural unity, and the negative influence arising from the patriarchal presence of Afrikaner Calvinism. She thus becomes one of the (Afrikaner) women who “commit to exposing the politics of representation” (Arnold 2005:19). Murdoch is filling the archival gap of Afrikaner female identities that were not represented in the power structures of the previous order by exposing power structures, both past and present. Her works provide a voice for women; she creates an ‘alternative archive’ through her rejection of patriarchal expectations and her forthright demonstration of the way previously accepted suppression makes her feel.

### 3.7 Conclusion

The artworks by Preller and Murdoch discussed in this chapter might be understood as part of an ongoing process in which the discriminatory nature of the South African archive is redressed. As mentioned at the beginning of this study, I look past the archive as a formal physical historical record in a building, and instead consider the way certain unrecorded aspects of silent Afrikaner female identities are detectable through the exposure and commentary on women’s social existence that is visible in these artworks. I suggest these attempts to ‘present another side of the story’ fulfil the function of redressing their exclusion from our historiographic record-keeping.

In the next chapter I discuss how my own artworks also support the notion of an alternative archive in order to subvert the Calvinist bias within Afrikaner nationalist history.
4. THREADS OF AMBIVALENCE, THE IMPLICATIONS OF SUTURING, AND A SOUTH AFRICAN FEMINIST RESPONSE

‘We’ is a tenuously created category, stitched together with deep ambivalences of signification … I propose that the seam is the place where difference and sameness are hitched together. (De Kock 2001:289, 277).

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is an explication of my body of work, Threads of ambivalence, in which I respond visually to the silenced aspects of Afrikaner female identities during the 1960s and 1970s. My response includes a consideration of the Calvinist bias within Afrikaner nationalism during my childhood, and the prevailing patriarchy to which it gave rise. Liese van der Watt (in Arnold and Schmahmann 2005:99) states that during the 1970s, Afrikaner women by and large were regarded merely as symbols, and that they themselves submitted to the dogma of the DRC, which suppressed any attempt at independence on their part. An incident that illustrates the pervasive submission to the patriarchy of the church, even towards the end of the twentieth century, is Unisa’s refusal to reprint Landman’s book, The piety of Afrikaans women: diaries of guilt, in 1994. The feminist theologian attempts in this book to reveal the relationship between Afrikaner women, piety and socio-political powerlessness, and to express the relationship between local Calvinism and local sexism. The book was met with anger by Afrikaner society, while the publisher (Unisa Press) would agree to a reprint only if the author renounced feminism in the foreword. The incident underscores the urgency I feel about redressing past injustices towards women, injustices that, for many of us, are still fresh in the memory.

My practical work draws on personal narrative, which includes family photographs that are used both as inspiration and as raw material in several works. I also employ processes of sewing and construction, which are used as a means of critical metaphoric engagement with personal memory. In this manner I aim to question, subvert and deconstruct prevailing stereotypes in an attempt to define my current, emerging identity. In certain pieces I make use of parody to undermine the patriarchal supremacy that persists within the Calvinistic structure and to produce my version of ‘a history which also matters’, as opposed to a history recorded only by force of authority.

This chapter continues addressing the notion of an ‘alternative archive’ as a record of personal identity within the master narrative of my childhood. My aim is to show how artworks can ‘speak’ and how they are able to fill the archival gaps of previously marginalised groups—in my case specifically to redress
certain aspects of Afrikaner female identities. Through these visual means I give voice to subdued aspects of my past by mending the frayed identities and stitching up the gaps and anomalies of my childhood memories. My purpose here is to come to terms with the ambivalence and uncertainty which shadowed the duration of my early years, as discussed in Chapter 2, and which still persists.

By subverting the stereotypical Afrikaner female identity, my artworks constitute a therapeutic journey; my artistic response acts as the catalyst towards my emerging contemporary female identity. In this way I demonstrate that I am part of a generation of women who express their opinions and who, by doing so, partly redress the historic suppression of the women who are described by Gaitskell and Unterhalter (in Arnold, M and Schmahmann, B 2005:96) as being “as silent as their stereotypical portrayal”. I incorporate De Kock’s (2001:281) notion of “sutured identities”, as discussed in the introduction to this study, by physically stitching or ‘suturing’ the boundaries of my fractured identity (where the fracturing has arisen from my on-going ambivalence towards my heritage). I thus suture images from my past in order to construct a metaphor for my newly emerging identity, as well as exploring the implications of needlework and feminism as considered in Chapter 3.

4.2 Implications of sewing, and a feminist response

Historically, needlework has been viewed as the pursuit of women, executed within the domestic sphere and therefore labelled a feminine craft. Women’s needlecraft, put to use in stitching clothing for their families, making pulpit cloths for the church or beautifying their homes, accorded with the male notion of ideal womanhood. Van der Watt (1996:54) suggests that men, by praising such accomplishments and elevating the Afrikaner woman’s role as wife, homemaker and mother, hit upon a strategy that “proved to be a cunning way of suppressing her without being too obvious about it”. Van der Watt (1996:99–108) proposes that in Afrikaner visual history “craft” is trivialised in relation to “art”. The production of the Voortrekker Monument tapestries is a case in point. The women who executed the tapestries were marginalised in the public domains which were inhabited and controlled by men. WH Coetzer (a male South African artist) was commissioned to design fifteen commemorative tapestries, to be hung in the Voortrekker Monument. The designs were passed on to eight women who worked for eight years to execute them. After working for eight years, the women had to ask permission to embroider their names onto the panels they had produced¹ —this while Coetzer’s initials or, in the case of the middle panel, his full name appeared conspicuously on each tapestry. This lack of personal recognition seems to reinforce what Parker and Pollock (1981:69) suggest about the historic apprehension of craft: that it emphasises the way objects are made, their function and purpose, rather than acknowledging the makers and creators, who are of secondary importance.

¹ “The Board of Control [of the Voortrekker Monument] consented provided that ‘dit nie opvallend gesien kan word nie’ (‘it would not be prominent’) ” (Van der Watt 1996:105).
This sentiment seems to correspond with Catherine King’s (1992:16) suggestion that a skill is more often than not gendered as a feminine craft if it is practised in the home, while if it constitutes paid employment outside the home for men it is considered an art. Parker (1984:4/5) states: “When women paint, their work is categorised as homogenously feminine—but it is acknowledged as art. When women embroider, it is seen not as art, but entirely as the expression of femininity and crucially, it is categorised as craft.” Broude and Garrard (1982:344) are of the opinion that the very reason women have been written out of art history is as a result of them being involved primarily with textiles and needlework.

Miriam Schapiro, a Canadian-born American, was one of the first feminist artists, in the early 1970s, who in part reacted against the formalist language of the New York School of the 1950s and 1960s. Her art is often compared with that of male artists like Matisse and Kandinsky who struggled against the stigma of ‘decoration’ associated with their work. In the work of Matisse and Kandinsky, however, the troublesome association with decoration was negated by virtue of the traditional method of paint on canvas, which raised Matisse’s art, according to the (male) critics of the time, from the “merely decorative” to the “significantly abstract” (Broude & Garrard 1982:320). Schapiro introduced “Femmage”, collages incorporating assorted fabrics and materials, which took the methods and product of craft through contextual alteration into the domain of ‘high’ art, but with one important difference: she presented these fabrics, textiles and materials, perhaps fully for the first time, as objects of aesthetic and expressive significance. Schapiro deliberately aimed to convey this aesthetic point by rendering her work as “significant abstractions” as opposed to “mere decoration”. According to Broude (Broude & Garrard 1982:328), “feminist art … by virtue of its profound human, social and political significance … can never be [categorised as] ‘merely decorative’”.

Following Schapiro’s example I attempt to counteract the undervaluation of women and craft in my work by combining the subversive strategy of embroidery as fine art with the actual act of stitching the ‘metaphoric seam’ in order to ‘suture’ alternative identities and disrupt patriarchal hierarchies. I am one of several local post-modern artists who include sewing and stitching in their work. Pointure, an exhibition curated by Ann-Marie Tully and Jennifer Kopping at the University of Johannesburg Art Gallery in 2012, is a point of interest in my research, as these curators undertook to produce visibility for this wide-ranging and under-explored area of art-making in South Africa. They accentuated methods involved with stitching,

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2 Schapiro coined the term “femmage” as a humorous play on “collage”; it reflects her deliberate effort to re-establish her links with this traditionally female craft and present it as a form of ‘high art’ (Broude & Garrard 1982:320).

3 Artists who participated were: Celia de Villiers, Christiaan Diedericks, Nicole Diffenthal, Suzanne Erasmus (du Preez), Stephan Erasmus, Leora Farber, Gordon Froud, Jeanette Gilks, Sue Pam-Grant, Diek Grobler, Marinda du Toit, Kim Gurney, Mike Hyam, the Keiskamma Art Project, Jennifer Kopping, Michelle Legg, Kim Lieberman, Kai Lossgott, Moira MacMurray, Amita Makan, Rosemarie Marriott, Tamar Mason, Jurgen Meekel, Walter Oltmann, Sarel Petrus, Landi Raubenheimer, Andrea Rolfs, Claire Rousell, Sally Rumball, Ann-Marie Tully, Yda Walt, and Gavin Younge (Pointure exhibition 2012).
suturing, and puncturing, thereby locating these works within the discourse of contemporary art and culture theory. It is the conceptual and theoretical basis of these works that render them acceptable as contemporary artworks, rather than merely ‘sewing as craft’. Similarly, in my art production, I aim to create works that redress the devaluation of craft by imbuing the works with a strong conceptual content.

4.3 My work

Intellectually my body of work engages with memory. Physically my body of work consists of installations and a combination of different materials and processes, such as the reproduction of family photographs, printing onto perspex and rusted metal, and printing etchings onto used teabags. All these media and processes are combined to a greater or lesser degree with sewing and embroidery, by means of which the previously mentioned issues of art versus craft and a feminist approach towards art and the metaphoric seam are incorporated. I appropriate the traditional feminine craft of stitching and embroidering in a post-modern context by using it as a vehicle to convey particular concepts. I employ needlework as a metaphor to represent emotional facets of my life, which may possibly resonate with my female Afrikaner contemporaries. My work combines stitching with notions of ‘suturing’, where the sutures may be seen as emphasising the site of difference or its opposite, the site of reconciliation. The thread running through this body of work is that of ambivalence, and loose threads left hanging in some of the works can be read as ‘fraying’ (disintegration), or as being ‘in process’ (in a state of incompleteness or evolution/becoming). The recurrent use of rusted steel signifies the conceptual disintegration of patriarchy, the corrosion of the surface denoting the decaying reality of a receding power structure. With the use of teabags, the medium becomes the message; the teabags symbolising the ‘home presence’ and submissiveness of the Afrikaner woman, ever ready to serve, support and pacify her family and volk.

In certain works I utilise parody whereby I imitate and comment with deliberate exaggeration on original work, not necessarily for comic effect. The exaggeration is similar to the imitated original work but aims to reveal a slight absurd connotation in order to provoke a different conceptual meaning. I do not intend to include satire, which, “unlike parody, is both moral and social in its focus and ameliorative in its intention” (Hutcheon 1985:16). I manipulate and reclaim the original concepts to air personal criticisms at non-negotiable historic cultural norms. Parody, therefore in my work “is both a personal act of supersession and an inscription of …historical continuity” (Hutcheon 1985:35).

As my body of work is of a narrative nature I refer to Carolyn Ellis’s (2004:111, 126) proposal that “we write [and create] to find the truths of our experiences” and that “narrative is the way we remember the past … and disclose to ourselves and others the truth of our experience”. These narrated personal experiences

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4 I acknowledge similarities here to works by the artist Maureen de Jager, for example those included in her solo exhibition In Sepia, at the National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, in 2008. Her photographic representations are printed directly onto rusted metal, which she uses to engage with concepts of nostalgia and the inevitable deterioration or corrosion of memories over time. (Schmahmann 2008).
form part of the suggested ‘alternative archive’ of previously omitted female identities. Although these works tell individual stories, the stories all connect to convey one pivotal theme/concept. Through this body of work, I embrace Lerner’s (1993:243) suggestion that it is only through my creative journey of discovery and an acknowledgement of my roots, my past, my history that I will become enabled to project an alternative future. It is through these works that I feel capable of redressing the former silences of Afrikaner female identities.

4.3.1 Spookasem (Fig. 14)

The installation Spookasem (fig. 14) consists of eight white shirts (not a significant amount, merely stressing a collective presence), each with a knotted white satin tie; the shirts hang on coat hangers suspended from the ceiling, so that they move as air passes through the room. The white shirts and satin ties are like those that the elders and deacons used to wear for the DRC’s Sunday church services. The hangers are wrapped in crocheted or knitted covers, like those lovingly crafted by (Afrikaner) women in the last century. The hangers are individually suspended with gut from an overhead strut, with the result that the shirts do not hang still but sway continuously in ghost-like motion. The swaying movement conveys the

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5 Directly translated, ‘ghost breath’. ‘Spookasem’ is also ‘candy floss’ in English, which could serve as a metaphor for a particular type of religious affectation or a cloyingly affected and sentimental religiosity.
way that Calvinism hung like a ghostly presence over my childhood, insidiously imparting the patriarchal value system that permeated my family life. The ubiquitous presence of Calvinism transmitted what Janssen refers to as “knowledge in the blood” (2009:70). Janssen (2009:70) describes the patriarchal Afrikaner value system as ever present, for “as the child grows up, [s]he hears the same ideas expressed in church, on the radio and on television, reads them in Afrikaans newspapers, magazines, comics and in Afrikaans novels, plays and at the cinema”. On another level too the sight of male shirts on the washing line carries negative connotations for me (as related in Chapter 2) and this is repeated in the subject matter of this installation.

4.3.2  *Die ouderling se stokperdjie*\(^6\) I (Fig. 15) and *Die ouderling se stokperdjie II* (Fig. 16).

Two individually enlarged photographs of me as a five-year-old form the subject matter of Figures 15 and 16. The photographs were retrieved from the family photo album. In the first, I am photographed wearing only a pair of lace panties (provided for me by the photographer), and in the second, I am shown wearing nothing but a transparent drape of netting. The photographs were taken by an elder of the local DRC, who photographed me on a school afternoon, alone in his garage, without my mother’s consent. My mother, on being given the photographs, did forbid me to return for more ‘modelling sessions’, but why she kept them is something I cannot answer. I enlarged these snapshots and printed them on clear perspex sheets which, when placed over a selected matrix, allow the weathered, rusted metal underneath to be seen. Both works are layered with embroidered type, the word ‘bangbroek’\(^7\) appearing on one (Fig. 15), and the phrase ‘suikerbos ek wil jou hê’\(^8\) on the other (Fig. 16). The layered image with the associated word(s) emphasises Hirsch’s (1997:135) notion that photographic images should not be ‘transparent’ (meaning here that they should not be taken at face value), and should be read not only for their documentary value, but as constructions to be taken apart and analysed. I use the transparent sheets deliberately and metaphorically, to ‘expose the rot’ beneath (in this case, the intentions behind the adult male gaze, which I will discuss in the next paragraph). The see-through sheets again call to mind the Afrikaans saying ‘bo blink en onder stink’.

\(^6\) ‘The elder’s hobby.’

\(^7\) Directly translated, ‘scared(y) pants’ (scaredy cat).

\(^8\) ‘Sugarbush I want you’. ‘Suikerbos’ is the common name of several flowers in the Protea family, and the name of South Africa’s national flower, *Protea cynaroides*. The line, ‘Suikerbossie, ’k wil jou hê’, comes from a light-hearted, mildly ironic Afrikaans folk-song; the words are addressed by a suitor to the object of his affections, the flower of maidenhood (who has few of the attributes sought in a wife). The ditty, in a setting by SH Eyssen and with supplementary lyrics by PH Langenhoven, was included under ‘Piekniekliedjies’ (picnic songs) in the FAK *Volksangbundel vir Suid-Afrika* (so-called ‘3rd’ or ‘Éeufees’ (centenary) edition), compiled by H Gutsche, WJ du P Erlank and SH Eyssen at the behest of the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge, and published in 1940 by J H de Bussy, Pretoria, and HAUM, Cape Town. (The two earlier ‘editions’ were N Mansvelt’s *Hollands-Afrikaanse Liederbundel* (1907) and J van Niekerk’s *Groot Afrikaanse-Hollandse Liederbundel* (1927).) The centenary (Great Trek Centenary … [sa]) referred to is the centenary of the Trek, which was celebrated in 1938 with two re-enactment treks, in ox-wagons and wearing full Voortrekker garb. Both treks started at the foot of Van Riebeeck’s statue in Cape Town in August 1938; one trek ended with celebrations at the scene of the Battle of Blood River, and the other at the newly built Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, where it was met by a crowd of over 100 000 people. The centenary treks and celebrations catalysed a surge of Afrikaner nationalism (Federasie van Afrikaanse … 1940:vii, 434).
Figure 15. Linda Rademan, *Die ouderling se stokperdjie I*, 2017. Perspex, rusted steel, embroidery, 102 cm × 70 cm. (Photograph by author.)
Laura Mulvey, a British film theorist and feminist, says that Hollywood’s female characters of the 1950s and 1960s were coded with “to-be-looked-at-ness”, and that classical Hollywood cinema placed the viewer in a masculine subject position, with the female figure on the screen being the object of desire of “the male gaze” (Mulvey 1984:366). The original motivation behind these two snapshots is similar, namely they were intended to be looked at by a male spectator.

Mulvey (1984:362) argues that women stand in a patriarchal culture as signifier for the male “bound by a symbolic order in which man [in this instance, the church elder] can live out his fantasies and obsessions … of woman [in this instance, myself as a five-year-old girl] still tied to her place as bearer of meaning and not as maker of meaning”. John Berger, like Mulvey, regards the one who looks as the one who has the power (Berger 1972:52); for Schroeder (1998:208), too, the gaze signifies “a psychological relationship of power”. The elder, already endowed with power by virtue of the overbearing position of church elders in Afrikaner society at the time that the photographs were taken, gains even more power through being in the subject position, being the one doing the looking. These images reach beyond the personal and cross into the cultural and historical domains to reveal the patriarchal construct of women as objects. Even if I had been capable, at the time, of understanding his questionable motives, I would not have been able to deny the elder’s authoritative male request to pose.
My intention with these artworks is to elicit a particular interpretation beyond the images that are presented, to evoke what Barthes (1980:27) refers to as the “punctum”, which is the element present in a photograph that disturbs the “studium” (as discussed in Chapter 3). The punctum is that which is not conveyed as literal information or representation of the referent or visual narrative, but a personal emotion conjured up from reading between the lines. Barthes (1980:27) interprets a photograph’s punctum as “the element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me … that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me).” The fact that a little girl copies a provocative, to-be-looked-at pose certainly elicits the above interpretation of the punctum, in that these photographs are deeply disturbing because of their paedophilic connotation.

The two photographs reveal a self-serving abuse of authority and of the Calvinist, patriarchal, system on the part of the photographer. Of significance, also, to this study is the fact that my mother, although she exercised her parental authority to keep me from returning for further photographs, did not consider it ‘her place’ as an ‘insignificant’ female member of the congregation to lay a complaint against the elder.

4.3.3 Wallflowers (Fig. 17), Part of the furniture (Fig. 18), and Installation with wallpaper, chair, cushion, mirror, side table and magazines (Fig. 19)

Used teabags, sewn together, form the ground on which my works Wallflowers (Fig. 17) and Part of the furniture (Fig. 18) are executed. The incorporation of used teabags in conjunction with the act of sewing those teabags together creates an altered state that introduces a conceptual reading. With reference to the words of Marshall McLuhan (in Federman 2004:1), the medium becomes the message. The artwork, being executed in the very medium of women’s oppression, that is, needlework executed in the home, as part of a woman’s domestic duties, is suggested as a post-modern symbol of women’s defiance.

The used teabags are printed with photographs of myself, dressed in my Sunday best, taken from the family album. The seemingly innocuous images become meaningful, beyond the transparent exposure of a little girl in her church outfits, by their deliberate repetition. This repetition discloses a notable presence of church, Sunday school, and the implied imposition of piety. From the varied yet insistent repetition of the images, one could read an almost unnatural need to be seen to be God-fearing, religious and subservient, which, in my experience, was exactly what the DRC demanded from its congregants at the time.

In Figure 17, Wallflowers, multiple images of the child dressed in church-clothes are individually dry-pointed onto sewn-together teabags to create wallpaper. The seams where the teabags meet are machine-stitched, with the ends of threads left hanging, not worked away. The loose threads can be interpreted as a metaphor for ambivalence, as the threads were used for sewing together, signifying reconciliation and wholeness, while at the same time they appear to be unraveling, implying disintegration.
In making the etchings I drew onto used x-ray plates, rather than traditional zinc plates, in order to underline the metaphorical significance of their ability to expose problem areas. In this case I aim to highlight, from my current viewpoint, the problem in our societal milieu of continuing to submit to the authority of the DRC. The title, Wallflowers, thus denotes the way in which little Afrikaner girls were typecast as obedient, well-behaved and respectful, blending into the background like wallpaper, overlooked and voiceless. This title includes the plight of Afrikaner women who, too, were expected to remain in the background and to defer to men.

In Figure 18, Part of the furniture, my reference to home décor is intended to continue the dialogue with existing patriarchal notions of decoration as typically ‘women’s work’ with no significant artistic value. The decorative cushion emphasises the notion of craft, as cushions are practical, utilitarian objects. In continuing the art/craft debate I deliberately present these artworks as domestic embellishments, but they are also entities of aesthetic value, which have socially and politically expressive significance. In this manifestation, therefore, they become more than ‘mere decoration’.

The installation in Figure 19 is set up to look like a lounge from the 1960s. Comprising wallpaper, an armchair with decorative cushion, a mirror, and a side table with a couple of Panorama magazines circa 1950s and 1960s. Panorama is deliberately incorporated in this installation as this magazine formed part of publicity material, for its propagandistic discourse about South Africa (Van Eeden 2014:80). Panorama was published and entirely funded by the State Information Office in Pretoria and did not feature any advertising but amongst panoramic photographic articles, revealed letters pages which consisted of an audience who owned cameras, partook in leisure activities, had money to travel and sported tertiary education (Groenewald 2012:58). According to Lize Groenewald (2012:50) this publication was a project “in a rhetorical exercise that grappled with constructed national identities”. Panorama seemed to support the myth of nationhood which was “…imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 1991:7). This glossy (both in physical as well as metaphoric) representation of South African content validated and fed my own superficial utopian aspirations whilst growing up, and can probably again be interpreted as ‘bo blink and onder stink’ as referred to in the previous chapter.

The installation serves to provide a context for the works Wallflowers (Fig. 17) and Part of the furniture (Fig. 18), which refers once again to the role of the woman/wife as subservient home-maker, and décor as ‘women’s work’.
Figure 17. Linda Rademan, *Wallflowers* (Wallpaper), 2017. Etchings on sewn-together teabags, 200 cm × 102 cm. (Photograph by author.)
Figure 18. Linda Rademan, *Part of the furniture*, 2017. Cushion, sewing thread and etching on sewn-together teabags, 60 cm × 60 cm. (Photograph by author.)
Figure 19. Linda Rademan, *Installation with wallpaper, chair, cushion, mirror, side table and magazines*, 2017. Mixed media. (Photograph by author.)
4.3.4  *In the name of the father I* (Fig. 20) and *In the name of the father II* (Fig. 21)

*In the name of the father I* (Fig. 20), displays a leather-bound, high-Dutch family Bible from around 1910. This installation is displayed alongside *In the name of the father II* (Fig. 21) and they function as a diptych. The lower-case ‘I’ in ‘father’ (in the title of these two artworks) refers to men and not to the Lord.

![Image of an open Bible](image)

**Figure 20.** Linda Rademan, *In the name of the father I*, 2017. Installation with High-Dutch family Bible from around 1910. (Photograph by author.)

The Bible lies open at one of the many scriptural passages which serve as authority for the precept that women should be subservient to men. The Bible, a book written by men, prescribes that women should be silent and that they should defer to men, as for example in 1 Tim. 2:11–13 (Holy Bible, NIV): “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.” I have addressed this power relation in the second part of this diptych by covering the christening dress in embroidered verses from the Scriptures, denouncing women as individuals in their own right and denying women their own voice.
Figure 21. Linda Rademan, *In the name of the father II*, 2017, and detail. Sewing thread on sewn-together teabags. (Photograph by author.)
In the name of the father II (Fig. 21) confronts the religious ritual of christening as a cultural rite and one of the fundamental Christian ceremonies, in which infants take on their given names and their father’s surname.

The verses embroidered on the christening dress reinforce what is expected of the girl child, who, ‘in the name of the father’—through the ritual of christening (by being labeled with her father’s surname)—is symbolically inducted into her place in society, where she is expected to honour, submit to, and be subservient to men.

The christening dress is displayed in an archival cabinet, rather than being placed in a frame. The archival cabinet is used to refer to the out-dated notion of women’s silence. As this ‘silence’ belongs in the past it is treated as a relic of history and preserved as such, because it is no longer relevant. This work represents another ‘thread of ambivalence’ in my life. The christening dress is the vehicle for expressing my dissatisfaction about the silence of women, and about the naming ritual that bestows the patriarchal family name. Ironically, I have chosen to keep and still carry my patriarchal surname; I have never adopted a husband’s surname through marriage.

4.3.5 Mum’s the word (Fig. 22)

Figure 22. Linda Rademan, Mum’s the word, 2017. Installation with doily, telephone. (Photograph by author.)

As noun, the word ‘mum’ is often used for mother and sometimes for wife; as adjective, it means keeping quiet or not divulging something; and as verb, it means to act, or to mime (thus act without speech), as in a masked mime. The expression ‘mum’s the word’, with its suggestion of lips pressed closed, is a way of
saying that secrecy or silence is to be observed. The layered meaning of the title suggests the muteness or voicelessness of women in general, and the muted identities of mothers in particular.

The vintage phone, from the 1950s/1960s, rests on a meticulously hand-crafted—anonymoufamily doily. The doily represents the underrated and unpaid labour, both household and creative, of countless nameless women, carried out in their homes for the benefit of their families. The phone lying off the hook ‘speaks for’ the notion of female identities remaining ‘on hold’ in the latter part of the twentieth century, just as they were in the early 1920s. With reference to the undervaluation/suppression of women’s creative expression Conradie (1996:69), for example, notes that poetry written by men was readily published in the first half of the last century; women’s contributions on the other hand “did not represent an oeuvre or genre as such”, in the estimation of male editors, but “were regarded as personal writings with no incentive for publication”. I refer to the discussion in Chapter 2, where Afrikaner women were presented as metaphoric symbols of purity, or sacrificial lambs, widely accepted archetypes and the recipients of women’s restricted social roles, such as only being the mothers of children and wives to husbands. In this regard, there has been no great improvement since the first half of the twentieth century. This installation visually depicts the blatant disregard of female agency in a patriarchal setup. No matter what women think, their opinion always seems to count for less than that of men. MER, the female Afrikaans author and academic of the 1920s, summarises it neatly: “[I]t is after all very clear that as regards cooperation, the men always have one policy: you and I are one but I am that one” (MER, quoted in Vincent 1998:14).

4.3.6 The Hol(e)y Trinity (Fig. 23)

The Hol(e)y Trinity is a mixed-media installation which parodies the sacred notion of the Christian altarpiece. This ‘altarpiece’, cut in the shape of an armorial shield, is made of rusted steel and carries a hand-drawn representation of an alternative (female) holy trinity, printed onto transparent perspex. The drawing has been printed onto transparent perspex so that the disintegration of the ‘coat of arms’, a symbol of the patriarchal national state, is visible underneath. Attached to the bottom of the shield is a rusted metal scroll with the embroidered motto, Komaan.9

The shield is used to signify the cultural symbols that were used to promote national identity during my youth. Anne McClintock (1993:70–71) remarks as follows on the national fixation with iconic

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9 This was the slogan on my high-school badge, which endorsed and encouraged the notion of getting ahead. The slogan was derived from a poem of that title by JFE Celliers, and means ‘Come on!’ (The school anthem was a setting of the same poem.)
Figure 23. Linda Rademan, *The Hol(e)y Trinity*, 2017. Charcoal, mixed media, perspex and embroidery on rusted steel, 160 cm × 120 cm. (Photograph by author.)
More often than not, nationalism takes shape through the visible, ritual organisation of fetish objects: flags, uniforms, airplane logos, maps, anthems, national flowers, national cuisines and architecture.” I give prominence to this notion of fetish objects by drawing the original image onto a torn 1938 topographical map of the Union of South Africa, which symbolises heritage, identity and the importance of land as an indicator of power in Afrikaner culture. To illustrate the imbalance of power in Afrikaner culture, I refer to four images by South African artist and photographer, Lien Botha. In 2003, as part of her exhibition titled *Vier susters* (Four sisters), Botha displayed sewing paraphernalia dedicated to each of the sisters. In a note accompanying the photographs on her website, Botha (2003) writes that her meeting with the sisters “prompted the recollection that the men inherited the land, while the women were left with trunks filled with linen, porcelain and family albums”.

![Image of Lien Botha's Vier susters exhibition](image)

**Figure 24.** Lien Botha, *Vier susters*, 2003. Set of four photographs. Size and location unknown. (Botha 2003.)

The holy trinity, printed onto perspex and attached to the rusting shield, consists of ‘the mother, the absent daughter and the skeleton in the cupboard’, who replace the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The crucified mother denotes the silent self-sacrifice of women in the last century and before, who gave up everything for the good of their husbands and families. The cut-out silhouette of the daughter literally expresses the unimportance of little girls in a patriarchal society. With reference to the significance of the Holy Ghost in religious dogma, Job 32:8 (Holy Bible, NIV) states: “But it is the spirit [the Holy Ghost] in a person, the breath of the Almighty, that gives them understanding.” Similarly, Ex. 31:3 (Holy Bible, NIV) states “and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills”. To resist this patriarchal devolution of knowledge and power I replace the Holy Ghost with a ‘skeleton in the cupboard’, a reference to the idiom with its derogatory connotations; the image of the skeleton is employed to refer to the discreditable and embarrassing facts the church and church ‘fathers’ keep carefully hidden from view. My title disparages the significance of the ‘Holy Spirit/Holey Ghost’ to

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10 During the 1970s it was still the custom for land to be passed on to male heirs.
draw attention to the clandestine presence of child molestation behind the closed doors of the church. The title also serves to expose the fallibility of religious strictures and behavioural expectations within the dogma of religion.

The motto ‘Komaan’, embroidered on the scroll, is borrowed from my high-school badge. Loosely translated, it is an injunction, ‘Come on! Get ahead!’, and thus serves as an obligatory component of a nationalistic fixation in encouraging the invented union of the volk. These slogans and scrolls formed part of the recurrent inclusion of master symbols which bolstered the notion of Afrikaner immutability and an ‘imagined’ identity of shared culture. Perhaps it also represents what McClintock (1993:67) identifies as “[w]hite, middle-class men [who] were seen to embody the forward-thrusting agency of national ‘progress’”.

4.3.7 His master’s voice (Fig. 25)

Figure 25. Linda Rademan, *His master’s voice*, 2016. Colour photocopy and embroidery on cotton, 30 cm × 62 cm
(Photograph by author.)

Figure 25, *His master’s voice*, consists of a blown-up colour photocopy of a R2 note from around 1973, with Jan van Riebeeck’s face removed and an embroidered portrait of my father inserted in its place. I have deliberately used a R2 note for its low value, which corresponds to the low emotional value I place on the patriarchal ‘voice of reason’. The Governor of the Reserve Bank’s signature is replaced with my father’s signature, and by means of a small typographical addition ‘Reserve Bank’ is altered to ‘Reserved Bank’. This parody refers to the ultimate familial patriarchal authority at the time, when men were the sole financial providers and therefore the sole decision makers. As an example of his power in my family (in
spite of his absence as a result of my parents’ divorce soon after my birth), my father exercised his patriarchal right by strongly insisting that I should pursue a tertiary degree in medicine at the University of Potchefstroom after matric. He refused to consider my personal preference and was not prepared to provide any financial assistance for an education in the arts. \(^{11}\) (My brother declined a tertiary education and thus avoided becoming embroiled in any patriarchal power play.) As a result of my mother’s support for my career choice, and my failure to obey his wishes, a severed relationship ensued between my father and me, which lasted intermittently for the rest of his life.

4.3.8 *Honoris crux* (Fig. 26)

The three-dimensional wall hanging *Honoris crux* consists of a large ground made from sewn-together teabags, onto which a self-portrait has been etched in between embroidered flowers. This is enclosed in an embroidery hoop, which is attached to a cut-out of rusted steel in the shape of an *Honoris crux* medal, which in turn hangs from a ‘ribbon’ made from sewn-together teabags.

The artwork parodies the *Honoris crux* (Cross of Honour), which is a military decoration for bravery, instituted by the Republic of South Africa on 1 July 1975 (Mackenzie 2012). The medal was awarded to members of the South African Defence Force for deeds of bravery in combat action while in danger of life. In this artwork I suggest instead that women’s identities were in danger of becoming insignificant or being overlooked, rendering their existence as peripheral during this time. Their negation is not owing to war, however, but is a result of the social and religious dogma of Calvinist patriarchy. The embroidered white flowers repeated as a background extend the notion of wallpaper, as in *Wallflowers* (Fig. 17) above. However, at the point where the image of my hand interacts with the flowers, the white (colourless) flowers are transformed into colour, signifying new life. The transformation symbolises the negation of the patriarchal expectation that women ‘should be seen and not heard’. The medal is bestowed in recognition of female bravery in its own right, and it serves to encourage women to be defiant, to embrace their courage and make themselves heard.

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\(^{11}\) I was fortunate enough to obtain a bursary, which I gratefully acknowledge as an opportunity enabled from an advantaged position by Afrikaner nationalism.
Figure 26. Linda Rademan, *Honoris crux*, 2017, and detail. Embroidery hoop, embroidery cotton, tea bags, rusted metal, 120 cm × 80 cm. (Photograph by author.)
Van trofee tot triomf (i)–(iv) (Figs. 27–30)

Van trofee tot triomf (Figs. 27–30) is a series of four portraits, individually displayed on shield-shaped plaques of rusted metal, in parody of hunting trophies. Hunting is a popular pastime in South Africa. In former times men needed to hunt in order to feed and clothe their families, and a man’s ability to be a good provider was relative to his success as a hunter. However, hunting has since become a recreational activity, demonstrating men’s power over hapless animals. Nowadays, trophy heads serve mainly as a means of impressing viewers with the hunter’s prestige, status and wealth, by signalling his ability to absorb the sizable costs involved in acquiring such souvenirs. I replace the severed animal heads with embroidered portraits of ordinary Afrikaner women. The pictures of these women (who are not remembered for any heroic deeds) were chosen from my family photograph album. Each portrait is executed on an oval-shaped background, in imitation of the oval portraits\(^\text{12}\) that were common at one time, and that generally depicted historic Afrikaner male (war and civic) heroes. The women’s portraits have been worked in embroidery as pieces of art, instead of being painted in oils, in an emphatic rejection of needlework being trivialised as ‘craft’.

In the position where the neck and shoulders of the trophy animal would normally have been fastened to the plaque, I have instead incorporated lace-collar designs, laser cut into the metal plaques. There are four different designs, one for each plaque. A design called “Wag-'n-bietjie”\(^\text{13}\) (after the indigenous South African tree) was used for the collar in Figure 27; it is a reproduction of a collar designed and made by Emily Hobhouse at the lace-making school she established after the Anglo-Boer War at Koppies in the then Orange River Colony. The original item is archived in a glass cabinet in the National Women’s Memorial and War Museum in Bloemfontein. The other three designs (Figs. 28–30) are replicas of exquisitely made, but nameless and unsigned lace collars dating from around 1914, which I found in an archival cabinet in the Richmond Museum in the Karoo. The anonymity of these collars is typical of what Parker and Pollock (1981:69) suggest about the historic apprehension of craft, namely that it is the way objects were made, their function and purpose, that is emphasised, rather than the makers and creators, who are of secondary importance.

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\(^{12}\) Printed sheets including numbers of oval-shaped portraits, flags and other patriotic symbols were circulated in the Free State after the First Anglo–Boer War (First Transvaal War of Independence), 1880–1881. Similar oval-shaped portraits regularly appeared in Die Huisgenoot to honour national male heroes and warriors (Du Toit 2001:81).

\(^{13}\) ‘Wag-'n-bietjie’ is directly translated as ‘wait a bit’. The ‘wag-'n-bietjie’ tree, *Ziziphus mucronata*, supposedly represents life: young twigs often grow in zig-zag fashion, indicating that life is not always straightforward. Stipular thorns—one straight and one hooked—at the nodes give the tree its Afrikaans common name. The hooked thorn represents where we come from, and the straight one where we are going (Mazibuko 2007).
Figure 27. Linda Rademan, *Van trofee tot triomf* (i), 2017. Rusted steel, copper, embroidery on cotton, 46 cm × 36 cm. (Photograph by author.)

Figure 28. Linda Rademan, *Van trofee tot triomf* (ii), 2017. Rusted steel, copper, embroidery on cotton, 46 cm × 36 cm. (Photograph by author.)
The title of these works, *Van trofee tot triomf* (From trophy to triumph), is punched into bronze labels that parody name-tags for dogs. A label is affixed to the lower part of each of the four plaques, proclaiming
possession. Although the women depicted in these trophies are not identified, they have been retrieved from my background and history, and my visualisation of them ‘speaks’ to acknowledge their absent existence and helps to fill the archival gaps of previously marginalised Afrikaner female identities.

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The intention behind this body of work is to give a voice to the previously mute women who existed under Afrikaner patriarchy. These are women who were overlooked as a result of the rigid master narrative of the time. But I am also attempting to highlight the blight of female abuse under any patriarchal construct. In this body of work, I aim to expose the silence which is ‘the other side of the story’. My work is thus about redressing women’s exclusion from Afrikaner historiographic record-keeping through an alternative archive, namely art.
3. CONCLUSION

I am
I am
god hears me
a free fucking woman¹ (Krog 2000:80).

My work titled *Threads of Ambivalence* can be summarised as a response to the compromised gendered othering and lack of female agency apparent in Afrikaner historiography in the twentieth century. In expressing my rejection of the dominant master narrative of my past, I give voice verbally and visually to my ambivalent self as social subject, acknowledging the weight of my roots, but discarding the burden of patriarchal nationalism as the only expression of a personal form of individuation. This study, therefore, acknowledges multiple subjectivities and accepts the notion of pluralism within Afrikaner female identity. A new agency comes into existence when the individual recognises herself as a participant in a variety of discourses, which implies a fluid identity composed of many strands, as opposed to a fixed, one-dimensional and silent identity. I propose that an acceptance and embracing of ambivalences could serve to free contemporary Afrikaner female identities from the fixed and stereotypical closure which also assumed that Afrikaner women were a union of sisterhood and thus transparent to one another (Kruger 1991:335).

Through the physical and metaphoric act of sewing I revisit the muted histories of my past and attempt to draw together the contradictory identities both within myself and within Afrikaner history. The act of ‘suturing’ forms a significant ‘voice’ of my alternative archive.

My study has proposed the creation of an alternative archive in which previously marginalised histories may be incorporated. I have produced an informal archive through a body of artworks. These artworks are intended to “underscore the nature of all archival materials as: found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private” (Foster 2004:5). In order to ‘speak’, this alternative archive thus addresses the previously unrecorded aspects of personal identity, memory and belonging within Afrikaner female identities. Through this journey of informal record-keeping, I have come to accept certain ambivalences present in my past. However, I acknowledge an identity of ‘becoming’, which harmonises with Ann

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¹ The last four lines of Antjie Krog’s translated poem ‘Paternoster’; the lines resonate with current aspects of my emerging Afrikaner female identity. Paternoster is the name of a small village on South Africa’s west coast. Its name is Latin for ‘Our Father’ (direct translation ‘father our’), the opening words of the Lord’s Prayer. I concur with Clair Scott’s suggestion (2006:117) that Krog subverts the power of Christian patriarchy by “simultaneously allowing her speaker to own the phrase ‘I am’, traditionally assigned to the God of the Old Testament, and rendering ‘god’ in lower case”. The subversion emphasises the poet’s claiming of power as a woman free from the dogma of the church. In her poem Krog offers an alternative way for us as (Afrikaner) women to negotiate identities that enable us to belong within the South African nation, and to free ourselves from the burden of a patriarchal narrative.
Stoler’s (2002:92–95) suggested move from “archive-as-source” to “archive-as-subject”, in order to be part of a generation of Afrikaner women who redress the stereotypical silent traits in order to lay a foundation for future contemporary discourse.

In this study I have tried to demonstrate how the patriarchal discourse of Calvinist Afrikaner nationalism stunted the social and creative liberation of female identities in the previous century. As it is not within the scope of this study, I have not addressed the artwork of female artists born in or after 1994, the so-called born-frees. Following the birth of democracy in South Africa, Afrikaner identity seems to be in a dislocated state, similar to circumstances experienced after the Anglo–Boer War 1899–1902, as discussed in Chapter 2. This presents opportunities for further exploration of contemporary Afrikaner (female) identities, especially in art, to ascertain how a new generation of female artists perceive and express themselves in relation to the concept of identity, and their place and future in South Africa.
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