

Homomasculine performativity and the  
legitimisation of hegemonic Afrikaner ideals in  
Oliver Hermanus's *Skoonheid* (2011) and  
Etienne Kallos's *Die Stropers* (2019)

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## ABSTRACT

Considering the lack of homosexual representation in South African cinema until 1985 (Botha, 2013), films in post-apartheid South Africa have made significant progress concerning this issue. However, despite this progress, there are few films that feature homosexual characters, especially in Afrikaans films that depict Afrikaner societies. This lack of representation can potentially downplay the urgency and importance of the social issues being addressed in these films, potentially preventing audiences from reflecting on the restrictive social conditions in Afrikaner communities and their effect on homosexual individuals in those communities. I have therefore chosen to investigate two critically acclaimed South African films: *Skoonheid* (2011, directed and co-written by Oliver Hermanus), and *Die Stropers* (2019, directed and written by Etienne Kallos). These films are noteworthy because of the representation of same-sex desire among men in conservative Afrikaner communities.

My study focuses on how these two films seem to interrogate and challenge hegemonic Afrikaner ideals set forth by Afrikaner nationalist discourse, and how the theme of homomasculine performativity among Afrikaner men emerges within the two films. Both *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* successfully confront the challenges faced by white, Afrikaans men within contemporary South Africa in terms of navigating social norms and constructing their identity within conservative Afrikaner societies. However, these films also show how hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity is still deeply embedded in the South African consciousness.

Therefore, this study explores how strict norms and morals represented in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* perpetuate and legitimise hegemonic masculinist identities and how, through performative strategies, Francois and Janno seemingly reinforce these heteronormative ideals. I argue that idealised masculine ideals negate mobility and fluidity of identities and restrict the possibility of Afrikaner men to freely negotiate their gender identities, as they are restricted to a hegemonic ideal of masculinity.

**Keywords:** Afrikaner nationalism; Afrikaans cinema; *Die Stropers* (2019); gender performativity; hegemonic masculinity; homomascularity; *Skoonheid* (2011)

## OPSOMMING

Daar was tot en met 1985 'n gebrek aan verteenwoordiging van homoseksuele identiteite in die Suid-Afrikaanse filmbedryf (Botha, 2013), en films in post-apartheid Suid-Afrika het aansienlike vordering gemaak met betrekking tot hierdie kwessie. Daar is egter min films wat wel homoseksuele karakters verteenwoordig, veral in Afrikaanse films wat Afrikanergemeenskappe verteenwoordig. Hierdie gebrek aan verteenwoordiging kan die dringendheid en belangrikheid van die sosiale kwessies wat in hierdie films aangespreek word, wat moontlik gehore verhinder om na te dink oor die beperkende sosiale toestande in Afrikanergemeenskappe en die effek daarvan op homoseksuele individue in daardie gemeenskappe, verminder. Ek het dus gekies om twee Suid-Afrikaanse films te ondersoek: *Skoonheid* (2011, met Oliver Hermanus as medeskrywer en regisseur) en *Die Stropers* (2019, met Etienne Kallos as skrywer en regisseur). Hierdie films is merkwaardig vir die verteenwoordiging van homoseksuele aantreklikheid onder mans in konserwatiewe Afrikaner gemeenskappe.

My studie fokus op hoe hierdie twee films hegemoniese Afrikaner-ideale wat deur Afrikanernasionalistiese diskoers uiteengesit word, ondervra en uitdaag, asook hoe die tema van homo-manlike performatiwiteit onder Afrikanermans binne die twee films na vore kom. Albei films konfronteer die uitdagings wat wit, Afrikaanse mans in die hedendaagse Suid-Afrika in die gesig staar. Hierdie uitdagings sluit die navigasie van sosiale norme en die opbou van hul identiteit binne konserwatiewe Afrikaner-samelewings in. Hierdie films wys egter ook hoe hegemoniese Afrikanermanlikheid steeds deel vorm van die Suid-Afrikaanse bewussyn.

Daarom ondersoek hierdie studie hoe die streng norme wat in *Skoonheid* en *Die Stropers* verteenwoordig word, hegemoniese manlikheidsidentiteite legitimeer en hoe Francois en Janno deur performatiewe strategieë hierdie heteronormatiewe ideale skynbaar versterk. Ek voer aan dat geïdealiseerde manlike ideale, in werklikheid, die mobiliteit en vloeibaarheid van identiteite ontken en die moontlikheid van Afrikanermans om vrylik oor hul geslagsidentiteite te onderhandel, beperk, aangesien dit beperk is tot 'n hegemoniese manlikheidsideaal.

**Trefwoorde:** Afrikanernasionalisme; Afrikaanse films; *Die Stropers* (2019); gender performatiwiteit; hegemoniese manlikheid; homomanlikheid; *Skoonheid* (2011)

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

South Africa has a very progressive constitution in terms of prohibiting discrimination against homosexual men and women. However, the representation of homosexual identities in South African films was severely lacking until 1985 (Botha, 2013). According to Botha (2013), Afrikaners' <sup>1</sup>conservative attitudes towards films contributed to Afrikaans language films having very few openly gay characters before 1994. Botha (2013) is of the opinion that this idealistic conservatism was characterised by an attachment to historical events and personas, the 'purity' of the Afrikaans language and whiteness, and moral norms predicated on strict Christian values.

Since the end of apartheid, significant progress has been made in the South African film industry concerning queer visibility on the big screen. This is mainly because of significant changes such as abolishing white rule and introducing a liberal constitution that emphasises women's and gay rights (Sonnekus, 2013:23). Accordingly, the apartheid government's control over and censorship of the media came to an end, together with the demonisation of homosexuality with the introduction of a new, more inclusive, constitution (Van Zyl, 2011:335) which also granted greater freedom for the representation of queer identities in the visual arts. However, it is important to note that, according to the IMDb<sup>2</sup> (2022) listing of mainstream Afrikaans-language films released since 1994, only a few of those showcase queer Afrikaner identities or explicitly focus on gender issues. Some examples of these include *Proteus* (2003), *Vir die Voëls* (2016), *Kanarie* (2018), *Stroomop* (2018), and *Moffie* (2019). This demonstrates a lack of queer representation in South African mainstream cinema, and especially in Afrikaans-language filmmaking, which is what this study aims to address.

This lack of representation in South African cinema potentially downplays the urgency and importance of the social issues being addressed by these few films. As I will argue later in the study, films have the potential to bring about social change, especially in South Africa (Maingard, 2007:3; Peach, 2005:i), and it is therefore essential for mainstream cinema to depict prominent social issues facing South African citizens. For this reason, I have chosen to focus on

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<sup>1</sup> While I may refer to "the Afrikaner community" or "the Afrikaner culture" on some occasions throughout this study, I acknowledge that there is no single unified Afrikaner community or culture. Rather, the Afrikaner communities and culture I refer to are minority communities within a larger and more diverse cultural milieu. In my critique of Afrikaner nationalist discourse and the beliefs, ideals, and behaviours of some Afrikaner people, I am in no way suggesting that all white, Afrikaans speaking individuals have these or the same beliefs or ideals. Therefore, when reference is made to "the Afrikaner community" or "the Afrikaner culture" I am specifically referring to communities and individuals such as those depicted in the two chosen films. Communities that are extremely conservative and aim to uphold the values and ideals preached by Afrikaner nationalism. These ideals are expounded upon later in the study.

<sup>2</sup> While this is not *the* authoritative list of mainstream Afrikaans-language films, it is a list nonetheless and it demonstrates exactly how rare queer representation in Afrikaans-language films are.

two queer films that, to me, successfully depict the struggles of men who desire men in conservative Afrikaner communities. *Skoonheid* (2011, directed and co-written by Oliver Hermanus) (Figure 1.1) and *Die Stropers* (2019, directed and written by Etienne Kallos) (Figure 1.2) are two critically acclaimed South African films that are notable for their representation of hegemonic masculinity and same-sex desire in conservative Afrikaner communities.

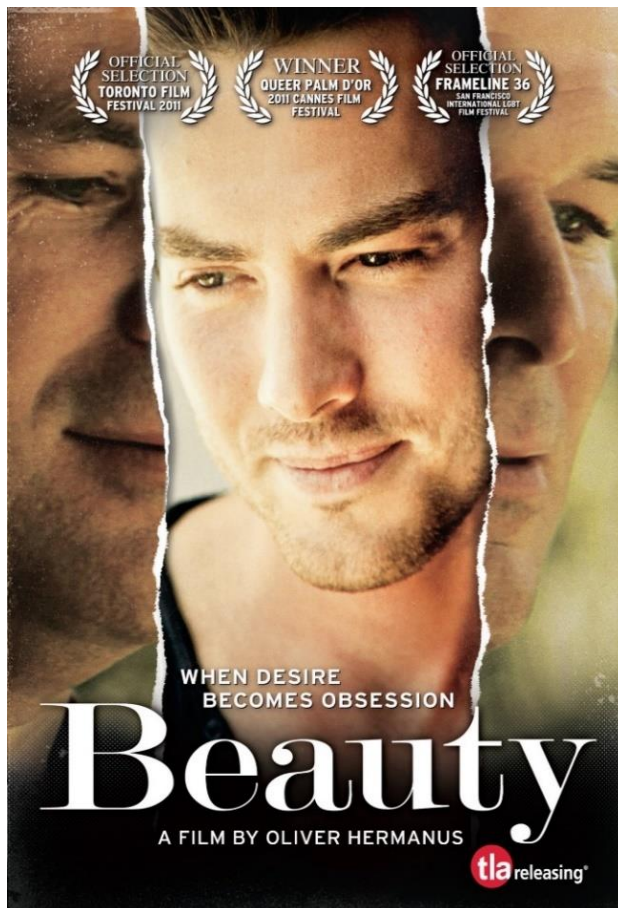


Figure: 1.1 Oliver Hermnus. *Skoonheid*. 2011. Film poster



Figure 1.2: Etienne Kallos. *Die Stropers*. 2019. Film poster

Within this study, I explore how these films seem to interrogate and challenge hegemonic Afrikaner ideals set forth by Afrikaner nationalist discourse and how the theme of homomasculine performativity among Afrikaner men emerges within the two films. This is done by examining the film style used in the films, which includes camera angle, lighting, camera angle and movement, and *mise-en-scène*. Homomascularity can be described as an over-masculinised performance by homosexual men to appear less feminine to avoid stereotyping and discrimination (Sonnekus, 2009:37). While *Skoonheid* exposes the underlying connections between gender, race and sexuality in South Africa (Andrews, 2018:32), *Die Stropers* explores identity and sexuality among young men within Afrikaner culture. Although these films confront issues of identity construction within a contemporary South African context, they also show how hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity is still deeply embedded in the South African consciousness.

Therefore, this study explores how strict norms and morals, represented in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*, perpetuate and legitimise hegemonic masculinist identities and how, through performative strategies, Francois and Janno inadvertently reinforce these heteronormative ideals. The performativity of homomascularity by these two characters is analysed by investigating selected scenes that demonstrate the severe societal pressure on homosexual men to conform to hegemonic masculinity. I argue that idealised masculine ideals negate the mobility and fluidity of identities, and restrict the possibility of Afrikaner men to freely negotiate their gender identities as they are restricted to a hegemonic ideal of masculinity<sup>3</sup>.

Before moving on, it is necessary to clarify my use of terms such as gay, homosexual, queer and heteronormative. I concur with Elbie Van den Berg (2016:26) when she states that “this is done in full recognition of the sociological and philosophical complexity of any claim to a shared experience or common group characteristic with regard to sexual identities.” Therefore, in my use of these terms, I am in no way claiming that the characters I refer to represent all other individuals who do not identify as homosexual, but that these terms are used in a very specific context, individual to the two protagonists who are the subjects of this study.

In this study, I focus on Afrikaner men who have same-sex desires and although these men do not explicitly identify as homosexual, I use the terms ‘homosexual’ or ‘homosexuality’ throughout my study as same-sex desire is at the core of its definition. I also acknowledge that this particular sexual identity marker posits sexual minorities as subordinate ‘others’ since the term originally reflected a pathological view of so-called ‘sexual inversions’ and as a condition to be managed, cured and/or policed (Brent, 2021; Van der Westhuizen, 2017:88). This, coupled with the fact that the term was the forerunner to later sexual identity markers for same-sex desire,

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<sup>3</sup> I acknowledge that, while a film can comment on a social issue or theme, the interpretation of *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* as having such commentary derives from my own reading of the films.

makes it appropriate for use in this study, i.e., Afrikaner men who have same-sex desires and their struggles with their sexual identity and fears of discrimination due to these desires.

The term 'queer' is used in my study as an umbrella term to refer to identities that do not identify as heterosexual or cis gender. However, I acknowledge the contestations surrounding the term because of its use as a derogatory insult in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2015). While the term was appropriated by some members of the LGBTQIA+ community as an umbrella term, others still consider it to be harmful (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2015). However, having acknowledged this, I agree with Marshall (2018:7) when he states that 'queer' has the potential to bring attention to "the ways in which symbolic formations such as nations, ethnicities and diasporas are marked by hierarchical (hetero)sexual binaries whose normativities can be disrupted and undone, and realities reformulated and rewritten."

## **1.1. Background and contextualisation**

### **1.1.1. Film synopsis**

Oliver Hermanus's *Skoonheid* (*Beauty*) tells the story of a conservative, patriarchal, white Afrikaans-speaking man, Francois van Heerden (played by Dean Lotz), who becomes infatuated with the son (Christian) of an old army friend, throwing his life into disarray and causing him to question his carefully constructed male Afrikaner identity (Andrews, 2018:32; Devarenne, 2020:9). *Skoonheid* was the first Afrikaans film to show at the Cannes Film Festival in 2011 (Devarenne, 2020:9). According to Sonnekus (2013:22), it portrays Francois as

the archetypal disenfranchised white Afrikaner man, whose repressed homosexuality amplifies the anxiety and disempowerment he experiences in a post-apartheid world. His masculine identity is constantly under threat from racial and sexual 'Others', who highlight the hypocrisy and constructedness of the outmoded model of patriarchy that he reveres. A self-loathing and tragic figure, Francois ultimately seeks out the illicit and unattainable beauty embodied by his youthful object of affection, Christian, the son of a friend, and destroys it.

At one point in the film, Francois travels to a farm near Bloemfontein, where he meets with a group of other white Afrikaans-speaking men to have sex in secret. Within this group dynamic, 'moffies' (queers, specifically feminine homosexual men) and 'kleurlinge' ('coloureds' or people of colour) are strictly excluded from all sexual activities, thereby contextualising these

gatherings within a social framework of heterosexual masculinity. According to Andrews (2018:30), Francois's longing for intimacy contrasts the taboo nature of same-sex attraction in the film. This longing for intimacy develops into an obsession with Christian, which ends violently in the film's climax as Francois attempts to sexually assault Christian.

Francois is portrayed as the archetypal family man who is well established and respected in his community (De Waal, 2011) (see Figure 1.3). However, beneath this seemingly faultless veneer, Francois is constantly at odds with his secret homosexual desires. Francois was presumably raised within a conservative Afrikaner community, and constructed his life accordingly, but this leads to a monotone, emotionless existence that fills him with frustration (Andrews, 2018:30; De Waal, 2011). The only place Francois feels safe to express his homosexual desires is in the secret grouping of other men (Falkof, 2016:18). According to Devarenne (2020:9), the film further links the racial and cultural essentialism that influences some forms of South African whiteness with heteronormativity and homophobia.



Figure 1.3: Oliver Hermanus. *Skoonheid*. 2011. Francois

Andrews (2018:32) states that *Skoonheid* demonstrates that discrimination and violence often result from boundaries on identities in terms of desire, social conduct, and gendered social interactions. As a white Afrikaans man, who experienced the benefits of the apartheid regime, Francois further feels excluded from the new South Africa (De Waal, 2011). This feeling of alienation is further emphasised when one considers that the figure of Francois is also that of a man who presumably grew up during the apartheid era and the state, army and church's demonisation of homosexuality (Du Pisani, 2001:169; Crous, 2006:48). Francois, therefore, demonises and suppresses his homosexual desires, leading to a type of homomasculine performativity, as I will argue in this study.

*Die Stropers (The Harvesters)* is Greek-South African director Etienne Kallos's feature debut and premiered at the Cannes Film Festival (Ellaya, 2019). The coming-of-age story takes place in central Free State in a community of white, conservative Afrikaners, where Kallos explores themes of masculinity among young Afrikaner men. In an interview with Daniel Dercksen (2019), Kallos states that the film explores adolescence, telling the story of the so-called *born frees*: the first generation born after 1994 and the institutional end of apartheid. According to Kallos (*in* Dercksen, 2019), "the issue of this [apartheid] legacy is never addressed directly in the film, yet it is pervasive and expressed by the feeling of alienation of the young protagonist, Janno, through his loneliness, his fear of being judged, and how lost he feels."

Similar to films such as *Skoonheid* and John Trengove's *Inxeba*<sup>4</sup> (2017), *Die Stropers* explores some of the complexities of masculinity in South African culture (Van Hoeij, 2018). The film depicts a devout Afrikaans family visually defined by the harsh land and its harvest (DeBarros, 2019). The film asks questions about hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy in South Africa. It explores fear, suppression and the sense of living under siege – whether it is a family suffocated by the perceived threat of extinction, or a teenage boy terrified of being found out as not being 'man enough' (DeBarros, 2019).

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<sup>4</sup> *Inxeba* (2017) tells the story of *ulwaluko*, a traditional Xhosa ceremony in which boys are initiated into manhood (Magodyo *et al.*, 2016), through the perspective of the protagonist, Vija. Vija, one of the elders in the film, secretly has a sexual relationship with another elder, Xolani (Kumalu, 2019:92). Vija's relationship, and status as a man, is threatened by an initiate who discovers the secret relationship.

The film received a lot of criticism from Xhosa communities and leaders for exposing the sacred practices of *ulwaluko* and the representation of homomascularity in Xhosa communities (Khoabane, 2018).



Figure 1.4: Etienne Kallos. *Die Stropers*. 2019. Janno

In the community depicted in the film, young men are defined according to traditional Christian values and stereotypes, which include displays of masculinity and shows of physical and emotional strength. This pressure to conform causes the film's protagonist, Janno (played by Brent Vermeulen), to feel like he does not belong in this community (see Figure 1.4). This feeling of alienation is worsened when his mother, Marie (Juliana Venter), adopts an orphaned drug addict from the city who is different from Janno in every aspect. Pieter (played by Alex van Dyk), unlike Janno, does not care what people think of him and merely puts on a deliberate act of the perfect Afrikaner boy in order to be accepted by his new family. On the other hand, Janno carefully constructs his identity to fit the mould and fulfil the expectations of the perfect Afrikaner boy. The plot unfolds as the two boys begin an ongoing fight for power, inheritance and parental love while developing their complex relationship.

Kallos confronts patriarchal ideas of masculinity in this filmic community while exploring “the fractures in identity that can come from being a product of post-colonial South Africa,” states Cochrane (cited by Ellaya, 2019). According to Cochrane (cited by Ellaya, 2019), the film “emerged as a Cain and Abel-type story, in which the spiritual and cultural fractures manifest as a fracture between two characters: two young men who are mirrors for and of each other.”

*Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* are notable films in South Africa as they address and ask questions about issues surrounding homosexuality and masculinity. The films are notable for their representation of same-sex desire within conservative Afrikaner communities. *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* seem to confront the challenges at the intersections of issues about homosexuality, race, religion, and cultural heritage. For this reason, it is important to examine

the two chosen films within the context of Afrikaner nationalist discourse, specifically focusing on hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity in the form of homomasculine performativity.

During apartheid, the marginalisation of racial and sexual 'others' in the film and television industries was common, and homosexual voices were especially affected (Botha, 2003). According to Botha (2003; 2013), homosexual identities have remained unseen for the larger part of South Africa's film history, because their sexuality opposes the heteronormative cultural mainstream. According to Tcheuyap (2010:25), African filmmaking is first and foremost regarded to bring about social and political transformation. Films are essential to communication and how we make meaning of our world (Kirby-Hirst & Karam, 2018:91). This, coupled with an audience member's own narratives and interpretations, can encourage people to question the status quo. However, when confronting an audience with a narrative that inadvertently legitimises the dominant, cisgender masculinity in white Afrikaans-speaking communities, such films fail to be useful as vehicles for critique or critical reflection.

#### **1.1.2. The representation of homosexuality within South African film: a brief overview**

According to Ntsabo (2018) and Schoonover and Galt (cited by Marshall, 2018:6), the media can change how representations of the lived experiences of marginalised groups are viewed and understood. This study focuses on marginalised men within Afrikaner communities, and it is therefore essential to look at the representation of homosexuality within Afrikaans film and media. Therefore, it is important, firstly, to discuss the representation of homosexual identities in South African cinema as, according to Hadland (2008:2), media is essential for the identity construction of Afrikaners. It is, therefore, also essential to discuss the socio-political function of film in South Africa, because films have historically been used as a form of control and, accordingly, a medium of protest by marginalised groups in South Africa. It is important to note that my overview will focus on Afrikaans films.

Maingard (2007:3) argues that cinema can shape and reflect a society's perceptions and that the visualisation of identities has a crucial effect on the acceptance of certain members into a nation. Similarly, Ricardo Peach (2005:i) states that there exists a relationship between queer representation in film and socio-political change. The effect of film on social perceptions is important because, as Maingard (2007:3, 178) argues, identity politics are essential to the lives of individuals, and identity in South Africa has been overwhelmingly classified in terms of the country's history of colonialism and apartheid (Da Canha, 2001:8, 67). Martin Botha (2012:239) conducted a seven-year study of the depiction of homosexual characters in African, Asian, and Latin American cinema, and notes that "the homosexual experience in South Africa is unique

because of the country's history of racial division and subsequent resistance.” Therefore, according to Da Canha (2001:8) and Maingard (2007:3), the history of South African cinema can help examine how identities have been portrayed in film and how and where identities have been excluded in the service of upholding ideological claims.

Internationally, the influence of cinema on the identity construction of audiences was historically done using propaganda films that perpetuate myths and symbols of certain ideologies within different historical contexts (Da Canha, 2001:1; Masilela, 1991). For example, during the South African War (1899-1902), some British film companies created anti-boer<sup>5</sup> propaganda films that perpetuated the myths and symbols of British imperialist iconography (Masilela, 1991). Historically, South African cinema has links with questions of ‘the national’ (Da Canha, 2001:67). In 1916, for example, the film *De Voortrekkers*<sup>6</sup> was advertised as “South Africa’s national film”, marking the first claim to ‘the national’ in South African cinema (Maingard, 2007:4).

The influence of apartheid propaganda filmmaking had consequences for the developing film culture in South Africa (Da Canha, 2001:1). According to Masilela (1991) and Da Canha (2001:1), films created during the apartheid era imprinted the state’s oppressive ideology on the historical imagination and consciousness of marginalised and oppressed racial groups. Apartheid black cinema, for example, served to propagate the dominant ideology of apartheid by showing films in mining compounds, black urban areas and Bantustans (Masilela, 1991).

Dominant ideologies were not merely disseminated in propaganda filmmaking: In seemingly innocuous ways, language became a mobilising tool to create a dialect of insider versus outsider (Da Canha, 2001:34). An example of this is Afrikaans-language cinema, which was predominantly controlled by the *Broederbond*<sup>7</sup> (Van Coller & Van Jaarsveld, 2018:1) and presumably used as a mouthpiece for Afrikaner nationalist discourse. The hegemonic Afrikaner

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<sup>5</sup> The term *boer* literally means “farmer” and has a very distinct white, conservative connotation to the *Voortrekkers*, a group of Dutch-speaking settlers who migrated into the interior of South Africa to gain independence from British colonial rule (Vestergaard, 2001:43; Rankin & Schneider, 2019). In post-apartheid South Africa, the descendants of the *Boers* are known as Afrikaners, and their identities are constructed in opposition to both black identities and Anglo whiteness (Van der Westhuizen, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> This film not only promoted the cause of Afrikaner nationalists, but also showed the necessity of combining forces with the British to defeat the Zulus, according to Maingard (2007:5), a metaphor for the potential power of black people. This silent film portrays the Great Trek with a focus on the conflict between the *Boers* and the Zulus (Van Zyl, 2008:24). It concludes with a recreation of the Battle of Blood River that took place in 1938.

<sup>7</sup> The Afrikaner *Broederbond* was established in 1918 and became a secret, self-consciously elite group devoted to promoting and developing an exclusive Afrikaner ideology (Suzman, 1999:39). Nearly half of the members were clergymen or teachers, reflecting the controlling influence of the Afrikaner intelligentsia (Suzman, 1999:39) and the need to promote and protect the financial interests of its members and the ethnic nation.

state extended its control in the 1950s and 1960s through exploitive legislation, coercive actions, and the suppression of black resistance (Maingard, 2007:7). In this period, a state subsidy scheme was used to ideologically control and shape cinema (Da Canha, 2001:20). This was initially targeted at producing films for white audiences and eventually developed to include films for black audiences separated by language and ethnicity, thereby sustaining 'tribal identities' (Maingard, 2007:7). Therefore, this ideology was responsible for affecting and inflecting its ideals on all South African citizens, including homosexual individuals.

According to Botha (2012:165) and Da Canha (2001:1), the film industry significantly influenced social unity and the processes of democratisation and development in South Africa after apartheid. This included the appearance of homosexual identities on screen. The first *Out in Africa* gay and lesbian film festival was particularly influential. The festival took place in 1994 and, according to Peach (2007:89), it not only created as South Africa's first queer cinematic space, but it also acted as a setting for community building and political action. However, these identities were initially portrayed in stereotypical ways, such as overly feminine gay men or masculine lesbians (Raygan & Lynette, 2014). In Ntsabo's (2018) opinion, this lack of diversity in film enforces the hatred towards queer bodies, contributing to the ever-increasing violence against the queer community. Ntsabo (2018) also believes that the media helps create meaning around sexuality and helps people understand the role that sexuality plays in identities, histories, social institutions, and day-to-day experiences. However, the binary portrayal between the queer community and heterosexual individuals still implies that being heterosexual is 'normal' and being gay is socially deviant, thereby normalising heteronormativity (Raygan & Lynette, 2014; Ntsabo, 2018).

Botha (2013) is of the opinion that, in Afrikaans films, most characters are portrayed as heterosexual. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Afrikaans films featured folk stereotypes that portrayed Afrikaners in a comedy tradition as "chatty, heart-warming, and lovable," or within Western melodramas, as "beset by trivial emotional problems about mismatched couples overcoming obstacles on the path to true love" (Da Canha, 2001:34; Botha, 2003). Afrikaans mainstream films in the 21<sup>st</sup> century seldom offer viewers any well-rounded and well-written gay characters as can be seen in a list of Afrikaans-language films compiled by IMDb (2022). The comedy *Kampterrein* (2017), for example, features two heavily stereotyped gay characters (in supporting roles) as gaudy and outspoken (see Figure 1.5). Leon Schuster's popular slapstick comedies (such as *Sweet 'n Short*, 1991; *There's a Zulu on My Stoep*, 1993; and *Panic Mechanic*, 1997) are rife with homophobic and offensive jokes and references. The type of masculinity in Afrikaans films projects a conservative notion of male ideals and men's dominant place in Afrikaner communities; not based on what Afrikaans-speaking men are like, but what they ideally should look like or be. However, as Sonnekus and Van Eeden (2009:85) point out,

“one must bear in mind that media-workers continually attempt to strike a balance between majority (heteronormative) interests and the interests of minorities (in this instance, queers).”



Figure 1.5: Luhann Jansen. *Kampterrein*. 2017. Stereotypical depiction of a gay character as feminine and flamboyant

In their article<sup>8</sup> on the marginalisation of black homosexual men through representation in the lifestyle magazine, the *Gay Pages*, Sonnekus and Van Eeden (2009:81) pose the following question concerning homosexual representation in media: “If ‘belonging’ is articulated through the consumption of queer culture, what then of those lesbians and gays who do not fit the ‘mould’ standardised by mainstream gay print media?” This is an important question as it emphasises the cultural significance of media and how individuals gain knowledge of themselves and the social world through media (Chung, 2007:99). According to Harvey (2018:8), “cinema has the capacity both to represent and construct a people.” However, Afrikaans films often portray heteronormative ideals, which has an enormous impact on Afrikaners’ identities, argues Da Canha (2001:34).

The limits of masculinity within Afrikaans films seem to be defined by the frequency of white heteronormative aesthetics and ideals, and, according to Benwell (2003:18), “this is a process

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<sup>8</sup> *Visual representation, editorial power, and the dual ‘othering’ of black men in the South African gay press: The case of Gay Pages* (2009).

of identity work whereby identities are partially defined by what they lack.” Therefore, the limited appearance of homosexual men in Afrikaans films casts them as the antithesis of an Afrikaner male ideal perpetuated in nationalist discourse, thereby re-inscribing Afrikaner masculine hegemony (Sonnekus & Van Eeden, 2009:88). This hegemonic masculinity thrives in the absence of its homosexual ‘other’.

In mainstream media, the prevalence of heterosexuality is re-inscribed through the marginal representation of gay subjects (Chung, 2007:101), which also appears stereotypical as gay men are often represented as being over-feminised. According to Levina *et al.* (2000:742)<sup>9</sup>, this representation “creates an assumption that everyone, or anyone worth representing, is straight.” At the same time, where included, the prevalence of white homosexual characters and narratives supports hierarchies of power within queer communities. Therefore, white homosexuality appears to be at the centre of lesbian and gay representation, implying that “qualities beyond sexual orientation – like race and class – help keep the dominant segment of this particular cultural group in power” (Sonnekus & Van Eeden, 2009:88, 89).

## **1.2. Afrikaner nationalism and idealised masculinity**

The idealisation of masculinity within Afrikaner communities can in part be attributed to Afrikaner nationalist ideology and the establishment of national and patriarchal ideals that entrenched men’s place at the head of national and familial structures. According to Gouws (2008:184), “the continuing British imperial influence in South Africa” and expansion of urbanisation and industrialisation contributed to Afrikaner nationalism’s success in the 1930s and 1940s. As a mobilising tool, Afrikaner nationalism created a vision of the only ‘real’ nation ‘chosen’ by God (Vestergaard, 2001:20). Nationalists are also responsible for designating and organising the ethnic origins of national or group identity, which, in the case of ‘the Afrikaner nation’, comprise several critical socio-cultural characteristics and historical events and developments (Petzold, 2007:116). The machinations of Afrikaner nationalism later exploited these to construct a sense of ethnic solidarity (Sonnekus, 2016:17).

Afrikaner nationalists used a select set of cultural characteristics and historical events to construct the Afrikaner, a mythical image of the so-called ‘Afrikaner nation’ (Giliomee, 2009:139). This image was overwhelmingly masculine. Myth-making practices relied on the repetition of selected events, symbols or personas to glorify Afrikaner nationalism (Sonnekus,

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<sup>9</sup> Even though this source was written in 2000 and much has changed in the past 20 years in terms of queer representation in South African media, mainstream media and films still depend on stereotypes about gay individuals when depicting homosexual characters.

2016:20). For example, the ideologically-driven surge of interest in the Great Trek in the 1930s established the figure of the Voortrekker<sup>10</sup> as an icon of Afrikaner people and a beacon of Afrikaner nationalism (Van Robbroeck, 2021). According to McClintock (1993:69), each imagined branch of the *Trek* is represented as a family that is “presided over by a single, epic male patriarch.” McClintock’s argument emphasises the importance of family and masculinist identity within some Afrikaner communities.

Within the context of the mythical image of the Afrikaner nation, emphasis was placed on Afrikaners’ rural existence, farming abilities, and their Christian values (Sonnekus, 2016:17). As such, Afrikaners are represented as having an intimate attachment to the soil. This attachment to the soil is prominently displayed in *Die Stropers*, as Janno is the eldest son of a successful farmer. According to the traditional succession in rural Afrikaner families, he will become the farm owner and continue the ‘family business’. According to McClintock (1993:63), “families are symbolically figured as domestic genealogies,” and this is essential to the construction of a nation because it provides a clear structure for social hierarchy (McClintock, 1993:63). Again, McClintock demonstrates the importance of the male patriarch in Afrikaner communities and families. This is the context within which I investigate homomasculine performativity as depicted in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*.

### **1.3. Theoretical framework: Gender performativity, Hegemonic masculinity and homomascularity**

The term performativity was coined in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and has undergone many variations across different disciplines (Tapaswi, 2018:29). John L Austin (1911-1960), a British philosopher of language, was the first to use the term to describe his speech-act theory (Tapaswi, 2018:30). In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Judith Butler integrated the notion of performativity into feminist and gender studies in two of her seminal works: *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (first published in 1990), and *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of sex* (1993). In these books, Butler critiques the outdated notion that gender is something

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<sup>10</sup> The Voortrekkers are a group of Dutch-speaking settlers who migrated into the interior of South Africa after 1834 in an attempt to gain independence from the British Cape colony (Rankin & Schneider, 2019). The Voortrekkers were mostly farmers and their determination and courage became two of the most important elements in Afrikaner nationalism (South African History Online, 2021). This ideology of a God-fearing, hardworking and determined Afrikaner people is still present in the 21<sup>st</sup> century among *Die Voortrekkers*, a youth organisation whose ideals are based on that of the first Voortrekkers: “*Die storie van Die Voortrekkers [...] is ’n storie van deursettingsvermoë, van toewyding en opoffering.*” (“The story of the Voortrekkers is a story of determination, of dedication and sacrifice”) (Die Voortrekkers, s.a.).

innate to all identities and explores later constructionist perspectives that regard gender as socially constructed. She also suggests that gender is the effect of discourse and defines performativity as a stylised repetition of acts (Butler, 1999:xxix).

Interestingly, Butler peels away at the notion of performativity and infuses the term with a particular sense that differentiates 'performance' from 'performativity' according to the nature of these respective concepts (Tapaswi, 2018:30). Performance assumes an actor who voluntarily and consciously chooses to take up a particular role (Weems, 2014:103), whereas performativity suggests a frequently unconscious act that (re-)iterates and legitimises certain cultural norms. Therefore, one can conclude that performativity constitutes performance (Tapaswi, 2018:31).

According to Butler (1999:173), gendered norms construct acts and gestures that are then performed. Gendered bodies, therefore, exist only based on presupposed gender performances. Therefore, performativity draws on existing representations of identity through historical discourses (Weems, 2014:103). Butler (1999:xxviii) also states that "gender is an impersonation... becoming gendered involves impersonating an ideal that nobody actually inhabits." Therefore, it can be argued that gender is a series of acts and gestures that re-iterate cultural norms (Rendell, 2002:89; Hall, 1999:186), and it is the same performance and imitation of gendered acts that aids in the construction of heteronormative ideas of gender. Butler's writing can also be used to explore the anxieties related to gender because of the forced and repeated construction of hegemonic masculinity within social settings (Brickell, 2005:24).

Brickell (2005:32) and Sturm (2011:229) argue that performativity constructs and reproduces the masculine *self* within gender performativity. Therefore, it is crucial to consider how masculinities are 'done' within the framework of culturally and historically conditioned masculine performances and how these performances are received within social interaction (Brickell, 2005:32). When looking at Afrikaans films, such an investigation becomes significant as it can shed light on men's experiences with same-sex desire in Afrikaner communities. The importance of investigating homomale identities in Afrikaans film pertains to the power relations created among men within a hierarchy of masculinities depicted in the films. Through the depiction of the characters, the films question and reflect the gender hierarchy that occurs in Afrikaner communities. Therefore, the films have the potential to not only reflect on the issues within the films, but also on issues within Afrikaner communities, more generally. I suggest that within these hierarchies, hegemonic, patriarchal masculinity is perpetuated. It also signifies and perpetuates something particular in these relations: that certain bodies, body language, speech, interests, and everything from tone of voice to one's hobbies are deemed superior and more legitimate than that of 'non-hegemonic' masculinities.

Butler (cited by Brickell, 2005:32) argues that “stable and oppositional heterosexuality can be understood as a precondition of the internal coherence of gender categories.” This suggests that the identity of the male heterosexual *self* partly depends on the exclusion of the homosexual *other* (Brickell, 2005:33). This exclusion may contribute to a sense of existential angst within the closeted homosexual male subject as he tries to separate his internal homosexual identity from his social heterosexual identity. In the struggle to separate their homosexual identities from homosexual acts (Brickell, 2005:33), Francois and Janno rely on homophobia and performative, hegemonic masculinity to protect and hide their sexual desires. These performative tools justify homosocial bonds and marginalise homosexual ones, reflecting their inner struggle to find a haven between homosocial and homosexual desire (Bak, 2010:268).

Messerschmidt (2019:89) states that hegemonic masculinity is a practice that legitimises the domination of men over supposedly subordinate groups such as women and other men. In addition, recognising the differences among hegemonic masculinities regarding local, regional, and global settings is a significant part of amplifying the concept (Messerschmidt, 2019:89). Even though hegemonic masculinities within contemporary societies are diverse, Messerschmidt (2019:90) states that “the relational practices and discursive meanings are not”, as they collectively contribute to and reproduce the patriarchal and heteronormative social structure within countries such as South Africa. These masculinities are configured and reproduced according to social practices and gender relations that produce specific social relationships and meanings, and they are culturally important because they influence what is considered ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ gendered behaviour in certain situations (Whitehead, 1998:58; 2002:93).

These masculinities are also widely considered templates for culturally dominant gender relations at a local, regional, and global level (Messerschmidt, 2019:89-90). According to Persson *et al.* (2017:699), white, heterosexual masculinity is commonly enacted and affirmed through “aggressive homophobia, rejection of interracial sex, and eroticised expressions of misogyny.” The system of male dominance is dynamic, repeatedly perpetuated and re-constituted as gender relations change (Wedgewood, 2009:332), thereby obscuring and encouraging the embodiment of unequal gender relations. This is also the case for hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity.

According to Sonnekus (2013:23), “hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity is a compartmentalised identity shaped by ingrained prejudices buttressed by a combination of whiteness, racism, and homophobia.” Van der Watt (cited by Sonnekus, 2013:24) also states that, as a gender construct, hegemonic masculinity does not allow any ‘other’ forms of masculinity to be a part of

its self-identification, and it also disregards all negations to its supposed superiority. It grew out of Afrikaner nationalist discourse and perpetuated its heteronormative and racist ideals (Du Pisani 2001:157). Although it asserts its authority within a gendered and racial hierarchy, hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity is still susceptible to negotiation, subversion and change (Sonnekus, 2013:24). In post-apartheid South Africa, power shifts have appeared in terms of gender, race and sexual orientation that indicate significant alterations to the social landscape (Botha, 2013). Despite constitutional changes, as Sonnekus (2013:23) argues, it seems that some Afrikaner men still refuse to separate themselves from the patriarchal norms that afforded them social and political control in apartheid South Africa.

Francois and Janno legitimise idealised masculine ideals through performative homomascularity and, as I will argue later in the study, homomascularity can be considered a form of hegemonic masculinity. This is because, like hegemonic masculinity, homomascularity identities “are characterised by a gender construct that ‘allows no exceptions and disdains all contradiction’ to the manliness it deems absolute” (Sonnekus, 2013:24).

The term ‘homomascularity’ was coined by Fritscher in 1977 to describe ‘traditionally’ masculine men who are attracted to other ‘traditionally’ masculine men (Fritscher, 2005). The term was coined to describe a subgroup of gay men within the LGBTQ+ culture who associate with the aesthetics and gender roles of heteronormative, straight male masculinity. This identification with ‘traditional’ male masculinity was adopted during the gay ‘clone’ era in the 1970s and 1980s (Sonnekus, 2009:37). During this historical period, gay men used hyper-masculine aesthetics and behaviours to protest the stereotypes associated with male homosexuality, such as being inherently flamboyant or feminine (Clarkson, 2006:193). According to Sonnekus (2009:37), “visual manifestations of this hyper-masculine gay body become sites of resistance through which ideological notions of gay male inferiority and heteronormative male superiority are challenged, re-appropriated and even subverted.” However, this act of subversion may undermine itself considering that the preferred ‘template’ of homomascularity is based on heteronormative stereotypes that frequently oppress gay identities. Therefore, I agree with Clarkson (2006:196) that “homomascularity re-iterates hegemonic masculinity in terms of the queer constituency, considering that it excludes effeminacy, transvestism, gay blacks<sup>11</sup> and less ‘acceptable’ forms of gay male expression from its self-definition.”

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<sup>11</sup> In this study, I use terminology that refers to people according to their race as used in colonial and apartheid classification, classificatory terms that have been retained in democratic South Africa. Because of the nature of this study, these racial terms are unavoidable since I look at and reflect on the impact of racialisation and ethno-nationalism. Posel (2001:87) admits that, even though racial categorisations are fictive constructs – just like gender constructs – it has real consequences.

Fritscher (2005) defines homomascularity as something that emerges from within gay communities. His definition, and the context in which it is written, is quite avant-garde and ground-breaking for its time since he coined and created words like homomascularity to describe the phenomena he observed. In his 2005 article, he states that the term had “jumped to gender studies” by 1990 (Fritscher, 2005), which signals a shift in the term’s use. Homomascularity was now being appropriated and used within gender studies and scholarly discourse as a tool to investigate and theorise certain topics and social phenomena. The appearance of the term in South African scholarship – particularly in the work of Sonnekus (2007; 2009; 2013) and Sonnekus and van Eeden (2009) – indicates yet another shift in its use and therefore meaning.

Homomascularity as a concept within gender studies is therefore useful for the analysis of the characters in the context of this study. I am proposing a theoretical lens that employs the concept to investigate how the protagonists in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* perform gender and identity in order to hide same-sex desire. Fritscher (2005) describes homomascularity as the fetishizing of a macho ideal of manliness that is “embodied in right-wing Hollywood cowboy John Wayne, that hyper-masculine exaggeration of an actual cowboy.” In the social context of white, Afrikaans-speaking communities, this ideal of masculinity is embodied by the archetypal *boer* or male Afrikaner ideal. This ideal is characterised by being hardworking, having Christian values, being heterosexual, and having a sense of patriotism to the *volk*. These Afrikaner men are also expected to be patriarchal and act as the head of the household within a nuclear family model. Fritscher (2005) also states that “Homomascularity seeks the pure heart of the archetypal best that males do, not the stereotypical worst. *Homomascularity* taken to extremes is *hyper-masculinity*” (italics in original). Thus, homomascularity in the films takes the form of hyper-masculinity since Francois and Janno embody, or try to emulate, this hypermasculine *boer* or Afrikaner male ideal.

My goal in this study is to describe the performative practices and strategies of men who desire men, or sexual intimacy with men, that manifest, or closely resemble the expressions of hegemonic masculinity within their respective filmic communities. I argue that the protagonists do this to fit in, to belong, and potentially avoid being ostracised or persecuted in their communities where homophobia is prevalent. I argue that the performative strategies by the protagonists emulate or resembles (in embodied, aesthetic ways) hegemonic Afrikaner

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Therefore, in this study, terms like ‘black’ or ‘white’ are used to address the complicated history surrounding the terms, or people so classified.

The term ‘black’, within a South African context, especially for political purposes, is used as an inclusive term to refer to people who are not or do not identify as White.

masculinity. Performative homomascularity manifests, I shall argue, in a manner that resembles hegemonic masculinity within these filmic communities. Therefore, homomascularity is used as a conceptual lens to examine this, as seen in the protagonists of *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*.

#### **1.4. Problem statement, research questions and sub-objectives**

Using the concept of homomascularity and the theory of gender performativity in my reading of *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*, I argue that hegemonic masculinity, as displayed in the two films, may be critiqued and challenged by the use of film style and elements such as camera angle, lighting, shot, film form, and *mise-en-scène*. This study is concerned with the performativity of homomasculine identities portrayed by the films' main characters, namely Francois van Heerden in *Skoonheid* and Janno in *Die Stropers*. More specifically, this project explores how these characters enforce and legitimise hegemonic masculinist identities through their performance of homomascularity.

From this problem statement, the following research questions and objectives can be formulated:

- 2.1.1. What are the effects of social and cultural norms on the protagonists in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*? *The first objective of this study is to determine what social and cultural norms are prevalent in Francois and Janno's respective filmic societies, and what effect these norms have on the protagonists.*
- 2.1.2. How do social and cultural norms affect the protagonists' gender performativity? *The objective of this question is to determine how social and cultural norms affect the protagonists' gender performativity within their respective filmic societies.*
- 2.1.3. How and why are homomasculine identities performed by the protagonists in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*? *This question is answered by exploring the performative strategies that Francois and Janno adopt to maintain the hierarchical positions afforded to them by their masculine identities within their respective filmic societies.*
- 2.1.4. How does Francois and Janno's gender performativity inform and legitimise hegemonic masculine identities defined by Afrikaner nationalist discourse within their social and cultural milieu? *Finally, the third objective of this study is to determine how hegemonic gender performance within conservative Afrikaner communities, as illustrated in the two films, legitimises hegemonic Afrikaner nationalist norms and ideals predicated on implicit gendered hierarchies.*

### **1.5. Central theoretical statement**

In this study, I argue that the films *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*, through the main protagonists' performance of homomascularity, may unintentionally reinforce hegemonic masculine ideals produced by Afrikaner nationalism, and at the same time, the films expose and question the problematic nature of these ideals. For this study, the films serve as visual resources to show how the main protagonists of the films, Francois and Janno, use performativity to hide their 'illicit' desires and assure themselves of and maintain their hierarchical positions within the conservative Afrikaner societies represented in the films. The need to emphasise their masculinity within these societies speaks to the severe societal constraints on Afrikaner men in the films. It provides insight into the attitudes towards homosexuality and homosexual men in these communities. The films demonstrate how the main and supporting characters' reactions to and discussions about homosexual men reinforce dominant stereotypes about these marginalised identities within the Afrikaner communities depicted in the films. The reinforcement of hegemonic masculine ideals is encouraged by Francois and Janno in terms of how they respond to certain situations in the films. When confronted with their hidden homosexual desires, Francois and Janno's hegemonic masculine façades break, leading to anxiety and violence. Through my analysis of visual representation within the films, I argue that the protagonists' homomascularity performativity can firstly be read as a critique about how the societal constraints in these Afrikaner communities negatively affect the identity construction of homosexual men. Secondly, *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* may also reinforce the hegemonic masculine ideals that are prominent in the Afrikaner communities depicted in these films.

### **1.6. Methodology**

This study is based on qualitative research, consisting of two parts: a literature study, and an analysis and interpretation of *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* drawing on film studies as discipline. The literature study forms the theoretical basis for this study from which an appropriate method is developed by identifying certain key concepts. Specifically, these key concepts, which are described below, are gathered from film studies. These key concepts are then used to analyse and interpret the two chosen films.

### 1.6.1. Literature study

I will look at critical scholarship on Afrikaner nationalism, identity and gender performativity to examine how Afrikaner masculinity is idealised by the societies depicted in the films and how the two protagonists perform it. A discussion of Afrikaner nationalist discourse serves as a precursor to investigating ideas about masculinity as depicted in the two films, and Anne McClintock's writings on nationalism and gender in *Family feuds: gender, nationalism and the family* (1993) serve as the primary source for this discussion in my study. I also look at essays in AM Grundlingh and S Huigen's *Van Volksmoeder tot Fokofpolisiekar: Kritiese opstelle oor Afrikaanse herinneringsplekke* (2008) to supplement this discussion.

Judith Butler's *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (1999) and its sequel, *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of sex* (1993), as well as Jack Fritcher's influential article *Framing keywords of queer and popular culture* (2005) are used as primary sources to discuss homomascularity and performativity. Regarding a discussion on homomascularity within a South African context, I use two articles by Theo Sonnekus, namely *Macho men and the queer imaginary: A critique of selected gay 'colonial' representations of homomascularity* (2009) and *'We're not faggots!': Masculinity, homosexuality and the representation of Afrikaner men who have sex with men in the film Skoonheid and online* (2013). Sonnekus situates his study within the same context and addresses similar issues identified in my study.

Keyan G. Tomaselli's book *The cinema of apartheid: race and class in South African film* (originally published in 1988) is a seminal source in the field of film studies in South Africa. While Tomaselli explores the representation of race and class in South African cinema, the book does not address the issue of gender or sexuality. For this reason, I will not be using Tomaselli's work in my study. The book does, however, highlight a research gap in terms of the representation of queer identities in South African, and specifically Afrikaans, films. Martin P Botha's scholarship is currently the primary writing on South African film history and the visibility of queer identities within the industry. His online articles *Homosexuality and South African cinema* (2003) and *The representation of gays and lesbians in South African cinema 1985-2013* (2013) provide in-depth discussions on LGBTQ+ visibility in South African cinema and serve as my primary source of information on the topic. I will also be consulting several sources on film theory to aid in my visual analysis and interpretation of the films. These sources will provide the appropriate language and terminology to be used in a study focussed on film. Among others, the primary source I use is David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson's *Film Art: an introduction* (2020).

A Nexus search has indicated that no similar study has been registered.

### 1.6.2. Analysis and interpretation of films

The method with which the chosen films are analysed is informed by the key theoretical concepts, namely homomasculine performativity and hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity. Firstly, selected sequences are discussed to highlight specific elements important for analysing the films and central elements of my study, such as the film's plot, themes and narrative development. In *Skoonheid*, the analysed scenes show Francois's apprehension about his own homomasculine identity and other expressions of homosexuality. It shows him simultaneously performing hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity and homomascularity, demonstrating the connections between Afrikaner nationalism and heteronormative masculinity. Within these scenes, the contradictions and conflicts that underline Afrikaner homomascularity are highlighted.

Performativity includes everything from a person's dress, posture, hand gestures, tone of voice and choice of vocabulary, and therefore I examine how the protagonists' gender performativity in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* contributes to their inadvertent legitimising of hegemonic masculine ideals. In *Die Stropers*, I compare and contrast scenes where Janno herds cattle with his father with scenes in his bedroom when he is vulnerable. Scenes where Janno plays rugby with the other boys in the film contrast a macho, aggressive sport played in the cold and hard soil to the warm embrace of his best friend. Following this discussion, an analysis is presented, guided by the key theoretical concepts highlighted above. This analysis investigates contradictions that seem to underlie homomascularity and gender performativity in these two films. I will also be looking at elements such as camera angle, lighting, shot, film form, and *mise-en-scène* to explore certain themes such as isolation and oppression.

### 1.7. Work plan

This introductory chapter of my study briefly outlines the theoretical points of departure, namely homomascularity and performativity. It also includes contextualisation of the films, which consists of a preliminary discussion on homosexual representation within South African and Afrikaans films. In this chapter, I provided a problem statement, research questions and objectives, the scope of the study, a brief literature review, and the research methodology.

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of Afrikaner nationalism in its development and history in South Africa to underscore the discourse's influence on idealised masculinity in Afrikaner communities. In this chapter, I further discuss Afrikaner nationalist discourse in post-apartheid South Africa by investigating two important devices that signify a continuation and revival of

certain Afrikaner nationalist ideals in contemporary South Africa, specifically among Afrikaans communities as depicted in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*. These devices include myth-making practices and the familial structure of nations and national communities. The place of homosexual identities within this national structure is also considered at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 3 focuses on the main theoretical concepts of this study, namely performativity, hegemonic masculinity and homomascularity. As well as giving definitions of the concepts, this chapter also considers the overlaps between them, particularly how homomascularity is performed as a type of hegemonic masculinity within queer communities. Afrikaner masculinity, its historical roots, essential characteristics, and how this identity manifests in post-apartheid South Africa is also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 follows with a discussion of selected scenes from the films. This chapter also contains an analysis of the two films regarding the discussions in Chapters 2 and 3. The concluding chapter will include a summary of the study and concluding thoughts and considerations.

## CHAPTER 2: HOMOSEXUAL IDENTITIES WITHIN AFRIKANER NATIONALIST DISCOURSE: MYTHS, FAMILIES AND HISTORY

*“Daar is so min van ons oor, Janno. Afrikaners... Janno, as ons nie one eie mense invat nie, wie dink jy gaan dit doen?”* (“There are so few of us left, Janno. Afrikaners... If we don’t take in our own people, who will?”) – Marie, *Die Stropers*

The statement above from Janno’s mother, Marie, creates the sense of a marginalised group who must care for one another to ensure the survival of the group and their culture. Therefore, the maintenance and perpetuation of Afrikaner ideals are essential, as this ensures the continuation of hegemonic ideals in Afrikaner societies in contemporary South Africa. The following chapter provides a brief overview of Afrikaner nationalism in terms of its development and history in South Africa to provide relevant context about the discourse’s influence on idealised masculinity in Afrikaner communities and how this idealisation contributes to Francois and Janno’s identity construction in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*. Firstly, a very brief discussion on nationalism is given to determine a definition thereof within the context of this study. The chapter also discusses Afrikaner nationalist discourse in post-apartheid South Africa to show how certain ideologies are still perpetuated in Afrikaner communities. Two devices have been identified to substantiate this discussion. I argue that these devices function to perpetuate Afrikaner nationalist ideals in conservative post-apartheid Afrikaner communities, as depicted in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*. The first constitutes myth-making practices, and the second, the familial structure of nations and national communities. Next, a discussion on the place assigned to homosexual identities in the national structure is provided. References to *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* are made throughout the chapter to demonstrate how the concepts mentioned above are highlighted within the films and how these concepts contribute to the identity construction of the two protagonists. This discussion also serves to provide important context for the analysis later in the study.

Various authors have extensively researched and commented on the hegemonic and homogeneous ideas surrounding nationalism and Afrikaner nationalism<sup>12</sup>. My purpose in this chapter is not to provide any new insights into the ideologies perpetuated by Afrikaner

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<sup>12</sup> Grundlingh & Huigen, *Van Volksmoeder tot Fokopolisiekar: Kritiese opstelle oor Afrikaanse herinneringsplekke* (2008); Webb & Kriel, *Afrikaans and Afrikaner nationalism* (2000); Van der Westhuizen, *Sitting pretty: White Afrikaans women in postapartheid South Africa*; De Klerk, F.A. van Jaarsveld’s *The awakening of Afrikaner nationalism after fifty years* (2008); Louw, *The troubled Afrikaner-tribe of South Africa: a political-historical perspective: 1652 – 2020* (2020); Suzman, *Ethnic nationalism and state power: the rise of Irish nationalism, Afrikaner nationalism and Zionism* (1999).

nationalism, but rather to provide sufficient contextual information for my overarching argument and to draw connections between ideological underpinnings of Afrikaner nationalism and my foci, including hegemonic masculinity, performativity, homomascularity and Afrikaans cinema. Therefore, I only briefly discuss the history and context of the ideologies, and mainly focus on essential concepts within Afrikaner nationalist discourse. The following discussion on nationalism includes arguments from key thinkers such as Benedict Anderson (1936-2015) and Ernest Gellner (1925-1995) as well as authors who focus specifically on Afrikaner nationalism.

## **2.1. Defining nationalism**

Anderson's book *Imagined communities* (first published in 1983) is a seminal work for studies of nationalism (Fögen & Warren, 2016:3; Harvey, 2018: 6), and serves as one of the main points of reference for my discussion on nationalism. Anderson (2006:6) describes a nation as 'imagined' since not all members know each other, but all members still have a sense of connection to one another (Wakefield *et al.*, 2016:449). Wakefield *et al.* (2016:449) argue that community members are also imagined since they represent the values and characteristics of the nation. This can also result in the community members thinking and acting in line with these values and characteristics (Wakefield *et al.*, 2016:449). The continuation of this sense of unity among community members depends on the repetition of cultural rituals (De Klerk, 2008:346; Fögen & Warren, 2016:3). Anderson's imagined nations form what can be described as fictive ethnicities. According to James Harvey (2018:8), fictive ethnicity describes a feeling of safety because of the association with the nation. Once fictive ethnicity is established, and the community's cultural rituals are repeated and represented, ethnic nationalism is bound to thrive.

According to Gellner (1983:1), nationalism is primarily centred on politics, with its members having the primary aim of defending national culture. Fögen and Warren (2016:5) also argue that nationalism selectively uses the existing cultural ideologies and transforms them radically. Harvey (2018:7) and Auestad (2014:xx) agree that the nation relies on a collective sense of belonging and that its legitimacy relies on convincing the popular masses of its representation of a cultural unit. This is done through channels such as mass media or the education system.

Anderson's (2006) argument about the primacy of the media in producing and sustaining the *imagined community* is of particular interest here. Anderson (2006:114) argues that "in nation-building policies, one sees both a genuine, popular nationalist enthusiasm and a systematic... instilling of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational system, administrative regulations." Pretorius (2014:185) states that the constructed national community included relied on narratives that were spread through media such as the journal *Koers* (first published in

1935) and magazines including *Inspan* (first published in 1978) and *Huisgenoot* (first published in 1916) (Pretorius, 2014:185).

For my examination of nationalist discourse, it is also important to define what is meant by 'ideology', a complex term widely contested within social science. In his influential article, *Ideology: A definitional analysis* (1997), John Gerring critiques established approaches to the concept of ideology and its limitations. According to Gerring (1997:980), "ideology refers to a set of idea-elements that are bound together, that belong to one another in a non-random fashion." These idea elements are then used to strengthen institutions by promoting support for a specific system. The use of propaganda can aid in the establishment of certain norms and values that bind individuals to a community (Gerring, 1997:980). Furthermore, ideologies are considered a tool for group identification where individuals use them to identify with a specific social group. In this way, ideologies serve to sustain relations of domination within society, as in nationalism.

It is also important to briefly discuss the more nuanced ways ideology is perpetuated, maintained, and enacted by a population or nation and groups or communities. According to Turner (1993:133,136), for ideology to work as a structuring principle, it needs to be framed as an unspoken, nuanced property of the natural world rather than human interest. According to Critten (2015:153), exposure to cultural products (such as films and books) can influence a population to engage in hegemonic ideologies. In other words, cultural products may affect individuals to behave in a certain way, adopt practical attitudes, and participate in certain practices that, in turn, contribute to the perpetuation and maintenance of hegemonic ideologies

When looking at the above discussion, it can be stated that nationalism has a profound effect on the identities of national members and may influence them to prioritise the nation's interest above all else. Therefore, it can be determined that nationalism can be defined as a politically-driven, ethnically-oriented ideology that constitutes an imagined community.

## **2.2. Afrikaner nationalism: a brief overview and key tenets**

Afrikaner nationalism is an exclusionary ethnonationalism (Webb & Kriel, 2000:25) and, according to Fourie (2015:246), signs of Afrikaner nationalism can be observed as early as 1877, during the British annexation of the Transvaal. Later events such as the British victory of the South African War (1899 – 1902) resulted in the development of Afrikaner nationalism as Afrikaners strived for self-determination and constitutional reform "to escape the effects of imperialism imposed by the British" (Allen, 2014:466). Afrikaner nationalism significantly advanced during the 1930s and 1940s and gained success among the white majority (Gouws, 2008:184; Van der Merwe, s.a.:34). This success resulted in the electoral victory of the National

Party (NP) in 1948 and the implementation of the apartheid system (Vestergaard, 2011:20; De Klerk, 2008:343). The formation of the *Broederbond* and variants such as the FAK (The Federation for Afrikaans Cultural Organisations) in the 1920s, together with the establishment of the Purified National Party (GNP) in the early 1930s, signalled the beginning of the nationalist movement in South Africa (Steyn, 2019:15; Suzman, 1999:30). According to Suzman (1999:30), “These organisations were able to capitalise on the foundations laid by earlier movements, such as the Afrikaner Bond, and establish a fully articulated ethnic nationalist ideology together with a solid organisational base around which to build a nationalist movement.” Afrikaner nationalism combines religion, the Afrikaans language, a constructed history, and whiteness as central tenets (Verwey & Quayle, 2012:553; Fourie, 2015:274). The ideology was greatly influenced by anti-British sentiment which grew strong among Afrikaners after the South African War (1899 – 1902) (Verwey & Quayle, 2012:553; Steyn, 2019:13). This Afrikaner culture and the efforts to isolate it from other South African cultures to preserve it influenced all parts of South African social life (Louw, 2020:29).

The institutions mentioned above were explicitly geared to promote the image of unity among white, Afrikaans-speaking South Africans and to construct a *volk* by forming alliances between different groups of people (Steyn, 2019:16; Fourie, 2015:257). Nationalist-constructed histories and ideologies were taught in schools and circulated in the population using mass media (Auestad, 2014:xvii). The belief in a divine destiny was promoted as a historical fact, and prominent male Afrikaner figures from the past were revered as national heroes (De Klerk, 2008:345). These figures include gendered images of the ideal Afrikaner male such as the patriarch, the Voortrekker, and the *boer* – all hardworking, religious, and brave pioneers. Du Preez (cited by Cloete, 1992:45) identified a series of master narratives that frequently occurred in school textbooks and continuously emphasised the idea of the permanence of the nation. Some of these grand narratives include the dominance of whites over blacks; South Africa as belonging to white Afrikaners; the *volk* as a people chosen by God to fulfil the special task of growing the nation; and white Afrikaners as under threat from cultural extinction. According to Cloete (1992:45), “the systematic repetition of these narratives served to reinforce an identity based on a common culture and tradition.”

According to Auestad (2014:xxii), nationalism takes shape as new nations claim their independence from other states regarded as oppressors, and draw on the rhetoric of freedom in legitimising themselves. The author explains that this new nation often develops by creating fear among its members of a perceived threat through the use of visual media (Auestad, 2014:xxii). This creation of an imagined threat can lead to members of the nation marginalising and oppressing those (‘others’) they deem to be a threat to the nation’s survival (Auestad, 2014:xxii). The new Afrikaner nationalists amplified the notion of racial and cultural threat by adding

ethnicity to the existing racial categorisation, separating white English speakers from white Afrikaans speakers (Vestergaard, 2001:20). This contributed a unique *volksgeist*<sup>13</sup> to the mythical and imagined Afrikaner volk (De Klerk, 2008:345).

During the 1930s and 1940s, the imagined community of Afrikaners included narratives of a heroic past and divine purpose (De Klerk, 2008:345). These ideas were distributed through print media, popular magazines, and newspapers such as *Die Burger* (first published in 1915) (Pretorius, 2014:185). The media also spread and endorsed a nationalist reading of history, thereby being central in creating a totality of thoughts familiar to a group where the nation is imagined rather than directly experienced (Auestad, 2014:xviii). By 1937, the key tenets of the nationalist-constructed history and ideals were successfully spread by the media (Suzman, 1999:40; Steyn, 2019:65). Creating a national iconography was critical to the overall formation of a separate national identity that would formally demonstrate South Africa's separation from Britain (Balibar, 1990:348).

One of the most important developments stemming from Afrikaner nationalism was the development of Afrikaans as an independent language (Kuitenbrouwer, 2012:256). According to Verwey and Quayle (2012:553), "language is a complex matrix of symbols" used by groups to express themselves, and it is linked to notions of group identity. The struggle for Afrikaans as an independent language was important for justifying white Afrikaans-speakers' political authority (Webb & Kriel, 2000:19). A national school system and state-subsidised cultural organisations such as media outlets like *Huisgenoot* and the *Burger Boekhandel* publishing house contributed to the standardisation of the language (Fourie, 2015:257; Auestad, 2014:xvii). According to Louw (2020:11), in the national imaginary, Afrikaans became a unique ethno-language, representing the exclusive heritage of some Afrikaners. This is prominently displayed in *Die Stropers* as the plot is set against the backdrop of a conservative, Afrikaans-speaking white community in the Free State. When Pieter is brought into the family, he is expected to speak Afrikaans. When he does not, his identity and belonging as a white Afrikaner are questioned.

South Africa's contributions in the Second World War (1939-1945) against Nazi Germany led the NP to victory in the 1948 elections; soon after, apartheid policies were implemented and Afrikaners' unique group identity was emphasised (Van der Merwe, s.a.:37; Webb & Kriel, 2000:38; Louw, 2020:7). From the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century until the 1970s, Afrikaners were defined by the colour of their skin and the Afrikaans language, thereby excluding coloured and black Afrikaans speakers (Steyn, 2019:9-10). Van der Westhuizen (2016:1) believes that "Afrikaner homogeneity was a carefully constructed exercise and process

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<sup>13</sup> *Volksgeist* or national character refers to a set of cultural characteristics (such as language or folklore) that define a nation (Rai, 2010).

of intense internalisation that formed an essential part of the collective *volks*-consciousness.” With the fall of the apartheid regime, the Christian nationalist government lost the political power to define the identities of the individuals in the nation (Vestergaard, 2001:22). Since then, the political and cultural circumstances of Afrikaners have drastically changed.

After the NP’s victory in the 1948 election, the ethnically exclusive image of the *Voortrekker* became a national emblem (Van Robbroeck, 2008:129). This image of the *Voortrekker* as national hero, along with key symbols such as the *fakkel* (torch) and the *ossewa* (ox-cart), was forced onto Afrikaners in a variety of visual mediums – from postage stamps, national monuments, and magazines (Van Robbroeck, 2008:129). Along with the images of the *Voortrekker* man, women were also idealised as *volksmoeders* (Brink, 2008:7). The *volksmoeder* myth manifested in popular visual culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in magazines such as *Die Boerevrou* (1919 – 1931). Anton van Wouw’s sculpture *Noitjie van die onderveld* (1907) appeared on the cover of the first edition of *Die Boerevrou* as an ideal for Afrikaner women (Freschi *et al.*, 2020:17). According to Kruger (cited by Freschi *et al.*, 2020:17), the image of the *volksmoeder* demonstrates how “nationalist art and visual culture were deployed in the gendering of Afrikaner nationalism.” This also demonstrates the importance of visual myths in the construction of the Afrikaner imaginary

## **2.3. Myth-making and the family**

### **2.3.1. Myth-making**

As I have discussed, nations can be identified in terms of particular cultural habits, practices and traditions. This includes unique folklore, religious and political beliefs, education, and patriarchal principles (Louw, 2020:18). The group identity of the Afrikaner nation was, in part, constructed by (replaced incited) practices of myth-making that contributed to a unitary identity, tradition and culture, and certain myths – such as Jan van Riebeeck as *volksvader* – were presented as fact and ultimately believed as such (Webb & Kriel, 2000:25). Before moving on to a more in-depth discussion about Afrikaner myths and practices of myth-making within Afrikaner nationalism, it is necessary first to discuss the concept of myth as it relates to ideology and nationalism. The question of what ‘myth’ is and how it functions, as articulated in Roland Barthes’s *Mythologies* (1957), is of interest here.

According to Barthes (1991:107), ‘myth’ is a system used to convey meaning (much like speech). Myth is a form with historical limitations, conditions of use, and relevance to society

(Barthes, 1991:107). Barthes (1991:108) believes that speech is a kind of message, since it can take the form of representations such as writing, photography, or film, to name a few.

Because Barthes (1991:110-115) believes that “myth is a type of speech chosen by history”, he examines the concept from a semiotic perspective, distinguishing between the linguistic system and the mythical system and between meaning and form<sup>14</sup>. According to Barthes (1991:115), myth identifies something as an ideology and informs the population, imposing it on them. The components of mythical speech (language and different modes of representation) are minimised and made to serve a purely signifying function (Barthes, 1991:113). “Myth sees in them [the materials of mythical speech] only the same raw material; their unity is that they all come down to the status of a mere language” (Barthes, 1991:113). The signifier of myth ambiguously presents itself as both meaning and form – as meaning, it already postulates a reading (Barthes, 1991:116). This is because signification is already built into the meaning, and myth takes hold of that hollow signification and exploits it.

Barthes writes that when myth becomes form, it empties itself, and history evaporates, leaving only *form* and creating a regression where meaning becomes form and the linguistic sign becomes a mythical signifier (Barthes, 1991:166). However, ‘form’ does not stifle ‘meaning’; it only deprives it and holds meaning at its disposal (Barthes, 1991:117). Form hides in meaning as it becomes a reserve of history that form can call on and dismiss (Barthes, 1991:117). This form of myth employs and exploits historical signifiers, while at the same time emptying it of the historical. In other words, the signifier of myth might appear historical, may look like signified proof, but Barthes (1991:117) states that the form of myth can sometimes be an artificial symbol.

The purpose of myth is, therefore, to transform history into what appears as natural fact, made clear by Barthes (1991:128) when he states that “what causes mythical speech to be uttered is perfectly explicit, but it is immediately frozen into something natural; it is not read as a motive, but as a reason!” For the so-called ‘myth-reader’, a concept or idea is connected to a signified image (Barthes, 1991:129). The picture, therefore, constitutes the concept, “as if the signifier gave the foundation to the signified” (Barthes, 1991:129). Therefore, myth can be understood as depoliticised speech as myth does not obliterate things; it talks about them, but purifies them and makes them innocent (Barthes, 1991:143).

Within the context of this study, myth serves to produce and sustain nationalistic ideals in order to maintain social and economic power within Afrikaner society. In a pamphlet written during the

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<sup>14</sup> Although an in-depth semiotic reading of Afrikaner nationalism is beyond the scope of this study, semiotics provides a useful way of looking at and understanding the concept of myth.

South African War, titled *A Century of Wrong* (1899), Jan Smuts (1870-1950) (cited by Suzman, 1999:33) writes: “[o]nce more the day has dawned in our blood-written history when we are compelled to take up arms and renew the struggle for liberty and existence and to entrust our national cause to that Providence which has led our people by miracles to South Africa.” In this quote, the use of words and phrases such as ‘blood-written history’, ‘national cause’, ‘Providence’, and ‘miracles’ demonstrates how some Afrikaner political leaders aided in the creation of a historical and constructed history of the Afrikaner nation. This mythical history relied on narratives of the victimisation of Afrikaners, a God-given purpose, and hard work and dedication to uphold the national cause. This shows how historical myth-making by political leaders was deployed, and the groundwork was being laid for a separate political identity built around an ethnic core of language and history (Steyn, 2019:14; Giliomee, 2009:123; Suzman, 1999:33; Webb & Kriel, 2000:19).

Religion was a prominent part of the mobilisation of Afrikaner nationalism, and the identification with Christian mythology led to myth-making processes that glorified the history of the Afrikaner *volk*, its leaders, culture, heritage, and language as divinely preordained (Fourie, 2015:251; Webb & Kriel, 2000:25). In the pivotal text, *From apartheid to liberation: Calvinism and the shaping of ethical belief in South Africa* (1991), Renick investigates the influence of religion on South African morals. Renick (1991:129) suggests that Afrikaner Calvinism especially contributed to Afrikaner nationalism and, accordingly, apartheid ideology. Paul Kruger’s<sup>15</sup> (1825-1904) (cited by Hughey, 1987:23) reference to a ‘sacred history’ and Afrikaners as part of a chosen *volk* demonstrates that Afrikaner history was rewritten based on a Christian-nationalistic ideology. Consequently, the Voortrekkers and the Republican Afrikaners viewed themselves as a chosen people and compared themselves to the Israelites of the Old Testament (Webb & Kriel, 2000:25). This belief was used to justify the oppression of ‘other’ races and racial segregation, thereby creating a historical myth (Webb & Kriel, 2000:25).

According to Sonnekus (2016:20), in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, myth-making practices included “the over-articulation and obsessive repetition of selected events, symbols, or personas that glorified Afrikaner nationalism.” The ideologically-driven surge of interest in the Great Trek lamented the figure of the Voortrekker as an icon of some white Afrikaans-speaking communities, and as a beacon of Afrikaner nationalism (Van Robbroeck, 2021). Although the actual Voortrekkers were not concerned with creating a nation-state, the Great Trek has been central to Afrikaner nationalist myths (Petzold, 2007:117; Webb & Kriel, 2000:25). Van der Merwe (s.a.:36) argues that the history of the Great Trek was intentionally constructed and defended by Afrikaner

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<sup>15</sup> Kruger was president of the Transvaal Republic (later divided into Limpopo, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, and North-West) between 1883 and 1902 and was instrumental in the establishment of the *Gereformeerde Kerke van Zuid-Afrika* (Kruger, 2021).

nationalists. Gustav Preller (1875-1943; journalist and linguist, and co-writer of *De Voortrekkers*) was responsible for the popularisation of Retief as the victim of Dingane's 'treachery', and he accordingly transformed the tale of the Trek into an important event for the construction of Afrikaner identity (Petzold, 2007:117). A set of myths informed re-interpretations of the Trek that appropriate specific signifiers or signs such as the image of the male *boer* as protector and leader or Afrikaner women as a modest and loyal wife and mother (see Figure 2.1 below). These signifiers were used to construct a particular Afrikaner identity, nation, historical events, and shared cultural characteristics (Pretorius, 2014:180).

These cultural characteristics, such as respect for history and traditions, a unique language, and shared history and faith, were used to construct a mythic image of the Afrikaner as overwhelmingly masculine (Freschi *et al.*, 2020:18). According to Sonnekus (2016:20), history professes objectivity and fixes the nation's origins in mythic time, giving authority to the representation and enactment of the characteristics of a nation. The retroactive incorporation of the Trek as Afrikaner nationalist history serves as an example of nationalists who selectively deploy historical incidents as the nation's points of origin. As early as the 1890s, Paul Kruger explicitly asserted that no one whose descendants had not been part of the Great Trek could regard themselves as Afrikaners (Suzman, 1999:32). Therefore, this can be seen as very early advocating for a more exclusive ethnic nationalism that included only white Afrikaans speakers.

Nationalism is responsible for organising the ethnic origins of national or group identity, which, in the case of some Afrikaners, comprises several critical socio-cultural features and historical events and developments (Sonnekus, 2016:17). The following is printed on the front page of *Die Patriot*, a magazine first published 1876: "if any Afrikaner asks us what our purpose is, our answer is to stand for our language, our nation and our country" (Suzman, 1999:32). This quote emphasises the feeling of national identity and lays the foundation of a national myth that, as discussed, would later become a central pillar within Afrikaner nationalist discourse. This reminds of Janno's mother, Marie, who perpetuates the idea that Afrikaners are God's chosen people and that the ideals perpetuated by Afrikaner nationalists must be kept alive by her family, and especially her children. The myth-making practices of 20<sup>th</sup>-century nationalists were carried over into post-apartheid South Africa and still contribute to the identity construction of some Afrikaners. This is mostly premised on the survival of the Afrikaans language under post-apartheid Black rule. According to Fourie (2015:281), the struggle for the survival of Afrikaans suggests "that the language struggle is still used by many as a pretext for the continuation of apartheid." Contemporary Afrikaner nationalist discourse, therefore, continues to appropriate the historical myths of the Afrikaners and thereby constitutes an imagined Afrikaner community in post-apartheid South Africa.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century re-interpretation of the Great Trek to create an exclusive Afrikaner national identity brings the discussion to the patriarchal structure of nations and nationalism. According to McClintock (1993:69), “each reinterpreted Trek is represented as a family presided over by a single, epic male patriarch,” emphasising the importance of family, male authority, and masculinist identity within Afrikaner communities. These ideas are further explained in the following section.

### **2.3.2. The nation as family**

Feminist researchers have explored how nationalist representations of community and identity use gendered constructions (McClintock, 1993:71) and argue that some depictions of national identity rely on the notion of family. McClintock (1993:64) explains that these representations imply an “organic unity of interests that promote a sense of horizontal community.” The national identities discussed above often emphasise a national community’s shared ethnic background and common ancestry (De Klerk, 2008:343). This emphasis on bloodline and ethnicity has had an impact on the construction of gender and sexuality. Therefore, as Wakefield *et al.* (2016:449) argue, if belonging to a nation depends on common ancestry, then national identity construction relies on sexual reproduction, reproducing heteronormative social roles.

Lauenstein, Murer, Boos and Reicher (2015:309) argue that the metaphor of an ‘imagined family’ is helpful when trying to understand the relationship between gender, nationhood and family. Auestad (2014:xxii) and Lauenstein *et al.* (2015:311) argue that the concept of the ‘national family’ includes numerous facets of social organisation. These firstly include the notion that families provide a structure for social interactions. Secondly, families generally have clear social roles and responsibilities, which are determined based on gender. Thirdly, the concept of family likely has positive emotional associations for most individuals. Lastly, family is associated with the idea of blood relatedness. Therefore, using the family as a metaphor for a nation re-establishes the idea that social relations are biologically determined.

Within the *imagined community*, it is proposed that there is equality between all community members, but within the national family, there are clear hierarchies based on age and gender (Vincent, 2000:64). According to Lauenstein *et al.* (2015:312), “a family metaphor is descriptive in terms of structure and prescriptive in terms of roles and responsibilities.” In *Skoonheid*, Francois is the breadwinner in the family, and his wife, in turn, becomes the homemaker and caring mother (see Figure 2.1). Similarly, in *Die Stropers*, Janno’s father runs his farm inherited from his father, a respected member of the family and community, and it is accepted that the eldest son will inherit and take over the farm (see Figure 2.2). Janno’s mother takes on a similar

role to that of Francois's wife, playing the mother and homemaker. However, she is also headstrong and determined to support her husband and keep her family on the right path of religion in the service of 'saving' the *volk* from extinction.



Figure 2.1: Oliver Hermanus. *Soonheid*. 2011. Francois as head of the household, seated at the dinner table with his family



Figure 2.2: Etienne Kallos. *Die Stropers*. 2019. Janno's family prepare to say grace as they gather for breakfast at the table

Marie's devotion to the Afrikaner *volk* and her religion parallels the *volksmoeder* ideology, which, according to Allen (2014:469), is a male constructed image of Afrikaner women. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these images included national media images and various representations within nationalist discourse, emphasising women's expected servitude to the *volk* by upholding moral standards, educating children in the ways of the Afrikaners, and promoting the Afrikaans language (Vincent, 2000:61). Afrikaner nationalist discourse also emphasised that Afrikaner women were expected to submit to the male head of the household and collaborate to establish Afrikaner nationalism's *volks*-utopia (Allen, 2014:466).

#### **2.4. Afrikaner identity in post-apartheid South Africa**

In post-apartheid South Africa, according to Verwey and Quayle (2012:556),

the social revisions brought about by the political realignment of the different population groups in relation to each other are far-reaching, complex and multiple. Not least among these is the re-negotiating of identities. South Africans, willingly or unwillingly, successfully or unsuccessfully, are engaged in one of the most profound collective psychological adjustments happening in the contemporary world.

During the apartheid era, Afrikaner nationalism was pivotal in constructing a narrative that made Afrikaner identity the most powerful ethnic identity. However, the end of apartheid also signified the end of the dominance of Afrikaner nationalist discourse within the political sphere (Van der Westhuizen, 2017:159). As a result, white South Africans have faced changes in their position in South Africa since the early 1990s. However, as Alsheh and Elliker (2014:429) argue, "the accord to formally end apartheid did not bring an end to efforts advocating the preservation and promotion of Afrikaans as a language, a culture and a family of identities and communities."

As Anderson (2006:42), Auestad (2014:xviii), Verwey and Quayle (2012:556), and Vestergaard (2001:22), have argued, collective symbols such as language are instrumental in the formation of national identity. In post-apartheid South Africa, Afrikaner nationalist history is de-legitimised, as demonstrated by the loss of nationalist symbols such as the national flag and anthem (Vestergaard, 2001:24). The disappearance of these old Afrikaner symbols has fundamentally influenced the construction of a shared Afrikaner identity.

The Afrikaans language has always been an important part of Afrikaner nationalist propaganda and the construction of Afrikaner identity, and it is traditionally considered the source of Afrikaner history (Kuitenbrouwer, 2012:256). However, since South Africa's first democratic

election in 1994, the country's language policy has been revised to include 11 official languages, signalling Afrikaans' fall from grace as the language of state power (Verwey & Quayle, 2012:554). Therefore, it can be argued that the end of apartheid and the subsequent demotion of white Afrikaners from rulers to just another minority ethnic group have left Afrikaners with an overwhelming crisis.

Steyn (cited by Verwey & Quayle, 2012:554) sums up this crisis as follows:

The future of the new democratic government is premised on the demise of everything that Afrikaner nationalism has always stood for. Afrikaners cannot escape the fact that the apartheid system was put in place in their name. The nationalist ideology that shaped the old South Africa, like all ethnocentric narratives, placed the Afrikaner in the centre. They were the most important population group: they were in charge.

Although Afrikaner nationalism generally ended with the first democratic election in 1994, there are still remnants of the ideology alive among white, Afrikaans-speaking citizens. It can be argued that since the fall of apartheid, Afrikaners feel confused about their place and identity in South Africa, culminating in the question: "Who are we?"

Danelle van Zyl (2008) argues that there is an increasing longing among Afrikaners for the values and security of the *platteland* (countryside). This longing is based on the re-conceptualisation of life on the countryside as simple and honest (van Zyl, 2008:127) – values attributable to Afrikaner nationalist discourse. The author speculates that this nostalgia within some Afrikaner communities seems to be a recent development as a nostalgic yearning to the countryside was never a prominent attribute of Afrikaner mentality (van Zyl, 2008:135). However, as Venter (2013:34) argues, most Afrikaners historically believe that they have a special bond with nature and rural areas.

An example of this nostalgia includes the *plaasroman* (farm novel) literary genre, popular during the 1930s to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Buxbaum, 2011:30). Buxbaum (2011:30) argues that the 20<sup>th</sup>-century farm novel symbolises a type of recourse to an idealised idea of the countryside and some Afrikaners' rural existence and land ownership. Similarly, Coetzee (1988:80-83) argues that certain social elements were brought to the forefront by Afrikaans novelists, including a longing for a 'peasant' way of life. That is, for an idealised, mythical lifestyle based on the imagined beauty and purity associated with people's primary bond with the earth obtained through a simple way of life. This can be seen in *Die Stropers* with how the landscape is idealised through long, wide and static shots. Scenes inside farmhouses are also tinted in sepia, linked to a nostalgia for an idealised Afrikaner past. *Die Stropers* can be

regarded as appropriating aspects of the farm novel to comment and critique the restrictive boundaries of the countryside.

Venter (2013:35) agrees with Buxbaum (2011) and Coetzee (1988) that the emergence of the farm novel is a direct consequence of the systematic change in living conditions and the cultural frame of reference of some Afrikaners that coincides with international and national economic hardship in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The genre's romanticised, idealised renditions of the family farm can be regarded as a type of escape to the past (De Klerk, 2008:345). This romanticising occurs in *Die Stropers*, where repeated landscape shots depict vast open plains and views of the farms in the isolated Free State town, idealising the landscape where the plot is set. According to Buxbaum (2011:30), a farm as an inheritance was once regarded as the birthright of every Afrikaner boy. The emphasis on birthright also establishes the importance of male inheritance in Afrikaner culture and, by implication, supports the group's legitimate ownership of the land. In *Die Stropers*, Janno is the eldest son of a prosperous farmer and, according to the traditional succession in rural Afrikaner families, he is destined to become the farm owner and continue the family business.

Often, the theme of a farm novel centres on the loss of the farm as a birthright, which is equated to a tragedy (Venter, 2013:36). Similarly, in *Die Stropers*, the plot centres on Janno's struggle for identity and proving himself superior to the newcomer Pieter, whom he perceives as a threat to his birthright. The story ends tragically with Janno burning a portion of his father's land, leaving the farm and retreating to the city. From one perspective, he succumbs to what is presumably the ultimate threat to what his family cherishes as the Afrikaner way of life – urbanisation and the expansion of metropolitan cities. From another perspective, this can also mean freedom from the restrictive social conditions in this Afrikaner community.

Place-identity plays a vital role in these films, as Francois and Janno's identities and underlying tensions and struggles are intimately linked to the countryside. Afrikaner identity is spatially organised by projecting an *imagined community* onto a national territory, argues Van der Westhuizen (2016:1). In other words, the communities in the films are informed through the protagonists' gender identification and performativity, and framed by their place-identity: Francois's masculinity is under threat from the supposed deviant sexuality of 'faggots' and 'non-whites', while Janno's position within a masculine environment is threatened by urbanisation, as personified through Pieter. However, Pieter also represents the prospect of sexual and social freedom, which may be why Janno decides to leave at the end of the film.

These films speak to the role of territories and 'comfort zones' in constructing and maintaining cultural identity (Sonnekus, 2013:31). However, the countryside is also a place of contestation

in these films. The protagonists' homosexual desires coincide with their Afrikaner identities as they attempt to negotiate their positions within the South African rural context where this very identity is considered 'ungodly' and unmanly. The countryside is idealised in both films using static long shots that frame the space as mythical and sacred, further emphasising the supposed immorality of Francois and Janno's hidden identities (see Figures 2.3 and 2.4). According to Kumalo (2019:3), the 'ungodliness' of queer identities threatens male Afrikaner identities and their assumed social power.



Figure 2.3: Etienne Kallos. *Die Stropers*. 2019. Wide angle shot of the Bethlehem landscape



Figure 2.4: Oliver Hermanus. *Schoonheid*. 2011. Wide angle shot of the Bloemfontein landscape

Coetzee (1988) and Buxbaum's (2011) view of the farm novel contradicts Van Zyl's (2008) remark that nostalgic longing for the countryside is a recent phenomenon within Afrikaner communities. Steyn (2019:110-111) agrees to the prevalence of this nostalgic longing, and this further speaks of the ongoing role of rural farm life in the psyche of some Afrikaners. From this discussion, it can be concluded that the Afrikaner as identity and concept cannot be examined without reference to the importance of land ownership and some Afrikaners' perceptions thereof.

Vestergaard (2001:22) states that the association with apartheid has harmed the reputability of Afrikaner identity. With the incompatibility of central tenets of with new liberal norms, the failure of Christian nationalism signals a massive shift in the identity construction of some Afrikaners (Vestergaard, 2001:22). The imagined history of Afrikaners has significantly contributed to the performativity of contemporary Afrikaner identities and the thinking on race and ethnicity (Louw, 2020:2). Davies (2007:357) argues that, in post-apartheid South Africa, 'an Afrikaner' can be defined as identifying with cultural homogeneity, which includes the Afrikaans language, whiteness, and awareness of being a political minority in South Africa. Therefore, many Afrikaners are no longer concerned with an ethnic background as the Afrikaner nationalists were, but rather with ensuring the survival of the Afrikaans language and culture (Davies, 2007:363). Interestingly, several Afrikaans films play on such themes, such as *Platteland*<sup>16</sup>(2011, written and directed by Sean Else) and *Treurgrond*<sup>17</sup>(2015, directed by Darrell Roodt).

In their article titled '*De la Rey*' and the revival of 'Boer heritage': Nostalgia in the post-apartheid Afrikaner (2011), Van der Waal and Robins discuss a prominent phenomenon in recent history where Afrikaners experience nostalgia and a strong conviction to defend their imagined history. They argue that the release of *De la Rey*<sup>18</sup> (released in 2006) (see Figure 2.5) embodies "a post-modern identity politics expressed through desires for cultural commodities rather than nationalist political traditions." Even though the artists claim that they wrote the song to express their Afrikaner pride, it quickly became associated with sensitive political issues about South

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<sup>16</sup> *Platteland* is a musical featuring popular Afrikaans music from various singers such as Bok van Blerk, Karlien van Jaarsveld, and Steve Hofmeyr (media update, 2011). The film follows farmer Riana van Niekerk (Lianie May) as she fights to keep her family's farm from being seized by Mike Ferreira (Steve Hofmeyr), ultimately being saved by a drifter who also becomes her love interest (media update, 2011). The film is quoted as having "a plotline straight out of the classic Westerns" (Moviesite, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> *Treurgrond* tells the story of a white, Afrikaans farming community threatened by an increasing number of farm attacks on its residents (Spling, 2015). The plot follows Lukas van Staden (Steve Hofmeyr) as he tries to protect his farm, family, and neighbours, not only from the attacks, but also from claims to their land (Moviesite, 2020).

<sup>18</sup> This song is written and performed by Afrikaans singer and songwriter, Bok van Blerk. The song and music video centre on General Koos De la Rey (1847-1914), who is a prominent and well-known figure in Afrikaner history because of his military prowess during the Second World War, and his involvement in the establishment of Afrikaner nationalism (Van der Waal & Robins, 2011:764).

Africa's history (McGreal, 2007). Critics of the song claimed that it was calling for the re-establishment of right-wing Afrikaner political and cultural power (Van der Waal & Robins, 2011:764). There were also claims that the artists were simply exploiting nostalgia and commodifying Afrikaner identity (Van der Waal & Robins, 2011:764).



Figure 2.5: Bok van Blerk. *De la Rey*. 2006. Bok van Blerk as a Boer soldier in his *De la Rey* music video

According to Van der Waal and Robins (2011:765), *De la Rey* uses nostalgia to convey the shared experiences and perceptions of some Afrikaners. It uses similar discourse and images as the Afrikaner nationalists, and repackages it for a white Afrikaans-speaking audience that identifies with and longs for the simplicity and freedom of a pre-apartheid *boer* past (De Klerk, 2008:345). The democratisation of South Africa put Afrikaners in a vulnerable position as they lost their former social and political privileges (Van der Waal & Robins, 2011:769), leading to a feeling of alienation that was confirmed by *De la Rey* and other songs such as *Afrikanerhart* (2009, Bok van Blerk) and *Ek bly 'n Boer* (2020, Jan Jan Jan). This feeling of being an outcast on several occasions found expression at live performances of *De la Rey*, where some audience members sang the 'old' Afrikaans national anthem (Van der Waal & Robins, 2011:769). The song also endorsed the need to keep the Afrikaans language and culture 'pure' (Van der Waal & Robins, 2011:770).

Van der Waal and Robins (2011:776) state that “the clamour surrounding *De la Rey* could also be seen as an example of how historical memory had been used to redefine the position of white Afrikaans-speakers in a changing society.” Therefore, the uproar points to the fact that Afrikaners are reassured about being offered continuity with the older generation’s heroic and nationalistic historical narrative. This also explains why many Afrikaners born before or during apartheid still feel an intimate connection to pre-democratic South Africa – it offers comfort and reassurance in a time when Afrikaner identity is uncertain.

## **2.5. Homosexual identities and the national family**

As discussed, mythical the Afrikaner nation is historically configured according to heterosexual family structures that rely on masculinised myths to promote the nation’s survival. Homosexuality can be regarded as a threat to the national family since normative heterosexuality is considered one of the central pillars of upholding a nation and its standards. Considering the historical context above, I investigate the construction of, and place assigned to homosexual identities as conceptualised within nationalist discourse. This is done to contextualise *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* within the socio-political landscape of contemporary South Africa.

According to Lauenstein *et al.* (2015:14), the notion of a heteronormative family suggests a sense of belonging and links to notions of blood relatedness. McClintock (1993:64) argues that the image of the national family

simplifies and reifies the complexity of nations and gender into a symbolic narrative offering an indispensable figure for sanctioning social hierarchy within a putative organic unity of interests. Since the subordination of woman to man, and child to adult, was deemed a natural fact, other forms of social hierarchy could be depicted in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature.

This would also suggest that homosexual identities do not fit into this familial structure and that the social difference that McClintock describes also applies to the divide that is (re-)produced between heterosexuality and homosexuality. This is important as it relates to ‘natural’ social hierarchy and the difference between sexualities constructed within ethnonationalist discourse. The portrayal of homosexuality as comedic, villainous, or sinful in South African film can be attributed to the nationalist view that homosexuality is ‘unmanly’ and degenerate. However, Winter (2018) argues that homosexual identities are incorporated into modern nations as they can uphold national values and contribute to the nation’s survival. This is done by identifying a

homosexual 'other' from which the ideal, masculinist, heterosexual subject – through comparison – derives his identity and value.

According to Winter (2018:109), “the family is encoded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as the natural and fundamental group unit of society ... entitled to protection by society and the State, and family is therefore considered the foundation of a nation.” Those opposing same-sex marriage reference the ‘unnaturalness’ of being homosexual, ‘traditional’ values, and a concern for the nation’s survival (Crous, 2006:53). The traditionalist values that seemingly oppose homosexuality are deeply embedded in nationalist and religious discourse (Winter, 2018:115). Ironically, the legalisation of same-sex marriage is defended in the name of those same traditional values (Winter, 2018:115). The integration of LGBTQ minorities into capitalist nations has been critiqued as supporting ‘homonormativity’<sup>19</sup> and same-sex marriage as conforming to heteronormative institutions (Winter, 2018:111). According to Winter (2018:111), it can therefore be argued that state intervention favouring same-sex marriage is not only about supporting gay rights, but also about protecting the conventions of marriage and the family model.

Winter (2018:114) believes that the discourse on same-sex marriage by social campaigns and governments reinforces the heteronormative portrayal of families, since ‘rainbow families’<sup>20</sup> are mainly linked to notions of biological kinship. This understanding of the family as forming ‘society’s DNA’ is reinforced by the approval of same-sex marriage (Winter, 2018:114)<sup>21</sup>. The white, homosexual family is therefore welcomed into the South African nation and represents national values.

South Africa’s constitution dictates that the freedom of sexual orientation is a human right (Van Zyl, 2011:335). However, homosexuality is still condemned in many South African communities that consider it ‘un-African’ (Van Zyl, 2011:335). In some Afrikaner communities, same-sex marriage is still vigorously opposed, and this, together with historical biases, is based on Christian nationalist values (Crous, 2006:48). In their discussion on homomascularity in *Gay Pages* magazines, Sonnekus and van Eeden (2009:82) argue that “assimilation by the dominant culture and full membership by the gay community is seemingly possible – provided

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<sup>19</sup> According to Robinson (2016), homonormativity refers to “the belief that sexual minorities should conform to heteronormative institutions in order to achieve greater acceptance into dominant society.” Homonormativity is therefore based on the idea that heterosexual norms and values should be adopted by homosexual individuals.

<sup>20</sup> Here, I am referring to families where at least one parent identifies as part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

<sup>21</sup> An example of this is when former British Prime Minister, David Cameron (cited by Winter, 2014), stated that “families are the ties that bind us” – demonstrating that he is in favour of same-sex marriage because it would uphold conservative values.

that it occurs in terms of 'normative' homosexuality<sup>22</sup>." Looking at films that depict gay identities and characters, one can speculate that this also reigns true for films that depict homosexual men in Afrikaner societies since relationships are often depicted in terms of a heteronormative dynamic.

McClintock (1993:63) states that nations are represented as families and that this is important as it provides a clear structure for social hierarchy. Therefore, the central concern of the nation is to uphold family structures and heteronormativity (McClintock, 1993:63). The nation as a family also implies that the patriarchal order will be upheld, with men at the top of the social hierarchy (Wakefield *et al.*, 2016:449). This led to the development of 'heteronationalism', a form of nationalism that celebrates heterosexuality as a social norm, and condemns homosexuality as deviant (Wakefield *et al.*, 2016:449).

From the quote at the beginning of this chapter, it can be deduced that the maintenance and perpetuation of Afrikaner ideals are essential in ensuring the continuation of hegemony and heteronormativity in Afrikaner societies in contemporary South Africa. Marie's statement also suggests that the survival of the people depends on Afrikaners standing together and safeguarding what binds them, such as language and religion. In this chapter, I discussed Afrikaner nationalism, its development and history in South Africa, and the discourse's influence on idealised masculinity in Afrikaner communities within the context of the films, *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*. It was established that nationalism could be defined as a politically-driven, ethnically-oriented ideology that constitutes an imagined community. Within a South African context, nationalism in the form of Afrikaner nationalism, is an exclusionary ethnonationalism with a strong focus on the purity of race, language and religion among the imagined Afrikaner *volk*. The chapter also discussed Afrikaner nationalist discourse in post-apartheid South Africa and shows how nationalist ideologies are still perpetuated in Afrikaner communities through myth-making practices and an emphasis on the national family. The place of homosexual identities within national families was also discussed. It was established that homosexual identities may be welcomed into nationalistic communities if they conform to and help perpetuate heteronormative institutions within a homonormative framework.

This chapter provided important contextual information for the analysis in Chapter 4, which focuses on how Afrikaner nationalist discourse contributes to the identity construction of the protagonists in the films. Chapter 3 provides an overview of my theoretical framework, which centres on gender performativity, hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity and homomascularity.

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<sup>22</sup> Normative homosexuality refers to stereotypical representations of homosexual men as white and middle-class (Sonnekus & Van Eeden, 2009:81).

### CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PERFORMATIVITY, HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY, AND HOMOMASCULINITY

*“Dis maklik om net normaal te wees. Jy steek jou hand uit en jy sê ‘bly te kenne.’ Noem die mans oom en die vrouens tannie.”* (“It is easy to be normal. Hold out your hand and say, ‘nice to meet you.’ Call the men uncle and the women auntie<sup>23</sup>.”) – Janno, *Die Stropers*

In the quote above, Janno explains to Pieter how to be ‘normal’; in other words, how to properly behave as an Afrikaner boy within this particular community. He does this by instructing him how to greet and refer to older people, helping Pieter understand the social hierarchies within this community. This reveals how Afrikaners within this filmic community use performative strategies to fit in and be regarded as ‘normal’ within Afrikaner social conventions. This quote also highlights the significance of gender performativity, since men and women are continuously gendered within this society.

The discussions in this chapter give a relevant theoretical framework and foundation to analyse the protagonists in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* and their performance of homomascularity adequately. For a thorough and detailed analysis to be done in Chapter 4, this chapter provides a detailed discussion of my theoretical framework, which consists of Judith Butler’s (born 1956) theory of gender performativity and the concept of hegemonic masculinity as formulated and discussed by Raewyn Connell (born 1944). This leads to a discussion about hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity, its historical roots, essential characteristics, and how this identity manifests itself in post-apartheid South Africa. The concept of homomascularity is briefly discussed to provide a relevant theoretical and conceptual point of departure for the more thorough discussion on the performativity of homomascularity by the protagonists in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* in Chapter 4. The discussion on performativity is prefaced with a brief look at a few critical distinctions: the difference between sex and gender, and the distinction between performance and performativity. Overlaps between the main theoretical concepts are considered, particularly between homomascularity and hegemonic masculinity, as homomascularity can be considered a form of performative hegemonic masculinity within queer communities and films. The discussions in this chapter also consider the concepts of masculinity, heterosexuality, hegemonic whiteness and *Afrikanerdom*.

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<sup>23</sup> These are terms of respect in Afrikaner culture used when addressing older men and women. The terms can be directly translated to English as ‘uncle’ and ‘aunt’, but this lacks the double meaning awarded to the terms in Afrikaans. This is because, in Afrikaner culture, all older people are referred to by these titles, regardless of relation.

### **3.1. Gender performativity**

#### **3.1.1. Sex versus gender**

The distinction between sex and gender was famously articulated by Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) (2009:330) when she wrote in 1949 that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman.” This refers to the behaviourally constructed and gendered social roles individuals are socialised into (Jones, 2018). According to Jones (2018), this distinction aids in understanding human identity, specifically gendered social behaviour as well as feminist and queer theory. Therefore, it is also important to discuss the distinction between sex and gender within the context of this chapter and study.

Psychologist Robert Stoller (cited by Ton, 2018:3) was the first to make this important distinction in his influential work *Sex and gender* (first published in 1968), describing ‘gender’ as an individual’s feminine and masculine traits and behaviours. Similarly, Mikkola (2017) states that gender signifies the social categories of ‘men’ and ‘women’, and this signification depends on social aspects such as social roles, behaviour, and identity. Sex, on the other hand, is used to refer to the biological features of an individual’s body (Ton, 2018:6).

In her often cited arguments in *Gender trouble* (first published 1990) and *Bodies that matter* (first published 1993), Judith Butler fuelled a paradigm shift where, according to her, a clear distinction is made between gender, sex and sexuality. Her arguments are based on the work of theorists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Julia Kristeva (born 1941) (Jacobs, 2018:91, 118). Butler’s arguments acknowledge that gender, sex and sexuality refer to separate but sometimes intersecting terms (Ströh, 2017:13).

Ströh (2017:13) offers another distinction between gender and sex, stating that:

Sex refers to the description of the chromosomal, anatomical sex, in other words, the biological sex of a person. In contrast, gender does not refer to the biological, but rather to the cultural: it refers to masculinity and femininity and describes patterns of behaviour that are considered by society to be appropriate for male and female bodies.

In this formulation, sex is defined as an invariant, anatomically determined, factual aspect of the body (Jacobs, 2018:91). Butler (1999; 2002) argues that gender identities are fluid and changeable and are performed within various societal contexts. Gender consequently becomes the body’s mode of articulation (Jacobs, 2018:91).

According to Ton (2018:7), sex refers to the sexed body, and gender describes the gendered behaviour of people. Butler (1999:142) argues that this distinction demonstrates that gender is not determined by biological sex, stating: "If sex and gender are radically distinct, then it does not follow that to be a given sex is to become a given gender; in other words, 'woman' need not be the cultural construction of the female body, and 'man' need not interpret male bodies." This distinction is central to the critique of cisgender and cis-normative gender identities as it implies that gender is socially constructed on a spectrum rather than within a binary.

According to Rubin (cited by Mikkola, 2017), social influences produce differences between genders in which people are taught how or how not to act according to their perceived gender. Hegemonic ideologies interpellate us as gendered subjects. Much of this is subtle and sub-conscious, as I will discuss below when looking at the concept of performativity. According to Fleming *et al.* (2019:198), social constructionism suggests that gender is not innate, but created within social interactions. Millet (1971:29) and Mikkola (2017) agree that the behavioural traits associated with men and women are culturally learned. Because the concept of and ideas about gender and sex change over time and vary within different contexts (Kimmel, 2000:87-88), Butler (1999:6-7) believes that gender cannot be separated from the cultural influences that produce and maintain it. According to Butler (cited by Bettcher, 2014), individuals are performatively constituted by their gendered behaviour.

Butler (1993:520) argues that gender and sex are not natural (biological), but instead historically situated and that gender is a part of identity that is learned (Crous, 2013; Jacobs, 2018:91, 118). Interestingly, Butler suggests that, just like gender, sex is culturally constructed, and sex, therefore, becomes a cultural norm and not something determined by the body (Butler, 1993:3; Butler 1999:10-11). Therefore, sex is a regulatory ideal and discursive construct that imposes a duality on being either male or female (Butler, 1993:1). For example, infants born with ambiguous genitalia are made either male or female through surgery. Likewise, some transgender individuals choose to have surgery (vaginoplasty or metoidioplasty) and undergo hormonal treatment to change their appearance to fit better the image of the biological sex they view themselves to be.

According to Xue (2008:5), "gender identity is constructed and reproduced through symbolic activities." Xue agrees with Butler (2002:128), who considers gender to be constructed and maintained through discourse. Individuals perform gender daily, and everyday performance constructs gender within social and cultural discourse (Xue, 2008:55). Butler (2002:38) argues that "performativity is the discursive mode by which ontological effects are installed." Gender discourse includes various symbolic and performative activities, including style of dress, behavioural patterns, interests and verbal communication (Xue, 2008:55).

### 3.1.2. Performance versus performativity

Another critical aspect to consider when discussing performativity is the distinction between performativity and performance. It was JL Austin (1911-1960) who used the term 'performative' in linguistic studies in the 1950s, and in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Butler differentiates 'performativity' from 'performance' in terms of the construction of gender identities (Tapaswi, 2018:30).

According to Butler (cited by Van der Watt, 2004:3), "performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate act, but rather as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names." 'Doing' gender requires the repetition of pre-established social meanings, and this repetition of gendered acts, therefore creates gender (Van der Watt, 2004:3). Butler (1990:33) uses performativity to explain how a continuous and repetitive process of becoming denotes gender (Lartz, 2019:29; Van der Watt, 2004:3).

According to Miller (cited by Tapaswi, 2018:29), "performativity refers to the features of an ongoing performance, whereas performance is the product of a specific set of actions that have the intentionality 'to show' some idea." Performance implies agency on the part of the subject, whereas performativity is conceptualised as an agency established and determined by discourse (Van der Watt, 2004:3). For Butler (cited by Van der Watt, 2004:4), performativity demonstrates that subjects are produced through the reiteration of gendered discourse.

The term 'performative' refers to an act that communicates and creates an identity (Jones, 2018). This includes performative speech that not only communicates something, but also serves to constitute an act. For example, saying "guilty" at a trial communicates that a person is guilty of a crime and constitutes legal action against them. The statement "I now pronounce you husband and wife" also constitutes gendered subjects. An example of performative speech within the conventions of Afrikaner culture is how people, specifically older people, are greeted. Typically, as Janno explains to Pieter, men (*ooms*) are given a firm handshake while women (*tannies*) are given a kiss. Both the self who is greeting and the 'other' being greeted are repeatedly constituted as gendered subjects through both speech and action. Performative acts of gender function similarly by communicating aspects of identity to others and creating that identity through repetition. Therefore, performance assumes an actor who voluntarily and consciously chooses to take up a particular role (Weems, 2014:103), whereas performativity suggests acts that consciously or unconsciously iterate and legitimise certain cultural norms.

### 3.1.3. Gender performativity and identity construction

Butler's *Gender Trouble* introduces the term 'performativity' to feminist and gender studies to suggest that a person's gender identity is not an innate, biological trait (Morris, 1995:567; Miller, 2020). According to Butler (1988:527), "gender is real only to the extent that it is performed." This is because, as she explains, "the view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylisation of the body" (Butler, 1999:xv). Therefore, gender is constructed through the reiteration of gendered acts.

Butler's notion of performativity related to gendered identities is based on Austin's explanation of the concept of performance and Derrida's criticism and assertion that it is the reiteration of acts that constitutes performance (Kroløkke, 2006:38). One of the most critical aspects of performativity is the iteration or repetition of acts, something Butler (2011:60) compares to "a ritualised production." Butler (2011:187) states that "the Derridean notion of iterability, formulated in response to the theorisation of speech acts by John Searle and JL Austin, also implies that every act is itself a recitation." Therefore, for Butler (cited by Miller, 2020), gender is consistently established through repeated performances that produce a series of effects. Again, the example of the *oom* and *tannie* is of interest here as it forms part of social rituals such as greetings within Afrikaner communities. This can also be seen in the gendered roles assigned to Marie's children: boys work outside on the farm, while girls are often pictured doing tasks inside the home.

When discussing performativity, it is essential to understand that identities are reproduced repeatedly through gendered action (Reddy & Butler, 2004:116). Furthermore, gender is established through the stylisation of the body and demonstrates how gestures or style of dress can create the impression of an ideal gendered *self* (Butler, 1988:519). Therefore, the actions that constitute gender are similar to performances within theatrical contexts (Butler, 1988:521).

Reddy and Butler (2004:117) state,

in being those subjects, in occupying and inhabiting those deciding norms, in incorporating and performing them, we make use of local options to rearticulate them in order to revise their power: Norms cannot be embodied without an action of a specific kind, and they cannot continue to enforce themselves without a continual action.

Therefore, Butler's view is that people are born into gendered, racial, or national norms that help determine their identities (Reddy & Butler, 2004:117). The discourse that precedes the subject,

and constrains the possibilities of identification, means that our identities are socially constructed from the day we are born, and we are born into a world we never made (Reddy & Butler, 2004:119).

Butler (1999:xxviii; 1999:519) also states that “gender is an impersonation... becoming gendered involves impersonating an ideal that nobody actually inhabits.” By describing gender in this way, Butler suggests that the formation of identity assumes an ideal way of ‘doing’ gender that is influenced by historical discourses (Butler, 1999:30). Performativity is characterised as the act of drawing on existing representations of identity – such as gender – through historical discourses (Weems, 2014:103). Butler (1999:173) states that

acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organising principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality.

Therefore, acts and gestures are constructed according to a gendered norm and are then performed. This performance of gendered norms is made up of other presupposed performances, which, in turn, constitute a social norm. Without this continued and continual performance, these gendered norms would not exist. Therefore, gendered bodies only exist based on presupposed gender performances. By describing gender as performative, Butler (1999:41) effectively argues that “gender is real only to the extent that it is performed... According to this view, then, the social construction of the natural presupposes the cancellation of the natural by the social.” Accordingly, to perform gender is to imitate, reproduce, and continually produce normative and ideal gender subjectivities, positions, and identities formed through social performance.

According to Tapaswi (2018:30-31), gender performativity is not about who one is, but what one does, and the subject is, therefore ‘done’ by their gender. Butler (2011:91) also state that the subject does not choose their gender; gender is imposed upon them. This implies that the subject is seldom aware of their performativity, and the performance of gender is, therefore, an effect of discourse, not its cause (Tapaswi, 2018:30-31). The use of the word ‘done’ in Butler’s definition can, on the one hand, signify a process of becoming, and on the other hand, it can also be understood as describing a process of construction (Tapaswi, 2018:31). Within gender

performativity, the subject simultaneously becomes gendered and is constructed by gender, and Tapaswi (2018:31) argues that “the actor or the subject of such action is merely a medium for certain conditions.”

The suggestion that the subject has no agency in constructing their gender has fuelled critique about Butler’s theory of performativity. Brickell (2005:28) states that the vagueness over the issue of agency in Butler’s work has led to readings that seemingly advocate voluntarism and determinism. According to Bunch (2013:40), Butler’s theory of performativity is apolitical because the subjects’ agency is erased if subjects are a mere effect of language. Hall (1999:186) agrees and states that “for Butler, there is no agency in the sense of a voluntarist subject, as actors are little more than ventriloquists, iterating the gendered acts that have come before them.” In a more radical vein, Van der Watt (2004:3) argues that the subject having agency is what Butler’s theory of performativity wants to eradicate. I investigate and question the issue of agency in my discussion of scenes in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*, specifically Janno’s attempt to break away from the social context that has constrained and determined his identity and gender.

It is clear that gender is a series of acts and gestures that iterate cultural norms (Rendell, 2002:89; Hall, 1999:186), and the performance and imitation of gendered acts aid in the construction of heteronormative gender ideals. Within South African society, heteronormativity<sup>24</sup> significantly impacts how we come to view and understand gender identity (Greaf, 2015:655). According to Reddy and Butler (2004:119), “social conditions determine us absolutely, restrict us absolutely, and constrain us all.” Therefore, it is essential to discuss these social norms and conditions to understand the gender identity construction of the protagonists in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*. The concept of hegemonic masculinity is of particular interest since Francois and Janno conform to and perform hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity in the films. Pieter displays a strategic appropriation of culturally-specific acts to be accepted by the Afrikaner community in the film.

### **3.2. Hegemonic masculinity**

Raewyn Connell is an influential scholar in gender studies, specifically in the study of masculinity, and her book, *Masculinities* (first published in 1995), is one of the best-known resources in the field. According to Wedgewood (2009:330), Connell’s research uses feminist

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<sup>24</sup> Within a heteronormative model, everyone is born ‘either’ male or female, heterosexual or homosexual, and with ‘proper’ ‘alignment’ between sex, gender, and desire (Weems, 2014:93). Within this model, any deviation is considered abnormal, unnatural, and/or sinful (Weems, 2014:93).

critique to investigate “historically specific masculinities”, and she acknowledges that some men are responsible for reproducing dominant forms of masculinity. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005:843), masculinity can be described as the repetition of gendered acts by both men and women. Connell (1992; 2005) also clarifies that masculinity cannot be equated to men, and she uses this concept to investigate their *position* within a gender order. To aid in this investigation, Connell developed the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, which serves as one of the focal points of this section in my study.

As defined by Connell (2005), “hegemonic masculinity is a specific form of masculinity in a given historical and society-wide social setting that legitimates unequal gender relations between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities.” It can be argued that hegemonic masculinity exists within a dualism with femininity and ‘non-hegemonic masculinity’ (Messerschmidt, 2019:86). Fleming *et al.* (2019:210) state that it is important to recognise that masculinities are socially determined and that several masculinities can exist within a single subject. As Connell (cited by Messerschmidt, 2019:86) points out: “Hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women.” She also states that “masculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts, which have meaning in relation to each other, as a social demarcation and a cultural opposition” (Connell, 2005:44). Moreover, it legitimates this relationship between dominant and submissive identities, thereby revealing the essence of hegemonic masculinity – to legitimise the dominance of men over supposedly subordinate groups such as women or other men (Messerschmidt, 2019:86).

Most masculine and feminine characteristics are socially determined by a dominant social group within a community that defines ‘appropriate’ gendered behaviour, marginalising those who do not conform and sustaining the binary constructs of masculinity and femininity (Sánchez *et al.*, 2009:74; Connell, 2005). In addition, we also ‘agree to’ perform, perpetuate and sustain these dominant ideals through gender performativity and subconscious accommodations of power, hegemonic ideologies, and our ongoing interpellation as gendered subjects. There are many subtle prompts, cues, rewards, and indications of ‘appropriate’ or ‘inappropriate’ behaviour. For men, argue Sánchez *et al.* (2009:75), the societal pressure to conform to traditional masculine ideals significantly influences men’s mental security. Inability to conform to these ideals can lead to feelings of inadequacy (Sánchez *et al.*, 2009:75).

According to Pleck (1995:11-13), these feelings of inadequacy can be linked to three categories of gender role strain: 1) strain due to an internalised feeling of failure to achieve an idealised and often unattainable view of masculinity; 2) strain due to the pressure to behave in a traditionally masculine way that can lead to physical or emotional harm (for example, not

allowing oneself to show signs of emotional distress); and 3) strain due to childhood trauma linked with gender role socialisation (for example, being shamed for not acting 'manly' enough, or having an interest in traditionally feminine toys or hobbies). Because of this, as Sánchez *et al.* (2009:79) and Fleming *et al.* (2019:197) explain, some homosexually identified men may feel a certain social and internal pressure to act more masculine to be accepted to avoid further marginalisation, bullying and shaming. However, this attempt may be futile as – within this social paradigm – identifying as homosexual often contradicts one's masculinity (Sánchez *et al.*, 2009:79).

According to Fleming *et al.* (2019:197) and Vandello and Bossen (2013:8), competing for social status influences men's behaviour within groups, often leading to exaggerated displays of masculinity, such as violence and bragging about sexual encounters. However, the need to compete against other men can also stem from a fear of humiliation for not meeting certain expectations of manhood (Fleming *et al.*, 2019:197; Vandello & Bossen, 2013:8). Competing successfully requires that men emphasise certain masculine traits such as strength, courage, leadership, and machismo by, for example, providing financially, prowess in particular sporting activities, and behaving aggressively. These actions are dependent on social context, since different social groups place value on different characteristics (Fleming *et al.*, 2019:202).

Pleck (1995) states that men are encouraged to meet certain cultural ideals of being a man. Sexual relationships with women also grant men the opportunity to gain social status, but it can also lead to humiliation and a loss of respect from other men (Fleming *et al.*, 2019:204). Regarding the latter, men lose respect from their fellow male subjects when their relationships with women do not comply with specific standards in terms of power relations and gender roles. Therefore, men are conscious of other men's hegemonic gaze, which may influence the outcome of relationships with women or men's emotional state. According to Vandello and Bossen (2013:2), men's often violent responses to humiliation shape their social behaviours and emphasise masculinity's fragile nature and the anxiety surrounding it (Fleming *et al.*, 2019:208).

Connell (cited by Wedgewood, 2009:330) emphasises the significance of acknowledging 'non-hegemonic' varieties of masculinity in reproducing the male-dominated gender order. More importantly, her work investigates how this gender order is undermined and how more egalitarian masculinities can be constructed (Wedgewood, 2009:335). According to Donaldson (1993:6), the interrelation among heterosexual and homosexual men is important when investigating how hegemonic masculinity functions within contemporary societies. Connell (1992:737) states that it is important not to think of homosexuality as the binary opposite of masculinity because it re-inscribes the assumed 'naturalness' of heterosexuality. One of the fundamental issues addressed in Connell's (2005:837) research is the marginalisation of

homosexual men through violence and prejudice and the creation of hierarchies among masculinities.

Many people consider homosexuality to be in opposition to masculinity, and therefore an expression of femininity (LaSala, 2010). However, when this assumption is made, homosexual men may be antagonised and feel pressured to perform or adopt a hegemonic masculine identity (Donaldson, 1993:6). According to Connell (1992:737), the oppression of gay men demonstrates that there are hierarchies among men, and the experiences of homosexual men are therefore essential to comprehend contemporary gender dynamics and how to bring about social change (Donaldson, 1993:6).

Sexuality and sexual orientation constitute one of the most important distinctions between masculinities (Connell, 2000:102). Hegemonic masculinity is equated to heterosexuality, and homosexual masculinities are therefore marginalised (LaSala, 2010). This marginalisation not only affects homosexual men, but also involves the regulation of heterosexual men (Connell, 2000:102). Because of the fear of being categorised as homosexual, homophobia is used as a tool to perpetuate, police and sustain hegemonic gender relations (LaSala, 2010). Hegemonic masculinity further involves the exclusion of women, children, and 'non-conforming' sexualities and men who have sex with men (MSM)<sup>25</sup> (Chikovore & Naidoo, 2016:7614).

The interrelation between hegemonic masculinity and homosexual masculinity also involves homophobia, violence and subordination, and the criminalisation of homosexual sex acts, which manifests in policing these identities in countries such as South Africa (Connell, 1992:745). Interestingly, according to Sánchez and Vilain (2009:73), this may lead to some gay men adopting over-masculinised behaviour within their predominantly heteronormative societies, negatively affecting self-image and same-sex relationships. This includes social pressure to look and act more masculine; not only to be accepted within a largely heteronormative society, but also to be more attractive to other gay men (Sánchez & Vilain, 2009:73).

### **3.2.1. Masculinity and existential crises**

In his discussion on Cold War masculinity and homosexual existentialism in the 1955 Broadway performance of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Bak (2010:264) discusses the existential crisis faced by the play's protagonist, Brick. He argues that homosexuality is not a fixed sexual identity, but

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<sup>25</sup> MSM refers to men who have sex with men, but do not necessarily identify as homosexual. In contrast to homosexuality, which can be regarded as a cultural identity and form of self-identification, MSM merely refers to an individual's sexual behaviour (Chikovore & Naidoo, 2016:7614).

fluid and socially heterogeneous, and it is represented by the 'other' (Bak, 2010:267). This role of the 'other' is included in the separation of homosexual identity (the 'other') and homosexual acts. Heteromascularity extracts homosexuality from male sexual gender performativity and relocates it (homosexuality) in an effeminate identity (Bak, 2010:268). The sexual identity of MSM relies on the separation of homosexual identity from homosexual acts (Bak, 2010:268). Francois and Janno rely on two important mechanisms to protect their sexual identities: performative, heterosexual masculinity, and homophobia. For example, Francois has sex with other men, but does not see himself as homosexual; on the contrary, he makes homophobic remarks on several occasions throughout the film. According to Bak (2010:270), homophobia as a performative tool is exploited by both heterosexual and homosexual men to condemn homosexuality within the male subject and maintain heterosexuality. This performative tool justifies homosocial bonds and bonding, and marginalises homosexual ones, reflecting their internal turmoil to balance homosocial and homosexual desire (Bak, 2010:268). This performative homomascularity is discussed at length later within the context of the two chosen films.

Bak (2010:264) emphasises the idea that "one's social and sexual identities are inextricably bound, both for the existent's sense of essence and for his 'other's' sense of essence." He also states that the role of the 'other' seems to have an increasing influence in shaping an individual's sexual identity (Bak, 2010:267). This is supported by de Beauvoir (cited by Bak, 2010:267), who states that male homosexual identities within Western contexts seem to be related to male heterosexuality in terms of difference.

Connell's (2005) concept of hegemonic masculinity is, according to Moolman (2013:95), a helpful point of departure for investigating the construction of Southern African masculinities within a social hierarchy. According to Van Zyl (2011:338), colonial, European values influenced idealised notions of masculinity and femininity, and these were utilised in constructing contemporary ideologies within heterosexual, patriarchal African families. As a result, social, political, cultural and religious struggles underscore the identity formation of Southern African males (Crous, 2006:49). As discussed in Chapter 2, Afrikaner men also face an identity crisis in post-apartheid South Africa due to the loss of social and political power. Connell (1992:735) states that "when discussing the fluidity of gender ideology, one must remember that problems of change and difference are closely connected." According to Sonnekus (2013:24), this requires one to reflect on "past and present histories, generations, and political landscapes." Therefore, hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity should be contextualised within South Africa's complex history. Historical context on the identity construction of Afrikaner males was provided in the previous chapter, and the following section continues with a discussion of hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa.

### 3.3. Hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity

Masculine identities in South Africa have been influenced by the country's history of racial and cultural conflicts (Bantjies *et al.*, 2017:234). Within colonial contexts, hegemonic masculinities have been defined in terms of race and have been inclined to value traits such as physical and emotional strength and an acceptance of patriarchal authority (Bantjies *et al.*, 2017:234). For example, in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century *boer* states, white Afrikaans boys were routinely sorted into *boer* commandos, which were militaristic social institutions that emphasised displays of strength, bravery and violence (Ströh & Nel, 2020:802; Symons, 2020:8). Similarly, until recently in South Africa, partaking in sports such as rugby was obligatory in (white) boys' schools, and this was used to perpetuate beliefs of racial dominance, patriarchal social structures, and classism (Ströh & Nel, 2020:802). There is also a close relationship between compulsory military conscription, the South African Defence Force (SADF), and hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity. For example, in the coming-of-age war musical, *Kanarie*, compulsory military conscription is described as an honour bestowed upon every young South African man.

Compulsory military conscription was prominent during the apartheid era, and by the 1980s, all young, white men were obligated by law to serve the South African Defence Force (SADF) (Conway, 2012:2). According to Du Pisani (cited by Mankayi, 2010:24) this obligation resulted in the "soldier image" becoming a hyper-masculine ideal and led to young men having a desire to be seen as 'manly'. This desire also instilled fear in many young men of being considered cowards or 'faggots' for not joining the SADF (Mankayi, 2010:24). Conscription served as an important system for constructing an ideal of 'normal' masculinity and of ideas about appropriate behaviour for young men (Mankayi, 2010:24). Myths of past Afrikaner heroes were often exploited together with a sense of cultural superiority to present national service as "an honour-bound duty that demanded unswerving loyalty" (Symons, 2020:24). According to Conway (2012:4) and Mankayi (2010:24), compulsory military service has been characterised by its effectiveness as a tool for socialisation. The SADF and compulsory military service "underpinned and perpetuated socially constructed gendered binaries" and acted as a template for White Afrikaner ideologies (Symons, 2020:24; Conway, 2012:4). This link between Afrikaner masculinity and the SADF suggests that the continuation and dominance of hegemonic masculinity depends on the deployment of economic, political, military, and social power by the dominant group in society (in this case, white Afrikaans speakers in apartheid South Africa).

As evidenced by Du Pisani's (2001; 2004) research on Afrikaner masculinity, South Africa has a unique form of masculinity influenced by a unique socio-political past. Du Pisani (2004:80) believes that Afrikaner masculinity and images of this masculinity show a strong puritanical

slant<sup>26</sup> that became homogenised after the consolidation of Afrikaner power in 1948. The government consisted only of white, Afrikaans-speaking men who enforced a form of masculinity characterised by authority, rigour and impunity (Ströh & Nel, 2020:802). Du Pisani (2001:158-159) further explains that during the beginnings of apartheid, the values of hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity were encapsulated in the Afrikaner Broederbond's membership requirements. Together with elements of Afrikaner male identity such as heterosexuality, being a practising Christian and being politically conservative were considered the ideal of hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity (Ströh & Nel, 2020:803). Although these characteristics and images of masculinity were strictly protected and maintained by some Afrikaner communities, there were also threats to this hegemonic masculinity (Ströh & Nel, 2020:803). The threats to hegemony, which include all other forms of masculinity such as homosexuality and homomascularity, are rejected by the hegemonic order and moved to the periphery of society through marginalisation (Du Pisani, 2001:167).

Bantjies *et al.* (2017) conducted a study documenting young men's experiences in post-apartheid South Africa. Despite the socio-political transformation, the authors found that young men in post-apartheid South Africa may not experience the freedom to break established gender conventions. All the participants felt compelled to follow rigid and restrictive standards of gender and a traditional hegemonic belief that men should be masculine and therefore heterosexual (Bantjies *et al.*, 2017:237). This suggests that – although outdated – hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity is still sustained through social roles. According to Sonnekus (2013:23), this is due, in part, to a nostalgic yearning for the benefits that this identity formerly provided some men and the fear of racial and sexual 'others'. This nostalgic yearning can be seen in the image of the white farmer (or *boer*) and its associations of traditional manhood (honest, steadfast, religious, hard-working, and head of the household) (Crous, 2006:51). The farmer has always been one of the primary expressions of manhood within rural contexts in South Africa (Crous, 2006:51; Du Pisani, 2001:65). This farmer ideal can be seen in various Afrikaans films such as *Vrou soek Boer* (2014) where white, Afrikaans farmers are considered 'real men' in contrast to men who live and work in big cities.

In the wake of democracy in South Africa, formerly oppressed expressions of manhood started asserting themselves more publicly, and hegemonic (heteronormative) Afrikaner masculinity was slowly but surely pushed aside, despite its perpetuation and attempts to assert it as 'natural' (Sonnekus, 2013:26). White Afrikaner men were afraid of emasculation not simply

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<sup>26</sup> This can be attributed to Calvinism and Protestantism among Afrikaners that were introduced by Afrikaner nationalist discourse, as discussed in Chapter 2. Afrikaner Calvinism is a cultural and religious movement that combines parts of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Calvinist teaching with an ethnic-nationalist reading of the Bible to form a philosophy centred on the idea of Afrikaners as a 'chosen people' (Louw, 2020:24).

because of their heterosexuality, but because of the promotion of gender and racial equality in post-apartheid South Africa, which instilled a sense of uncertainty and resentment (Sonnekus, 2013:26).

When writing about Afrikaner masculinity, Du Pisani (2001:157) points out that although Afrikaner masculinity and views on Afrikaner masculinity have changed, “it did not lose its essential puritan character.” According to Crous (2006:49), this implies a fiercely religious view based on Biblical values and strict adherence to Christian conduct and morals. In terms of Afrikaners’ views on homosexuality, Du Pisani (2001:169) remarks that “homosexuality was considered to be sinful, unnatural and abnormal” and homosexuality was “suppressed as an alternative expression of masculinity through isolation and a conspiracy of silence.” This is not isolated to Afrikaners and South Africa; on an international level, contemporary hegemonic masculinity is characterised by heterosexuality with a strong emphasis on sexual prowess, marriage and procreation, and homosexuality as the subordinate of masculinity (Connell, 2005:77). One of the main focal points in the study of masculinities is how hegemonic masculinity represses ‘other’ masculinities by repeatedly reiterating its authority within the social hierarchy (Sonnekus, 2008:45-46). The concept of homomascularity helps articulate how hegemonic masculinity in the form of homomascularity suppresses ‘other’ masculinities and queer identities by reiterating its supposed supremacy.

### **3.4. Homomascularity as a hegemonic ideal**

By mimicking the style and behaviour of archetypal masculine characters such as the cowboy or *boer*, gay ‘clones’ characterise, according to Sonnekus (2008:46), “a nostalgic, romantic longing for ‘a man’s man’ that is traditionally associated with heterosexuality and that does not carry the stigma associated with over-the-top, effeminate queers.” Homomascularity differs from homosexuality because it attempts to maintain the stereotypical appearance of heterosexuality (Kumalo, 2019:91). According to Fritscher (2005), “homomascularity seeks the archetypal best that males can do, not the stereotypical worst.” Therefore, white Afrikaner homomascularity repeats hegemonic masculine ideals since it rejects femininity, trans individuals, black homosexual men<sup>27</sup>, and less ‘acceptable’ expressions of homosexuality from its self-definition (Sonnekus, 2008:47). The internalisation of heteronormativity and the normalisation of particular

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<sup>27</sup> For a more detailed discussion on critiques of black self-representation and images of black homosexuality within visual culture, and homomascularity among black South African men, see Sonnekus’s *Invisible queers: investigating the ‘other’ Other in gay visual cultures* (2008), and *Macho men and the queer imaginary: a critique of selected gay ‘colonial’ representations of homomascularity* (2009), and Siseko Kumalo and Lindokuhle Gama’s *Interrogating concepts of manhood, sexuality and cultural identity* (2018).

clandestine homosexual lifestyles through selective homophobia and racism is achieved through the fetishisation of hyper-masculine white men (Sonnekus, 2008:47) (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2).



Figure 3.1: Fred Goudon. *Untitled*. 2017. Photograph



Figure 3.2: Fred Goudon. *Untitled*. 2017. Photograph

This fetishisation is demonstrated in *Moffie* (2019), a film about compulsory military conscription as seen through the eyes of the film's secretly homosexual protagonist. Within the context of apartheid South Africa, the film contrasts forbidden same-sex desire with the hypermasculine military culture often perpetuated by the SADF in the 1980s (Kramer, 2021). This hypermasculinity is emphasised in scenes where the young teenage soldiers shower together as the camera pans across their naked bodies (Erickson, 2021). Ironically, these scenes also appear to be quite homoerotic, something that is hidden by the displays of hypermasculinity throughout the film.

It is also important to explore how this gendered construct contributes to the marginalisation of certain homosexual men (Sonnekus, 2008:45-46). According to Fritscher (2005), the gay 'clone' era<sup>28</sup> and the popularisation of homomascularity in the 1970s and 1980s seemingly contributed to a racial and gendered hierarchy within queer culture. It is important to investigate how the appeal of heteronormativity is perpetuated because it is related to the creation of hierarchies

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<sup>28</sup> The gay clone era was a period of time during the 1970s and 1980s when gay men dressed and acted in a hyper-masculine way to protest stereotypes of homosexuality, such as gay men being inherently flamboyant or feminine (Sonnekus, 2009:37; Clarkson, 2006:193).

within the male gender (Sonnekus, 2008:44). These hierarchies represent power dynamics between gay men and reiterate hegemonic masculinity, along with racism and sexism (Sonnekus, 2008:44).

Contemporary images of 'hyper-masculine aesthetics' in gay visual culture give visual expression to gay men's reaction to discrimination, argues Fritscher (2005). According to Sonnekus (2009:37), "visual manifestation of the masculine gay body become sites of resistance through which ideological notions of gay male inferiority and heteronormative male superiority are challenged, re-appropriated, and even subverted." However, this process leads to the creation of a new hegemonic ideal.

Within the context of this study, it can be argued that homomascularity in white Afrikaner communities is reinforced by the claim that supposed 'less masculine' gay men bring shame to Afrikaner communities and families, and therefore present a threat to Afrikaner masculinity. This is displayed in *Skoonheid* as Francois continually rejects stereotypically feminine gay men from his self-definition to maintain a veneer of Afrikaner heterosexuality, defined by his hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity (see Figure 3.3). This is an image of a sequence in which Francois, having travelled to Cape Town in his pursuit of Christian, enters a gay nightclub where a coloured man flirts with him. He immediately rejects the man and proceeds to get drunk at the bar. Shortly after, he calls Christian to take him back to his hotel room. Therefore, feminine queer identities are situated as 'other' to white hegemonic masculinity within the context of the white Afrikaner communities depicted in the films, regarding gender performativity and the stereotypical feminisation and demonisation of homosexual men in Afrikaner communities.



Figure 3.3: Oliver Hermanus. *Skoonheid*. 2011. Francois rejecting the advances of a gay man of colour in a night club in Cape Town

Similar to the discourse perpetuated by hegemonic masculinity, homosexuality within Afrikaner communities is often vilified and considered the antithesis of heterosexuality. As Van der Westhuizen (2016:2) states, in certain contexts, Afrikaner identity can be understood as favouring white, heterosexual, and middle-class individuals who fit into a particular political category of ethnicity. Concerning the dominance of whiteness in this system of power, Sonnekus and Van Eeden (2009:85) also reference the “heteronormative project of perpetually re-establishing the superiority of whiteness and patriarchy.” Because of congruence between ‘whiteness’, beauty, and hegemonic, ‘straight’ masculinity, Sonnekus (2008:117-118) is of the opinion that white gay men dominate the queer hierarchy of power in visual media (Sonnekus, 2008:117-18).

Van den Berg (2016) also comments on the perpetuation of homonormativity through the supposed assimilation of queer identities into heteronormative society. She argues that attempts at assimilation by queer individuals create a “double-bind”. According to Van den Berg (2016:30), “the process of becoming an ‘accepted’ part of a heteronormative community, is at the same time a process of dissimulation – it advocates ‘integration’ in the dominant social and sexual order, but possibly at the price of subordinating oneself to the dominant heteronormative ideology.” While Van den Berg’s argument is made in the context of openly queer individuals attempting to become accepted as part of ‘normal’ society, this argument can also apply to homomascularity. As stated, performative homomascularity by men mimics a heteronormative ideal of masculinity to avoid persecution (Sonnekus & Van Eeden, 2009). The risk, however, is that homophobia and misogyny of hegemonic masculinity are internalised, therefore further marginalising sexual minorities and re-inscribing institutions such as the nuclear family.

Homomascularity can be considered a type of hegemonic masculinity as it functions at the expense of ‘less masculine’ homosexual identities. Therefore, homomascularity is performed (acted) in queer spaces and communities, but it also borrows from hegemonic masculinity based on traditional masculine aesthetics and ideals. In *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*, this homomascularity is not so much performed but performative in the sense that the characters use performative strategies to boost the appearance of their heterosexual ‘Afrikaner-ness’ to blend into their societies and hide their homosexual desires. In terms of how these concepts are embodied and function in society, there are several subtle overlaps between homomascularity and hegemonic masculinity that highlight the significance of the concept of homomascularity within the context of this study. According to Sonnekus and Van Eeden (2009:89), the ideal gay man is represented by white homomascularity; similarly, the hegemonic masculine ideal is represented by white heteronormativity. Masculinity is a construct created in line with attributes considered ‘male’ within heteronormative conventions, and hegemonic masculinity projects these features onto men as a social group collectively, thereby creating a homogeneous and

constrictive social group (Sonnekus, 2008:10). Similarly, homomascularity also maintains specific requirements to be considered 'a man' within the queer community (Sonnekus, 2008:10). Therefore, both concepts rely on perpetuating ideals that place white, 'traditionally' masculine men at the pinnacle of a hierarchy of masculinities, whether in queer or conservative Afrikaner communities.

In this chapter, I discussed gender performativity, hegemonic masculinity, and homomascularity related to Afrikaner masculinity in South Africa. It was established that gender, as argued by Butler (1993), is socially and discursively constructed and that performativity constitutes gender identities. The discussion on gender performativity established that gendered acts constitute a gendered identity through the repetition of social and cultural norms and ideals. This performativity, in turn, re-inscribes heteronormative ideals and legitimises hierarchies within society. There also exists a hierarchy among masculinities, of which hegemonic masculinity is at the top of this system of exploitation and abuse. Hegemonic masculinity, therefore, legitimates gender inequality between men and women and between expressions of masculinity. Of import in the discussion on hegemonic masculinity is that this hierarchy, the different masculinities, and the forms that these masculinities take are context dependent. In South Africa, for example, white, heterosexual Afrikaner masculinity is considered by Bantjies *et al.* (2017), Ströh and Nel (2020), and Sonnekus (2013) to be the dominant form of masculinity that marginalises and suppresses other forms of masculinity, femininity, and other gender or sexual identifications. To avoid this suppression, some gay men display homomascularity, which maintains the appearance of heterosexuality in the male subject. However, by maintaining this illusion of heterosexuality, homosexual male subjects reiterate hegemonic masculinity within queer communities and societies at large. This is further discussed in Chapter 4 concerning the two protagonists in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*, Francois and Janno.

## CHAPTER 4: HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AS HOMOMASCULINE PERFORMATIVITY IN SKOONHEID AND DIE STROPERERS

*“Kyk hoe lyk hy – ons is nie moffies nie, Gideon.” (“Look at him – we aren’t faggots, Gideon”) – Francois, *Skoonheid**

*“Moet nie vir mense sê wat jy met die ou man in die kar gedoen het nie. Netnou dink hulle ek doen dit ook, en ek doen alles reg!” (“Do not tell anyone what you did with that old man in the car, or they might think I do that too, and I do everything right!”) – Janno, *Die Stropers**

In both the above statements, Francois and Janno express concern about the way that people (specifically men) around them look and behave, and how their own actions and association with these people are perceived by others. The quotes also expose the protagonists’ awareness of a particular hegemonic gaze upon themselves and may therefore reveal their attempt to be accepted in their communities through their idealised performances of Afrikaner masculinity and their unintentional policing of *self* through predetermined social behaviours. Therefore, gender performativity is essential for Francois and Janno regarding how they view and construct their masculine Afrikaner identities and how other characters view them in the films. This chapter examines how the protagonists’ performative enactment of hegemonic masculinity in the form of homomascularity enforces and legitimises potentially adverse Afrikaner ideals of masculinity and heteronormativity. The key theoretical concepts of performativity and homomascularity are used to analyse the films and investigate the protagonists’ hegemonic masculine performances. The analysis focuses on aspects of Francois and Janno’s behaviour in the films as it contributes to their legitimising of Afrikaner masculinity through specific performative strategies. Firstly, I discuss how certain characters in *Die Stropers* appropriate myths about religion, language and culture to maintain hegemonic Afrikaner identities. Next, I consider how hierarchies are established among different forms of masculinities, genders, and different races in the community depicted in *Skoonheid*. As discussed in Chapter 3, Francois and Janno’s performance may reinforce heteronormativity in the filmic societies and convince other characters of their heterosexuality to blend into their respective societies and hide their homosexual desires.

#### 4.1. The maintenance of Afrikaner ideals in *Die Stropers*

As I have established in Chapter 2 of this study, history is often deployed within nationalism to construct cultural myths that are, in turn, appropriated to constitute an imagined community. Within the context of post-apartheid South Africa, some aspects of Afrikaner identity have remained resistant to change because of the continual appropriation and retention of certain myths within Afrikaner communities (Fourie, 2015:281). According to Kumalo (2019:97), the most prominent historical elements continually perpetuated in creating cultural myths include the importance of the Afrikaans language and its conservation. Another important element of Afrikaner culture and identities that has been emphasised and utilised since the beginning of Afrikaner nationalism is religion. Religion is a central pillar of Afrikaner nationalism and in *Die Stropers*, it is used to perpetuate the idea that the Afrikaners, as chosen people, are threatened by post-apartheid political rule. This speaks to what has been identified by Van der Waal and Robins (2011:777) as the victim mentality of some Afrikaners within particular communities such as those depicted in the two chosen films. This victim mentality describes a feeling among Afrikaners of being under threat from cultural extinction, not only due to the perceived loss of a shared history (represented by the removal of statues commemorating Afrikaner political leaders and the changing of the names of places<sup>29</sup>, among other things), but also because of white Afrikaans-speaking Afrikaners' position as a political minority after the fall of the apartheid government.

According to Fourie (2015:247), there is a theological justification of Afrikaner nationalism, and this, coupled with the essentially religious nature of Afrikaner identity, creates a situation in which religious fundamentalism is forged. In *Die Stropers*, religion is used by Janno's family, specifically his mother, in effect harnessing Afrikaner nationalist ideals and she ensures that her family, specifically her children, conform to and enforce hegemonic Afrikaner ideals. Kallos subtly emphasises this religious theme through his strategic use of light in the film. Figure 4.1 depicts an image of a scene where the character of Janno's mother, Marie, is first introduced in the film. Directly after the opening sequence, Marie is depicted standing in the *veld* (field) seemingly praying for Janno. Shortly thereafter, she returns to the farmhouse to start breakfast for her family. As she stands in the *veld*, she is positioned in the centre of the frame facing away from the rising sun. The camera is angled towards the sun, creating a scene in which the sun shines from behind Marie, creating a halo effect. This is reminiscent of medieval and Renaissance paintings depicting religious figures such as Mary, Jesus, or Christian saints. Throughout the film, this lighting effect happens with various other characters, including Janno's best friend and implied crush, Hennie, during a church youth ceremony. During the ceremony,

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<sup>29</sup> An example of this includes the renaming of Transvaal to Gauteng, or Pretoria to the City of Tshwane.

the group of young teens and children stand in a circle and join hands as Hennie prays for them. The scene is cast in low-light, and a combination of over-the-shoulder shots and close-ups emphasise Hennie and Janno (at opposite ends of the scene) as the two focal points in this instance. Hennie stands in front of a stained-glass window and the light cast from it creates the effect of a beam of light shining from heaven (see Figure 4.2). During the prayer, the camera pans across the screen from Hennie to Janno as the group engages in silent prayer. As Janno opens his eyes, the camera cuts to a close-up of Hennie. This further implies that Janno is romantically infatuated with Hennie and idolises him as the ideal Afrikaner man – here indicated through Hennie’s demonstration of religion and membership of the new generation of Afrikaners.



Figure 4.1: Etienne Kallos. *Die Stropers*. 2019. A halo of light shines from behind Marie as she prays



Figure 4.2: Etienne Kallos. *Die Stropers*. 2019. Hennie prays for the church's youth group

The importance of religion in *Die Stropers* is further emphasised by the film's plot as, according to Cochrane (cited by Ellaya, 2019), it is loosely based on the story of Cain and Abel from the biblical book of Genesis. Similar to the Bible story, Janno and Pieter are the first two sons of Marie and Jan, both making sacrifices to gain approval from their adoptive family. Initially, Janno tries to impress his father and gain approval by working on the farm and behaving like a 'real man' should. In the film, this involves braving the cold before sunrise to work on the farm (see Figure 4.3). After a late night of helping his mother get Pieter settled into his new home, Janno is awoken by Marie the following morning. He realises that he is late for helping his father on the farm and states that "*Ek weet ek moes al buite gewees het. Op my ouderdom is manne al reg, aangetrek, en buite op die lande aan die werk.*" ("I know I should be outside already. At my age men are already dressed and working in the fields by now") before running out into the *veld*. The camera quickly cuts from one scene to the next as it follows Janno through the house and into the *veld*, emphasising the urgency Janno feels at failing to fulfil his duties on the farm. This statement reveals that the gendered norms and ideals that young men like Janno are expected to conform to have a powerful effect in constructing their gender identity. The act of getting up early in the morning to do strenuous farm work forms part of the identity construction of young, rural Afrikaner men. Through this gendered act, Janno demonstrates his masculinity to Marie and Jan, furthering his quest for approval.



Figure 4.3 Etienne Kallos. *Die Stropers*. 2019. Janno herding cattle

Jan represents the Afrikaner patriarch, and within the religious context of the film, he also represents prominent patriarchal figures from the Bible. Examples include the figure of Adam as the first man created by God with the responsibility for growing and expanding the nation of God. Jan can also be compared to the biblical notion of 'the man as the head of the household' since he is seen as the provider and protector of his family, and he is the one who says grace at the table before every meal. This can be seen in a scene at the beginning of the film where the family gather for breakfast after Jan and Janno return from working on the farm (see Figure 4.4). This is an image of a scene in which Jan instructs the family to hold hands as he leads them in a prayer before they eat, demonstrating his role as leader and head of the family. Afrikaner nationalist discourse also places white, Afrikaans-speaking men at the top of the social hierarchy and views them as godlike (Bantjies *et al.*, 2017; Ströh & Nel, 2020; Sonnekus, 2013). Jan has the utmost authority over his wife, children, workers, and animals on the farm. This authority is demonstrated by Jan's method to reform Pieter. Whereas Marie relies on affection and support, Jan is stern and is quite hard on Pieter.



Figure 4.4: Etienne Kallos. *Die Stropers*. 2019. Jan preparing to say grace before the family eats breakfast

Although Jan is an important figure in *Die Stropers* because of his patriarchal role, Janno and Pieter mainly direct their efforts of approval towards Marie, seemingly because of the influence she has on her husband and the family. Marie is a complex character as she not only represents the archetypal Afrikaner woman (the *volksmoeder* ideal), but can also be regarded as the embodiment of the biblical figures of Eve and Mary. Both women were responsible for building and growing the nation of God's chosen people by giving birth to sons who had the task of providing leadership and guidance to the nation. In Marie's case, this act of growing the nation by adopting demonstrates her efforts of securing the future of the nation, and secondly, indirectly upholding the heteronormative values preached by Christianity and patriarchy's narrowly construed ideas about gender and sexuality. This again demonstrates Marie's *volksmoeder* position<sup>30</sup> in the film as she is responsible and trusted as a guardian and nurturer of the nation's religious values, community and family. Marie and Jan – the film reveals – are also unable to have children themselves, further exemplifying her symbolic role as Mary in *Die Stropers* since Mary was a virgin at the time of Jesus' birth.

Another example of the importance of religion in *Die Stropers* includes Marie's prayer for Janno that is heard in the first few minutes of the film. While Janno herds cattle, Marie stands in the *veld* near the farmhouse and pleads with God to "*Maak die seun sterk, maak sy hart sterk, maak sy saad sterk*" ("Make the boy strong, make his heart strong, make his seed strong"). This emphasises the importance of male virility and fertility – traits considered necessary for a man to maintain and uphold his people's ideals – within hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity. In other words, according to Marie's prayer, a man should be physically and emotionally strong ("Make the boy strong, make his heart strong, ..."). He should also be able to produce children and teach those children the way of life of Afrikaners and, in so doing, uphold and strengthen the nation ("make his seed strong"). This also establishes the importance of male heirs in Afrikaner culture and, by implication, the group's legitimate ownership of the land. By adopting a boy that can inherit the farm, Marie actively constructs this destiny and works to fulfil it. She actively forms and constructs the myth that is supposedly 'natural'.

This prayer becomes a leitmotif for the themes in the film, again emphasised through light. The prayer starts at the beginning of the film while Janno walks into the *veld* to help herd cattle before dawn. The scene is cast in dim light, and this, coupled with the monotone and suspenseful background score, gives the scene a foreboding atmosphere, laying the groundwork for what is to follow in the rest of the film. The second instance in which the prayer

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<sup>30</sup> My analysis does not include an in-depth discussion of the *volksmoeder* ideal in Afrikaans films since this is outside the scope of the study. Rather, this section focusses on Marie as a mother figure within the film. However, the *volksmoeder* as filmic archetype in Afrikaans films is mentioned in the conclusion as a suggestion for further research.

is chanted occurs later in the film after Pieter is brought home from the police station by Jan and Marie after trying to sell his body for money. Janno accompanies Marie to a cornfield where she gets on her knees to pray (see Figure 4.5). After getting on her knees, the camera cuts to a close-up of Marie's hands digging into the soil and slowly pans upwards into an extreme close-up of her from behind as she brings her hands up to the sky. The camera then cuts to a close-up of Marie's face as she stares into the sun on the right of the screen. In this second instance, the prayer takes place late in the day with the sun about to set, casting a warm golden glow across the scene. The placement of these scenes near the foreboding beginning and climactic end of the film is symbolic of Janno's character development. When the film starts in darkness, he is caught in the illusion offered by the countryside, unquestioningly following the social roles and responsibilities prescribed to him. As the film nears its climactic end, the illusion fades, revealing to Janno the oppressive nature of the (Afrikaner) countryside, his Afrikaner community, and family.

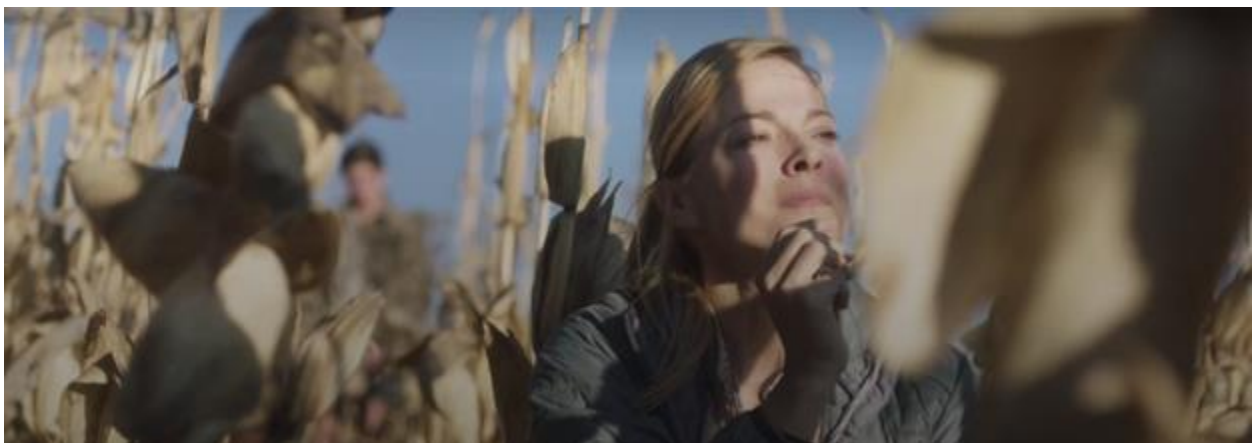


Figure 4.5 Etienne Kallos. *Die Stropers*. 2019. Marie gets on her knees and prays for Pieter in a cornfield

Marie regards herself as a keeper of Afrikaner traditions and believes that she must ensure the continual growth of the *volk*. Throughout the film, she tells Janno that it is their Christian duty to help Pieter and rehabilitate him. At one point in the film, Marie states that there are very few Afrikaners left: "*Daar is so min van ons oor, Janno. Afrikaners*" ("There are so few of us left, Janno. Afrikaners"), re-establishing the myth of the Afrikaner as under threat and the nation at risk of extinction. She says this to convince Janno to help Pieter after he expresses his dislike for the newcomer. This speaks to the victim complex of Afrikaners and the fear of losing their history, culture and traditions (Van der Waal & Robins, 2011:777). This can also be linked to the racial dimension of *Afrikanerdom* and the idea of keeping the nation 'pure', especially when considering the essential role of Afrikaner men to produce Afrikaner children.

Both *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* are shot almost entirely in Afrikaans, and this is used to critique the cultural and gendered hegemony within communities shown in the films. According to Falkof (2016:21), language plays a major role in the formation and conservation of Afrikaner identity. In *Die Stropers*, Pieter's character is introduced as being extremely 'other' to the Afrikaner family he is adopted into. He dresses differently, speaks differently, and acts differently from the rest of the family members. After Pieter arrives at the farm and is given a haircut, Marie gives him food which he eats with his hands. Upon seeing this, one of Marie's daughters asks her mother if Pieter is indeed Afrikaans: "*Is hy Afrikaans?*" ("Is he Afrikaans?"). Janno does the same later in the film when he becomes frustrated with his mother's affection toward Pieter: "*Is hy regtig Afrikaans?*" ("Is he really Afrikaans?"). This shows that being Afrikaans is not merely about speaking the language, but conforming to cultural and historical norms and behaving in certain ways.

Marie wastes no time transforming Pieter into a model Afrikaner boy to conserve the Afrikanerness and the sanctity of the family and the nation. After Janno introduces himself to the newcomer as his new brother, Pieter is taken to a bathroom where he is stripped of his clothing and his long hair shaved into a buzz cut: his body and soul must be transformed and purified in order for him to become a part of the Afrikaner community depicted in *Die Stropers* (see Figure 4.6). Pieter is forced on multiple occasions throughout the film to join the family in various Christian practices such as prayer and attending church on a Sunday, regardless of his religious beliefs. However, Marie and Jan's efforts to transform and reform Pieter ultimately fail, and he is sent to a '*mannekamp*' (men's camp), where he is brutalised by other young men and returns seemingly rehabilitated. The evidence of this brutalisation can be seen in a scene where Pieter changes his shirt in front of Janno, revealing the marks on his back. Showing Janno his scars can be considered an act of machismo, since Pieter is flaunting his scars to show how strong he is and had to be, to have survived the ordeal. During the '*mannekamp*', this violence seemingly transforms Pieter from a supposed homosexual, sinful city boy into a tough, hardworking, loyal, heterosexual Afrikaner man.



Figure 4.6: Etienne Kallos. *Die Stropers*. 2019. Marie instructs Pieter to remove his shirt so that his hair can be shaved

Pieter reveals that Hennie, Janno's friend and implied crush, is responsible for giving Pieter the lashings that left marks on his back. In the film, Hennie's character serves as a comparative device to show the audience what the ideal Afrikaner boy should look and act like. He also perpetuates Afrikaner masculine ideals, as seen throughout the film as he acts violently towards those he deems not masculine enough. Janno's idealisation and infatuation of Hennie possibly indicate his insecurity about not being 'man enough' to fit into his community and eventually take over the family farm. This idealisation of Hennie is made clear in the film when it is revealed that Janno keeps a photo of him in his closet. Figure 4.7 shows a scene in which Pieter opens Janno's closet out of boredom, where he finds a photo of Hennie taped to the inside of the closet door. Pieter proceeds to taunt Janno about it, causing Janno to reach for the picture to hide it. This is not surprising, as closets are often a place where private belongings such as pictures are hidden from other people. This outburst also implies that Janno is ashamed of having a photo of his best friend and is possibly visually symbolic of him possibly being 'in the closet'<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Being 'closeted' refers to queer individuals who have not publicly 'come out' and shared their sexual orientation or gender identity with other people. The act of 'coming out' is a process of recognising one's own gender identity, sexual orientation, or sex identity and sharing that identity with other people (Bell, 2021).



Figure 4.7: Etienne Kallos. *Die Stropers*. 2019. Pieter finds a photo of Hennie in Janno's closet

Despite the family's efforts at reforming him, Pieter sees beyond the seemingly peaceful and righteous façade of the Afrikaner community. Even after his supposed reformation at the camp, he puts on an act for his new family. This becomes clear when Pieter confronts Janno in one of the most intimate moments in the film (see Figure 4.8). The intimacy of the scene is emphasised by the film style, as the room is cast in darkness with the only source of light being Janno's bedside lamp which casts a soft glow across the boys' faces and bodies. The camera pauses in a static shot of the interaction, creating an atmosphere of discomfort. As Pieter starts his monologue, he leans close to Janno, whispering in his ear and placing his hands on Janno's thigh. The scene cuts from Janno's face to Pieter's hands, to over-the-shoulder shots of Pieter talking and Janno's reactions. This scene takes place after Janno tries to hug Marie in a moment of desperation for affection and approval. Pieter enters his room and proceeds to explain how Marie will never love either of them. Shortly after, he approaches Janno and expounds his bleak view on life in the following monologue:

*Ek laat mans aan my vat vir geld en ek is trots daarop. Dink jy ek sou survive het as ek ook liefde by hulle gesoek het? Ek het myself aan hulle verkoop en hulle het cash betaal, so ek kan enige iets survive. Tot 'n kak broer soos jy. So moenie vir my pity nie. Actually pity ek vir jou. Jy dink ek weet nie van grootmense se respek nie, om hulle klam, nasty hande te skud nie? Die stad is vol outjies wat baie mooi "hallo oom" sê vir mans wat in karre sit. En nou het ek myself alweer verkoop vir kos en 'n warm bed. En dit voel great. Sy [Marie] kan my maar drukkies gee as sy wil, maar ek weet haar hart is yskoud. En ek gee nie 'n fok om nie. (I let men touch me for money and I'm proud of that. Do you think I would have survived if I wanted love from them too? I sold myself to them and they gave me cash, so I can survive*

anything. Even a shit brother like you. So, don't feel sorry for me. Actually, I pity you. You think I don't know how to show respect to elders, how to shake their sweaty, perverted hands? The city is full of boys saying 'hello uncle' to men in cars. And now I've sold myself again for food and a warm bed. And it feels great. She [Marie] can hug me if she wants, but I know she's dead inside. And I don't give a fuck.)



Figure 4.8: Etienne Kallos. *Die Stropers*. 2019. Pieter explaining his bleak view of life to Janno

From this monologue, it is clear that Pieter has figured out exactly how to behave to survive in and fit into any community. Early in the film, Pieter is taken to church with the family as part of their weekly routine. Before entering the church, Jan explains to Pieter how to behave properly, to which Pieter replies "*Julle is almal brainwashed!*" ("You are all brainwashed!"), further showing that he sees how and why specific ideas are perpetuated in this community and by the family. After this, Pieter proceeds to storm out of the church, leaving the community members and the family stunned. Because Pieter can perform according to preferred Afrikaner ideals for his gain, it shows up the performative nature of Afrikaner identity and Afrikaner masculinity. He chooses to perform in this way, whereas other people in the community – according to him – do it because they are 'brainwashed'. At the same time, it can be argued that Janno's performance of Afrikaner ideals is automatic and unintentional. However, it is also possible that he performs – even if sometimes unconsciously – in this way to gain something from it: acceptance by his family and community.

Van Rensburg (2010:120) points out that the outsider in a narrative, whether the writer of the text or an outsider character within the text, often comments honestly and directly on social order and structures due to their exclusion. In other words, the author of a literary work (written

or visual) distinctly uses the outsider character to comment on or criticise the community within that literary work (Ströh & Nel, 2020:798). Within the context of *Die Stropers*, this outsider character is represented by Pieter. Through his rebellious behaviour and questioning of the community in which he finds himself, he emphasises the restrictive nature of Afrikaner communities and the constructed nature of their foundational myths and narratives. Pieter also emphasises the performative nature of gender roles and identities within this community and how these are considered 'natural' and enforced according to Biblical standards. These communities, as pointed out by Kallos in the film, are restrictive spaces that require the conformation to specific historical and cultural ideals and embodied identities (evident in the behaviour, speech, preferences and sexual orientation of the characters) that have no room for 'other' identities that do not fit the mould. Therefore, the portrayal of South African communities in South African film in this way is of value to the contemporary viewer, as it may prompt critique and provides a space for questioning historical and cultural traditions and ideals (Ströh & Nel, 2020:799).

#### **4.2. Afrikaner masculinity and exclusivity in *Skoonheid***

*Skoonheid* also criticises the restrictive nature of Afrikaner culture and how it affects men in these communities. According to Falkof (2016:15), "*Skoonheid* is deeply embedded in the sense of Afrikaans culture." The film opens with the sound of conversation that can be heard while a black screen lightens to reveal the festivities of a wedding reception. A slow shot moves through the crowd and zooms in on a handsome young man (Christian) before cutting to a close-up of Francois, who can be seen staring at Christian from across the room (see Figure 4.9). This initial shot sets the scene for Francois's obsession with Christian and, according to Falkof (2016:19), establishes Francois as "an Afrikaans man within a social and cultural milieu." Sonnekus (2013:27) states that "Francois is not stereotypically gay but rather archaically Afrikaans". His heterosexually defined life and austere existence present an image of hegemonic masculinity that contradicts his homosexual desire (Sonnekus, 2013:27). This also makes his homosexual sex acts – for example, at the farm orgy and his attack on Christian – somewhat of a shock to the viewer.



Figure 4.9: Oliver Hermanus. *Skoonheid*. 2011. In the opening scene, Francois stares across the room at Christian

The choice of creating *Skoonheid* in Afrikaans establishes the events in the film more securely within Francois's community and the cultural history of Afrikaners (Devarenne, 2006:106). The second half of the film is set in the Atlantic seaboard of Cape Town – an affluent, liberal, English, and cosmopolitan area (Falkof, 2016:21). To build up the courage to interact with Christian, Francois gets drunk at a bar in Green Point<sup>32</sup>, which leads to the violent failed rape of Christian. In the film, Cape Town is portrayed as a hedonistic space in which the purity or *skoonheid* of the imagined Afrikaner *volk* is under threat from homosexuality. This homosexual threat is exemplified by a young, coloured queer man who flirts with Francois in the bar. Even though Francois aggressively rejects the man, Falkof (2016:21) believes that this interaction signifies Francois's commitment to whiteness.

Francois's 'Afrikaans-ness' is further emphasised in the film by his white ethnic identity (Falkof, 2016:20). This is done using the bakkie (a pick-up truck) and Francois's position in the vehicle to symbolise traditional Afrikaner manhood. The way Francois sits in his bakkie represents a form of masculinity associated with white Afrikaners in the countryside. In one scene, on his way home from work, Francois is pictured driving in his bakkie while on his phone, with one arm on the steering wheel. The sequence is made up of one long tracking shot that follows Francois as he drives through Bloemfontein in his *bakkie*. This sequence frames and emphasises his hairy arm, wedding ring, and gold watch and taken together, serves as a visual cue for the audience to recognise the particular type of manhood Francois inhabits (see Figure 4.10). Falkof (2016:20) argues that "Francois's physicality suggests Afrikaner manhood tied to retrogressive,

<sup>32</sup> The suburb of De Waterkant in Green Point was branded as a safe haven for queer South Africans by Cape Town's tourism agenda (Tucker, 2008:188). The so-called 'gay village' is located in De Waterkant and includes various establishments that exhibit and celebrate the South African queer community (Sonnekus, 2013:31; Tucker, 2008:188).

patriarchal nationalism.” Furthermore, his socio-cultural identity is personified through the bakkie, and the expensive model he drives represents a certain social status tied to income, class and prosperity. Therefore, Francois’s sexual desire and actions become deviant because it takes place *within* and *from* within his upper-middle-class Afrikaner identity. The bakkie as a symbol of male ‘Afrikaner-ness’ is also promoted in popular culture (such as music videos) as synonymous with the identity of white Afrikaans men.



Figure 4.10: Oliver Hermanus. *Skoonheid*. 2011. Francois in his bakkie

One example includes a music video by the popular Afrikaans boyband, JAN JAN JAN, titled *Wys jou vleis* (*Show your meat*) (2019) (see Figure 4.11). In the video, one of the members of the band is dressed in khaki clothes typically worn by farmers, and particularly Afrikaans farmers. He seems to be attempting to court a young woman in a veld while she sits on his bakkie. The bakkie in this shot may serve the purpose of creating a further link between the band, JAN JAN JAN, and *boer* or Afrikaner culture.



Figure 4.11: JAN JAN JAN. *Wys jou vleis*. 2019.

Francois's Afrikaner identity is further emphasised in a scene where he drives to an empty farmhouse to meet other Afrikaans men for sex. All the men fit the stereotype, with beards and khaki pants and shirts, typical of white, Afrikaner *Boers* in the countryside. The first scene in this sequence shows the men in a kitchen, making awkward conversation and passing beers among themselves, reminiscent of a weekend *braai* (barbecue), creating another link to Afrikaner manhood (Falkof, 2016:20).

#### 4.3. Space and place in *Scoonheid* and *Die Stropers*

Space and place play an important role in locating the films socially and politically within South Africa. Kallos uses static long shots in *Die Stropers* to cast the Bethlehem landscape in an idealistic light. Reminiscent of the farm novel, this idealisation is used to critique the restrictive nature of the spaces in the film. In the film, images of the farmlands translate into a feeling of unsettling isolation, becoming a metaphor for the family's survival (DeBarros, 2019). This idealisation of the landscape is symbolic of a nationalistic worldview perpetuated by Afrikaner nationalists and the characters in the film. The idealisation also critiques this worldview by contrasting vast open spaces and wide shots of the serene landscape with close-up shots within buildings. Kallos bombards the viewer with close-up after close-up within the dark and suppressing spaces of the farmhouse and shebeen, creating a sense of claustrophobia that mimics Janno's increasing uncertainty about his Afrikaner home and way of life. The final landscape shot takes place after Janno's climactic escape from the farm. The shot is identical to

the film's opening scene, but in this instance, Pieter has taken Janno's place as he walks into the *veld* at the break of dawn to herd cattle. Pieter has now replaced Janno as the only son and heir to his father's farm, and one gets the sense that, because he 'sees beyond the myth', he is aware of the restrictive and oppressive environment in which he willingly and knowingly placed himself.

Similar to Kallos's critique through his film style, Hermanus critiques "the social constraints that bind traditional Afrikaners within the conformist group discipline" (Falkof, 2016:23). Following the awkward conversations in the kitchen, *Skoonheid* shifts to a graphic sex scene that creates an uncomfortable atmosphere as the viewer is forced to watch the sexual acts between Francois and three other men. There is a sudden shift in the film's atmosphere, reflecting Francois's feeling about homosexual sex acts as something deviant and perverted that needs to be hidden. Francois's conflicted feelings about his homosexual desires is made clear in a scene where he visits a doctor because he feels sick, but the doctor finds nothing physically wrong with him.

Following the sex scene, the film suddenly cuts to a static long shot of the empty farmland. The agricultural landscape speaks to Afrikaner nationalist myth and important masculine ideals such as being a farmer and making the land productive through hard work and perseverance. This is also the romanticised landscape typically described in the farm novel genre as it represents nostalgia for the ideals preached by Afrikaner nationalist discourse. This idealised farm landscape is starkly contrasted with the stifling interior spaces of the farmhouse: the enclosed kitchen and bedroom where the men meet to have an orgy stand in direct opposition to the values represented by the landscape. This contrast in space is also prevalent when looking at how Cape Town is contrasted to Bloemfontein. This juxtaposition symbolises the stifling nature of Francois's community and the way he lives his life, in contrast to the freedom offered by Cape Town and an acceptance and open expression of homosexual identities and desires.

According to Sonnekus (2007:42-43),

Spaces and places are not empty arenas, but are imbued with ideological meaning and differently gendered, classed, raced, and sexualised, depending on the core population that inhabits or is confined to it, and the ideals that are projected onto the space by their practices, movements, ideals and needs.

In *Skoonheid*, Bloemfontein represents a rigid Afrikaner society, whereas Cape Town offers a liberal space where individuals are not bound by prescriptive gender roles. Slow tracking shots or static long shots emphasise the lifestyle in Bloemfontein and a quiet, often foreboding atmosphere devoid of any diegetic or non-diegetic soundtrack. In contrast, Cape Town is

characterised by bustling streets, a lively social scene, and a leisurely atmosphere, especially in the city's gay spaces such as bars and nightclubs. Cinematographically, the two spaces are depicted similarly, with a foreboding atmosphere emphasised by dark tones in dimly lit rooms. The only exception to this is when Francois admires Christian from afar. Francois hides away in dark spaces in these instances, while Christian enjoys time with his friends at the beach or university, outside and in the sunlight. In the film, Christian and the city represent the possibility of living free from the harsh constraints of Afrikaner group discipline (Van der Westhuizen, 2007:293).

Interestingly, bedrooms are also critical representational spaces in the film. Both the bedroom on the farmhouse where the orgy takes place and the bedroom in Cape Town where Francois attempts to rape Christian represent Francois's pent-up frustration about his desires, which is ultimately expressed through violence. There is also an interesting contrast between these bedrooms and Francois's home bedroom, which he shares with his wife. Here, the 'normal' and 'ideal' heterosexual lifestyle is represented, but it represents the restrictive and oppressive nature of Francois's identity as seen in his behaviour and interaction with his wife, which is often cold and strained. These images show the couple after the wedding at the beginning of the film and before Francois departs for Cape Town (see Figures 4.12 and 4.13). These scenes are lit with low-key lighting and usually consist of static long shots of the couple. Francois and his wife make superficial conversations about the state of their swimming pool or their experience at a wedding, and they are never shown making physical contact with each other. In *Skoonheid*, Francois goes against his society's norms by attending secret gatherings with other men where they engage in sexual activities. However, even within these gatherings and in his 'normal' day-to-day life, he still perpetuates his society's heteronormative ideals. This is demonstrated in a scene where he denigrates '*moffies*' in a conversation with a friend or when attending a braai. Here, he is performing to promote hegemonic masculinity to secure his masculinity, further suppressing an already marginalised part of his identity.



Figure 4.12: Oliver Hermanus. *Skoonheid*. 2011. Francois and Helena in bed



Figure 4.13: Oliver Hermanus. *Skoonheid*. 2011. Francois and Helena watching television

Francois's pursuit of Christian leads him to Cape Town, which is contrasted with his routine, heteronormative lifestyle in Bloemfontein (Sonnekus, 2013:31). Interestingly, as pointed out by Sonnekus (2013:31), Francois's heterosexuality and conservatism paradoxically make him an outsider in the liberal and predominantly homosexual spaces of Cape Town. This is emphasised when a gay coloured man flirts with him in a nightclub, which, according to Sonnekus (2010:196), "facilitates a power shift since it relegates heteronormativity to a vulnerable position..." In this process, Francois and the hegemony of his group are overthrown and disempowered.

White Afrikaner men's expression of masculinity is often in line with the ideals historically promoted by the Dutch Reformed Church and Afrikaner nationalists (Sonnekus, 2013:30). In other words, hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity is defined by its 'other' (i.e. blackness and gayness), and acts of violence or discrimination against these 'others', therefore, become displays of masculinity (October, 2022). Van der Watt (2005:127) and Walker (2005:226-228) suggest that within a post-apartheid South African context, white, Afrikaans men often attempt to regain their loss of political, economic and social power through performative hegemonic masculinity which manifests as acts of discrimination.

In *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*, this masculinity, as performed by the protagonists, takes the form of homomascularity. Homomascularity is a helpful lens for looking at gender performativity within these films, and through this performativity of homomascularity, we see hegemonic masculinity being reinforced. In *Skoonheid*, homomascularity presents itself as a racist and homophobic display of manhood that asserts itself as superior to all 'other' displays of masculinity in the film. In *Die Stropers*, Janno uses homomascularity in an attempt to blend in and assert his place in the repressive Afrikaner community depicted in the film.

#### **4.4. Homomascularity performativity in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers***

According to Sonnekus (2009:38), images of hypermasculinity in visual media such as magazines and films serve as protest images against prevailing stereotypes of gay men as feminine, which suggest that they are not 'man enough'. Hegemonic masculinity in homomascularity suppresses 'other' masculinities and homosexual identities by reiterating its own supposed supremacy. This can be seen in the images of gay men as comedic and stereotypical sidekicks in Afrikaans films such as *Lipstick dipstick*, *Kaalgat tussen die daisies*, and *Kampterrein*, where gay men are depicted as feminine and 'unmanly'. In *Kampterrein*, for example, a gay couple's caravan is decorated with colourful painted flowers, and their camp equipment consists of pink folding chairs and various colourful lawn ornaments such as flamingos and flowerpots. In addition, the characters are dressed in feminine clothing, such as a floral nightgown, and their personalities are over-the-top and flamboyant.

In *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*, homomascularity is used as a performative strategy to hide homosexual desires because of the fear of being stereotyped as '*moffies*' and therefore being bullied and ostracised. When looking at the male power hierarchy within patriarchal societies, homosexual men are often positioned lower because of stereotypes and beliefs that perpetuate the idea that gay men are less masculine and consequently inferior. Being categorised as such often results in discrimination and rejection from communities that value hegemonic masculine

ideals, such as the Afrikaner communities depicted in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*. This stereotype of gay men as less masculine is perpetuated in the films by the very people who fear it: Francois and Janno. According to Jean-Paul Sartre (cited by Leone, 2016:2), “we only become what we are by the radical and deep-seated refusal of that which others have made of us.” When applying this statement to Francois and Janno’s behaviour in the films, it becomes clear that their attitudes towards homosexuality stem from a deep-seated internalisation of certain Afrikaner ideals that not only leads to a rejection of ‘other’ masculinities but an internalised refusal of part of their own identities as well.

According to Oliver Hermanus (cited by Sonnekus, 2013:26), “the collective guilt and subconscious need to defend their heritage are what most conservative [Afrikaner men] battle with every day.” Hermanus explores this crisis through the portrayal of sexual interactions between men in *Skoonheid*. However, even though sex between men is considered ‘un-Afrikaner’ in the film, it is still permitted within the specific group setting, based on racial and cultural similarities between the men who partake. Therefore, the men in Francois’s group do not oppose their established heteronormative identities because certain conditions are put in place that regulates the appearance of homosexual men (Sonnekus, 2013:28; Sonnekus and Van Eeden, 2009:90). This can be seen in the example of the farm orgy sequence where Gideon – one of the members – brings along a feminine, young, coloured man. The pair enter the kitchen, and the other men immediately ostracise Gideon. The men’s reactions and Francois’s statement that “*Ons is nie moffies nie*” (“We are not faggots”) make the rules clear: only white, heterosexually identified Afrikaner men are welcome at these gatherings.

The negative reaction from the men to the coloured outsider exposes their contradictory and repressed sexuality (Sonnekus, 2013:28). According to Falkof (2016:21), this space is “for the exclusive expression of white Afrikaans desire where the boundaries of whiteness, even in transgression, are aggressively policed” – this is done through the explicit rejection of gay male culture and people of colour. Therefore, Falkof (2016:21) believes that the traditional patriarchal system – exemplified by the figure of Francois – remains devoted to keeping white Afrikaans men at the top of a hegemonic hierarchy.

In Afrikaans, the definition of the word ‘*skoonheid*’ is twofold: beauty, and on the other hand, it refers to cleanliness or purity. The exclusion of the coloured man “suggests a purification of the body politic or the sanitisation of the closed community of ethnic whiteness” (Falkof, 2016:21). The obsession with racial purity evokes the fears of racial ‘miscegenation’ that underpinned the apartheid government’s policing of sexual intimacy, the fear of ‘impurity’, and consequently the myth of purity of blood. The contradictions in Francois’s actions and the threat to his manhood

from 'moffies' and 'non-whites' highlight the hypocrisy of the patriarchal system that supposedly sets him apart from these 'other' expressions of masculinity (Kumalo, 2019:90).

The scene described above is particularly significant because it represents a context wherein Afrikaner MSM create an "identity of sameness" by excluding the 'other' (Sonnekus, 2013:28). This identity recycles traditional hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity, showing how 'acceptable' masculine behaviour for some white men is still determined by apartheid-era propaganda that aimed to maintain a dichotomous society (Stobie, 2008:71; Du Pisani, 2001:172). Sonnekus (2013:28-29) explains that "the typification of the 'other' has a determining influence on individuals' definition of the Self and their behaviour." Therefore, by determining the role of the 'other', the *self* also takes on a predefined role.

The coloured man's racial and homosexual identity threatens the group of men's compartmentalised view of sexuality (Kumalo, 2019:91). Hermanus (cited by Sonnekus, 2013:29) states that "for men such as Francois, on the screen and in society, the act of gay sex is considered more vulgar if it is with someone from another race since it transgresses two of the central taboos that shape and direct conventional Afrikaner masculinity." Therefore, black gay men in South Africa present a significant threat to the 'standards' of white, Afrikaner patriarchy since they are considered too gay and too black (Sonnekus & Van Eeden, 2009:95). In this example, Francois completely rejects the coloured 'moffie' – exorcising this supposed 'non-masculine' identity from his self-identification, suggesting that he can no longer be masculine as soon as he describes himself as gay or is labelled as such by others. This would also mean that he could lose his position of dominance and superiority as a businessman with a wife and two children – in effect also losing the safety and security from discrimination awarded by his community.

Homophobia as a performative demonstration of masculinity is illustrated in another instance in the film when Francois's family enjoys lunch with Christian's family the day after the wedding in the opening sequence. Christian's father tells Francois about a time when a man propositioned Christian, prompting Francois to state that "*Jy weet nooit met die moffies nie. Hulle kom met baie weg deesdae.*" ("You never know with these faggots. They get away with a lot these days"). According to Du Plessis (2006:29), this scene shows that masculinity is often performed for the approval of other men. Homophobia forms part of ideal hegemonic masculinity. Sonnekus (2013:30) also comments on this, stating that this scene "expresses the disillusionment shared by men who formerly bent the South African landscape to their will." This creates a hierarchy of masculinities in the film.

In *Die Stropers*, homophobia is also used as a performative tool to maintain and keep the Afrikaner men on the farm pure. Homosexuality is fiercely condemned by the characters, particularly the men. On his way to school, Janno sees his grandfather sitting in the living room and greets him. Janno is met with his grandfather's angry gaze as he proceeds to shout at Janno that

*"Hierdie grond is alles myne. Ek het my hele lewe daarop gewerk en jy gaan dit nie kry nie. Jy gaan dit nie kry nie so fok of! Gaan terug strate toe! Jy gaan nie vat wat myne is. Jou stuk gemors! Jou moffie gemors!"* ("This land is all mine. I spent my whole life working it, and you are not going to get it. You are not going to get it, so fuck off! Go back to the streets. You cannot take what's mine. You piece of trash! You faggot trash!").

This quote displays Afrikaners' attitude in this community – personified by the grandfather – to homosexual identities and the importance of inheritance and how, if one is not considered worthy or manly enough to inherit the family farm, one is cast out and ridiculed.

In the film, homosexuality is shown within a framework of social deviance as the only instance where sexual activities between men take place is in a shebeen in one of the townships near the farm. Pieter convinces Janno to accompany him to the shebeen and Janno agrees, remembering his promise to his father that he would keep an eye on Pieter. This sequence is made up of tracking shots, quick cuts, and the camera that pans across the scenes. The camera follows Janno through the shebeen as he gets drunk and stumbles through the building. His disorientation is emphasised by a slight haze that covers the camera's lens as well as high-contrast lighting created by bright flickering lights in the otherwise dark space. Pieter, looking to sell his body for money, gets into a car with an older man. Janno is horrified and begs Pieter not to go with the man, afraid of the repercussions for himself because of his association with Pieter. Janno's reaction exemplifies the attitudes of Afrikaners in this community to homosexuality and homosexual acts and the supposed 'corrupting' effects this might have on the Afrikaners' puritan ideals. To the Afrikaners depicted in the film, homosexuality is considered the 'evil' counterpart of heterosexuality as gayness is associated with urbanisation and the corruption of Afrikaner men by the big cities (Falkof, 2016:21; Peach, 2005:91). This is also found on the peripheries of white Christianisation as represented by the shebeen and black township.

Another interesting conflict is that between Afrikaner and English-speaking white masculinities and their intersection with homosexuality. According to Van der Westhuizen (2018), Afrikaner identity was not only constructed in opposition to black identities but Anglo whiteness as well.

Hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity often rejects any form of homosexuality on the grounds that it is 'un-Afrikaner' and that it is more prominent among English-speaking white men (Du Pisani, 2001:167; Van Zyl, 2011:335). This suggests that some Afrikaners believe that homosexuality is not an inherent part of Afrikaner identity and rather something brought to South Africa by British colonialism.

As argued by Bantjies *et al.* (2017:237), homosexual men in post-apartheid South Africa often feel ashamed when unable to meet societal expectations and deviate from heteronormative conventions. White Afrikaner gay men often find themselves in a complex situation where men with homosexual desires, or men who sexually desire men without identifying as gay, are also regarded as deviant since homosexual acts are also considered 'un-Afrikaner'. This is important as the sexual orientation of Francois, Janno and Pieter are not made explicitly clear in the films. *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* prominently display the pressure to follow restrictive gender norms and hegemonic ideals as Francois and Janno grapple with their identities within strict social settings.

This struggle manifests itself within a performative framework in which homomascularity becomes a means of concealing Francois and Janno's 'deviant' homosexual desires. In *Skoonheid*, for example, Francois's homosexual acts are visually represented in terms of the normative sexual binary where the hegemonic male is often in control of their partner and the (penetrating) acts that occur. On the two occasions that homosexual sex acts are shown on screen, Francois is always in the dominant or 'male' sex role. Francois's violence is also directly linked with his homosexual desires and the appearance of other gay men in the film. Kumalo (2019:95) states that by acting violently towards gay men in the film, Francois "rids himself of vulnerability and reasserts his masculine power."

In terms of performative strategies used to reassert masculinity, the protagonists use subtle strategies to fit in and be accepted and regarded as part of the hegemonic masculine order. In *Die Stropers*, for example, Janno goes fishing, wakes up early in the morning to herd and feed cattle, plays rugby, and even the way he dresses indicates a type of ideal Afrikaner masculinity, emulating the dress of grown-up men and farmers. Style of dress is an important performative tool in the films as, from an audience member's point of view, this visually separates groups of people in terms of their culture and ideals (Butler, 1988:519; Xue, 2008:55). The khaki clothes Francois and Janno wear throughout the films indicate a specific type of Afrikaner masculinity, one associated with the exclusive patriarchal ideals of the South African countryside. One of these ideals is a type of stoicism that both Francois and Janno inhabit in the films.



Figure 4.14: Etienne Kallos. *Die Stropers*. 2019. Janno watching over his father's cattle, dressed in a khaki ensemble

By hiding their emotional vulnerability, Francois and Janno further reassert their Afrikaner masculinity. Men's emotional responses other than aggression are often associated with weakness in Afrikaner communities (Ströh & Nel, 2020:802); as we see in *Die Stropers* when Janno, in a desperate final attempt for his mother's affection, embraces her and hugs her tightly, only for him to be pushed away and his affection ignored. Janno's supposed weakness is highlighted throughout the films as his father condemns him for not wanting to partake in some of the more gruesome farm jobs, such as dehorning cattle. This encouragement of men to act tough and hide their emotional vulnerability is common in Afrikaner communities. This can be seen in a scene where Janno is tackled by two boys while playing rugby, and Janno's first instinct is to respond with violence by attempting to attack them. Therefore, violence is often carried out in the presence of other men for approval and to avoid humiliation from other men: men perform their masculinity for other men. This performance can be seen in the film's climactic end when Janno burns his father's fields. He does this partially to free himself from the constraints of the farm, but also to prove to Pieter that he is braver and more 'manly' than Pieter will ever be.

Interestingly, a connection can be made between the landscape in *Die Stropers* and the male body since both of these elements seem to be idealised in the film. This also has further implications when thinking about Janno's act of arson at the end of the film, which occurs after Pieter's harrowing monologue. Janno is not only burning his father's land in an act of retaliation against his parents and their Afrikaner way of life: he is also burning the countryside, an integral part of his identity as an Afrikaner in the film. Therefore, this act represents his symbolic release from the ideals that have kept him bound to a set of conservative guidelines that have

determined his behaviour since he was adopted by Marie. This scene also becomes important when considering the title of the film, *Die Stropers*.

Similar to *Skoonheid*, the title of *Die Stropers* loses part of its meaning when translated into English. To harvest is to gather crops and reap the benefits of your hard work, but to *stroof* is to pillage, plunder and poach; to take something from someone. When thinking about this definition in terms of the issues surrounding identity construction and the expression of same-sex desire that are explored within the film, it can be assumed that the title contributes to the film's exploration of these issues. The title therefore provides another layer of meaning to the film as it makes a bold statement about the incredibly restrictive and potentially harmful nature of the hegemonic Afrikaner community depicted in the film. In other words, the characters that form part of the Afrikaner community within this film perpetuate certain Afrikaner nationalist ideals to the point where it leads to the literal plunder of 'non-heterosexual', and 'non-white' identities and desires. This makes Janno's act of retaliation even more impactful as he destroys the countryside, as the ideals imposed upon him within this space have destroyed a part of him.

According to Fleming *et al.* (2019:203), men's fear of being humiliated can be attributed to the social pressure surrounding competition with other men for social status. When a man is humiliated, he often responds with violence (Fleming *et al.*, 2019:205). This can be seen in *Die Stropers* as Janno competes with Pieter for Marie's approval. Throughout the film, Janno sees Pieter with Marie as they talk, laugh and bond; their relationship seems more affectionate than his relationship with Marie. This makes Janno feel rejected as the family's only son and as the heir to the farm. In response to the humiliation of losing to Pieter, Janno commits arson, showing that he is indeed capable of violence and retaliation like Pieter.

In *Skoonheid*, Francois shows little to no emotion throughout the film, giving forced smiles at social gatherings. Even after his attack on Christian, arguably the most shocking and emotional scene in the film, Francois represses his sudden emotional outburst as he calmly collects himself and leaves the hotel room. Francois's attack on Christian also demonstrates that, as Kumalo (2019:95) argued for Afrikaner men, there are cultural standards for masculinity that include violence when being rejected or humiliated. In a later scene, back in Bloemfontein, he and his wife are shown quietly sitting in the living room, the atmosphere a type of silent suppression of emotion (Falkof, 2016:26).

*Die Stropers* also highlights the importance of the role of the *boer* father and mother in maintaining cultural standards of masculinity. The role of a mother and father within Afrikaner culture is to teach their children 'appropriate' social behaviour; for example, the appropriate way to greet people. After another night of dealing with Pieter's nightmares, Jan takes Pieter to

church the following Sunday. Before entering, however, Jan instructs Pieter to behave himself while inside to not reflect badly on Jan and his wife. Jan instructs Pieter on how to behave, telling him to, “*Wees beleefd. Jy skud hul blad as hul hallo sê. Noem hulle ‘oom’ en ‘tannie’.*” (“Be polite. Shake their hand if they greet you. Call them ‘uncle’ and ‘auntie’”). Furthermore, this instructive role of the Afrikaner mother and father in this scene represents a hegemonic gaze within the films. This hegemonic gaze suggests a system of power in which those who are gazing (the mother and father) are superior to the one being gazed at (the children).

According to Bak (2010:266), homosexuality (like all gendered identities) is often defined through actions. Similarly, Janno considers actions to be a key defining characteristic of one’s identity. His insistence that Pieter does not tell anyone what he did with the older man in the car for fear of association with those same deviant homosexual acts indicates this. In contrast, Francois does not consider himself homosexual even though he regularly engages in sexual acts with other men. Only when he starts to become emotionally infatuated with Christian – breaking the boundary between his secret sex life and his perfect heteronormative lifestyle – Francois loses control of his carefully constructed and compartmentalised male Afrikaner identity.

The alienation from a part of their identities is significant because Francois and Janno cannot imagine themselves as homosexual based on the disjunction between what society has taught them and what they feel inside themselves (Brant, 2004:127). In a discussion about repression, Butler states that “the repression of homosexuality is intense for most heterosexual people, and this repression can be linked to a type of loss within the subject” (Reddy & Butler, 2004:121). This repression can be seen in both *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*, where Francois and Janno exacerbate Afrikaner masculine traits as they struggle to suppress a part of their desires deemed socially unacceptable. This brings me to the question of agency in the films.

Critiques of Butler’s theory of performativity suggest that, according to this theory, the subject has no agency in the way they act in and perceive the world (Brickell, 2005:28; Bunch, 2013:40; Hall, 1999:186; Van der Watt, 2004:3), as the subject is wholly constituted by pre-conceived notions produced by discourse. However, I propose that the characters in the films exercise agency through their actions and decisions, as demonstrated in *Skoonheid*, where Francois very deliberately structures his life to bolster his image as an Afrikaner man while secretly enjoying sex with other men. In *Die Stropers*, Janno also exercises agency when he decides to strategically act, dress and speak in a certain way to fit the mould of the perfect Afrikaner boy. The use of symbolic language by the characters is relevant in this discussion as they use pre-established signifiers and symbols in their performativity of masculinity. Pieter also demonstrates his agency when he chooses to strategically deploy and appropriate existing

gender discourses in his performance of Afrikaner masculinity. Therefore, while the characters are produced as gendered subjects by existing discourses, they also exercise agency by choosing to use, appropriate and deploy elements of those discourses in their performance of Afrikaner masculinity.

Even though Janno shows agency in his decisions and actions, these norms also result from socialisation and indoctrination. In other words, Janno does not question why people are expected to behave in a particular way, as, throughout the film, he displays hegemonic masculine traits that are in line with what the ideal Afrikaner man should be. Nothing forces Janno to act more masculine, but the social environment he finds himself in promotes these ideals and rewards those who behave accordingly, and he unquestioningly conforms to them. Janno functions to keep this hegemonic system in place through his performative homomascularity that oppresses 'other' forms of masculinity and reiterates its own supposed supremacy. *Die Stropers* is a coming-of-age story of disillusionment, and it is through Pieter that Janno sees the oppressive systems around him.

Pieter knows that showing signs of weakness is out of the question within this macho Afrikaner context, and he attempts to prove himself to Jan through an act of violence. When a stray dog that Pieter adopted kills some of a neighbour's sheep, he demands to shoot the dog himself (Van Hoeij, 2018). Interestingly, although the focus of the sequence is on Pieter's show of masculinity, the camera cuts to Janno's face and his reaction when Pieter shoots the dog. This is an important scene as it demonstrates that Pieter understands the social dynamics of life on the Afrikaner farm. In shooting the dog, Pieter proves to Jan that he can push aside his emotions, be a 'man', and do what needs to be done when the situation arises. This is also an example of hegemonic masculine performance at times overlapping with homomascularity.

From this discussion, it can be speculated that Francois and Janno have homosexual desires and use performative homomascularity to blend into society. We see this homomascularity in how Francois and Janno emphasise hegemonic masculine traits in their gender performativity to secure their masculinity in their respective filmic societies. Examples of this include their displays of physical and emotional strength through violence in response to threats to their masculinity and their interest in traditionally masculine things such as rugby or fishing. Francois and Janno's speech and actions in the films frequently emphasise what the ideal Afrikaner man should look and act like, and are also examples of them securing their masculinity. By stating that men must wake up early to work, that gay men are not men, and homosexual sex acts are

‘un-Afrikaner’<sup>33</sup>, Francois and Janno reinforce hegemonic Afrikaner ideals even though they themselves are oppressed and constrained thereby.

This chapter provided an analysis of *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* in terms of the protagonists’ performance of homomascularity and how this enforces and legitimises hegemonic ideals of masculinity in the conservative Afrikaner communities depicted in the films. The analysis focuses on three main points that contribute to Francois and Janno’s behaviour in the films. These include myths regarding religion, language, and culture to maintain hegemonic Afrikaner identity construction. These myths are perpetuated by supporting characters in the films, specifically Janno’s mother Marie, and Francois’s secret group of associates, and reveal the characters’ conservative and stereotypical ideas about homosexuality and homosexual individuals. It was also considered how hierarchies in the films’ communities contribute to establishing and maintaining hegemonic Afrikaner ideals regarding masculinities, genders, and different races. Finally, Francois and Janno’s performativity of homomascularity was discussed in terms of their masculine behaviour that reinforces heteronormativity while obscuring their homosexual desires. This discussion established that Francois and Janno’s behaviour in the films contributes to their inadvertent legitimising of Afrikaner masculinity through specific performative strategies.

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<sup>33</sup> The notion of ‘un-Afrikaner’ can be related to homosexuality being considered ‘un-African’. This is interesting as it signals a similarity between two seemingly contradictory groups and ideologies. For more information on homosexuality being ‘un-African’, see Mikki van Zyl’s article *Are same-sex marriages unAfrican? Same-sex relationships and belonging in post-apartheid South Africa* (2011), and Amar Wahab’s *“Homosexuality/homophobia is un-Africa??: un-mapping transnational discourses in the context Uganda’s anti-homosexuality bill/act* (2016).

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this study, I argued that the films *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* attempt to explore and challenge hegemonic ideals set forth by Afrikaner nationalist discourse through the film style and elements such as camera angle, lighting, shot, film form, and *mise-en-scène*. The performance of homomascularity by the films' main characters, Francois van Heerden in *Skoonheid* and Janno in *Die Stropers*, was revealed to enforce and legitimise hegemonic masculinist identities within the communities depicted in the films.

This investigation focused on three main aspects. Firstly, the study looked at how homomasculine identities are performed by the protagonists in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*. This required an in-depth look at Francois and Janno's gender performance to maintain the hierarchical positions afforded to them by their masculine identities within their respective filmic societies. Next, the effect of social and cultural norms and expectations on the protagonists and their gender performativity within these societies was explored. Finally, it was argued that Francois and Janno's performance of homomascularity within their respective social and cultural milieus, informs and legitimises hegemonic masculine identities described in Afrikaner nationalist discourse. It was concluded that hegemonic gender performance within conservative Afrikaner communities, as illustrated in the two films, legitimises hegemonic Afrikaner nationalist norms and ideals predicated on implicit gendered hierarchies and is potentially harmful.

The method with which the chosen films were analysed was informed by the key theoretical concepts of homomascularity and gender performativity. Selected scenes were discussed to highlight important elements for analysing the films and central features in the films, such as the films' plot, themes, and narrative development. I also looked at cinematographic elements such as lights and camera placement.

### 5.1. Summarising key points in the study

The first chapter introduced my study, research questions and outlined the chapters that followed. The second chapter in my study included a brief history and key tenets of Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa. It was important to provide a contextual background since the history of Afrikaner nationalism has significantly impacted the performativity of race and gender among Afrikaners. It was established that Afrikaner identity, as constructed by Afrikaner nationalism, is based on strict Christian morals that value patriarchal ideals, conservatism, and the 'purity' of whiteness as racial category. The most important part of this discussion was identifying two important devices within Afrikaner nationalist discourse that signify a continuation

and revival of Afrikaner nationalist ideals in contemporary South Africa, specifically among Afrikaners in conservative communities as depicted in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*. The first includes myth-making practices, and the second, the familial structure of nations and national communities.

The discussion revealed the manner in which Afrikaner group identity was specifically constructed by practices of myth-making that, in turn, created a unitary identity, tradition, culture and certain foundational myths. Family as a metaphor for the nation was influenced by the formation of gendered categories that are essential to the representation of the national community. Family as a nationalist construct was used for the categorisation and organisation of social roles and responsibilities within the group, thereby establishing the biological determinism used to justify racism, sexism, and homophobia. This discussion also provided relevant context about Afrikaner nationalist discourse and its influence on idealised masculinity in Afrikaner communities and how this idealisation contributed to Francois and Janno's identity construction in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*, respectively.

Afrikaners are defined within a post-apartheid context in terms of the identification with homogeneous cultural characteristics, such as the Afrikaans language. Therefore, many Afrikaners in present day South Africa care more about protecting their language and culture rather than being concerned with an ethnic background as the Afrikaner nationalists of the Union and apartheid decades were.

The place of homosexual identities within the post-apartheid Afrikaner community was also discussed. This has significant implications for the analysis of the films in the fourth chapter of the study. Even though it is implied that homosexual identities do not fit into this national familial structure because it is often seen as 'unmanly' and even degenerate, it was argued that homosexual identities are incorporated into contemporary nations. This is because they offer the potential to uphold national values and contribute to the nation's survival by identifying a (homosexual) 'other' from which the ideal, masculinist, heterosexual subject – through comparison – derives his identity and value.

Using Judith Butler's (1990; 1996) theory of gender performativity and the concept of hegemonic masculinity as formulated and discussed by Raewyn Connell, I set out in Chapter 3 to give a relevant theoretical framework and foundation for the analysis in Chapter 4. I started by examining the distinction between performance and performativity, where performance describes an intentional set of actions, and performativity refers to the features of ongoing 'performance'. Acts and gestures are constructed according to a gendered norm and are then performed. Without this continued and continual performance, these gendered norms would not

exist. Consequently, gendered bodies only exist based on pre-established gender performances.

The discussion on performativity was followed by a discussion of hegemonic masculinity as described by Raewyn Connell. Hegemonic masculinity is historically and culturally determined, and the concept describes a specific type of masculinity that is placed at the top of a hierarchy, thereby legitimising inequality among races, sexualities and genders. Within a South African context, specifically within Afrikaner communities, hegemonic masculinity is often characterised by heterosexuality and whiteness, thereby rejecting homosexuality and 'other' races from its self-definition.

The framework of Chapter 3 was used to analyse the protagonists' performative enactment of hegemonic masculinity – which takes the form of homomascularity. In *Die Stropers*, this can be seen in the clothes worn by the men who work on the farm: short khaki pants and a khaki button-up shirt, often accompanied by a hat in the same colour. This style of dress speaks to a certain type of Afrikaner masculinity often associated with farmers on the countryside. Following this discussion, an analysis was presented to investigate contradictions that underlie homomascularity and gender performativity within Afrikaner contexts in these two films.

I also addressed agency in this third chapter to establish that, although their respective filmic societies pressure Francois and Janno to behave according to hegemonic Afrikaner conventions, they display agency in their choices throughout the films. I will unpack the implications of the characters' performativity in the sections that follow.

Sexuality and sexual orientation constitute the most important distinction between masculinities, and this often leads to the subordination of homosexual men and the informal policing of heterosexual men. There are two important mechanisms for perpetuating and sustaining hegemony in gender relations: homophobia and heteronormativity. South Africa has a unique form of masculinity influenced by a unique socio-political past. It was established in Chapter 3 that hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity is historically and culturally influenced by deep-seated prejudices in terms of racism and homophobia. Hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity does not allow any 'other' racial or sexual masculinities as part of its self-definition. Francois and Janno use homophobia and performative, heterosexual masculinity to disguise their sexual desires. These performative instruments justify their homosocial bonds and bonding, and marginalise homosexual ones, reflecting their inner struggle to find a haven between homosocial and homosexual desire.

It was established that one form of hegemonic masculinity is homomascularity, which marginalises certain gay men by reiterating heteronormative ideals and aesthetics.

Homomascularity excludes femininity, black homosexual men, and transvestism from its self-definition. The reinforcement of heteronormativity through homomascularity performativity in Afrikaner communities leads one to believe that homosexuality is not welcomed or regarded as part of Afrikaner culture.

Both *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* provide a critique of the restrictive nature of Afrikaner culture and how this restriction affects men in these communities, as both films are deeply embedded within the context of Afrikaans culture. In both films, I proposed that homomascularity is used as a performative device to hide homosexual desires because of the fear of being stereotyped as 'moffies'. The protagonists' attitudes towards homosexuality stem from a deep-seated internalisation of certain Afrikaner ideals that not only leads to a rejection of 'other' masculinities, but also an internalised refusal of part of their own identities.

I argued that Francois and Janno use performative strategies to assure themselves of and maintain their hierarchical positions within the conservative Afrikaner societies represented in the films. By behaving in a way that presents an image of the ideal Afrikaner man, Francois and Janno are presenting themselves as stereotypically masculine to other characters in the films and even to the audience viewing the films. Therefore, the protagonists attempt to negate their homosexual desires and feelings by convincing themselves and others that they are not gay. By only allowing themselves to show their homosexual desires in secret – Francois only allows himself to enjoy sex with other men in a secluded farmhouse far from 'normal' society, and Janno only reminisces about his crush in the safety and isolation of his bedroom – the protagonists can enjoy the advantages of being heterosexual, masculine Afrikaner men while avoiding the consequences of being exposed as 'moffies'.

This fear of being seen as 'moffies' leads the characters to emphasise their masculinity through performative strategies. In the case of *Skoonheid*, Francois behaves in a homophobic way towards 'other' gay men in the film who do not fit the mould of ideal Afrikaner masculinity. He also presents as a hegemonic Afrikaner man through the way he dresses, the car he drives, and how he drives that car. The reinforcement of hegemonic masculine ideals is encouraged by Francois and Janno in terms of how they respond to certain situations in the films. One way Francois and Janno's performativity is visually represented is by the responses when confronted with their hidden homosexual identities. For example, in a moment of frustration at being rejected by Christian, Francois's first response is to act violently and attempt to forcefully take what he could not get by being kind and friendly. Janno also shows this violent response when being teased by other young men while playing rugby. In another instance, Pieter pesters Janno about his implied crush on Hennie, resulting in the boys wrestling each other on the floor of Janno's bedroom.

This need to emphasise their masculinity – often through aggression – within these societies speaks to the severe societal constraints on Afrikaner men in the films. It provides insight into the attitudes towards homosexual men in these communities. The films demonstrate how the main and supporting characters' reactions to and discussions about homosexual men reinforce hegemonic stereotypes about these marginalised identities within the Afrikaner communities in the films. In *Die Stropers*, for example, Janno's grandfather uses a homophobic slur in a violent outburst where he states that Janno will never inherit his farm. The outcast status of gay men in Afrikaner communities is further emphasised when considering that Pieter's homosexual acts are conceptualised within a framework of deviance and deviant acts in the city or a shebeen in a township, away from the sacred heterosexuality of the white countryside.

## 5.2. Concluding remarks

Throughout the films, Francois and Janno's performance shows their apprehension about their own homosexual desires and expressions of homosexuality by other men in the films. It shows the protagonists simultaneously performing hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity and homomascularity, demonstrating the connections between Afrikaner nationalism and heteronormative masculinity. It also points to the discrepancies and contradictions within the protagonists. Through this visual representation, Francois and Janno's homomascularity performativity can be read as a critique about how the societal constraints in these Afrikaner communities damage the identity construction of homosexual men in terms of the expression of sexuality, and become a way of reinforcing the hegemonic masculine ideals prominent in those communities.

The film's critique on the oppressive qualities of conservative Afrikaner communities is why I specifically chose to focus on these two films. *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* demonstrate how some Afrikaner communities still cling to outdated and harmful ideas about gender and sexuality, despite South Africa's progressive social and cultural history and constitution.

While these films seem to attempt to subvert stereotypes about homosexual men, *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* risk reinscribing those stereotypes through the protagonists' performance of homomascularity in conservative Afrikaner communities. This is because performative homomascularity recycles hegemonic displays of masculinity such as homophobia and racism, thereby rejecting racial and sexual 'others' from Afrikaner self-definition. Although the protagonists in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* do not identify as gay and do not have the implicit goal of subverting stereotypes about gay men, they still display performative acts of homomascularity. This can be seen in the way they over-articulate certain male Afrikaner traits

such as the love of sport, a particular style of dress, or religiosity, to fit into their societies and avoid the risk of possible discrimination because of the negative connotation of being gay – or a ‘moffie’ – in Afrikaner communities.

From another perspective, queer representation in films such as *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* provides a significant critique of the oppressive characteristics of conservative Afrikaner communities. It shows how people in these communities are socialised and even forced into racial and sexual categories that define how they should act, speak and look. However, I argue that these films also contribute to the stereotypes of queer individuals in conservative Afrikaner communities because of the racial and gendered status of the protagonists. The (seemingly oppressed) protagonists are portrayed as white, Afrikaans-speaking men who embody ideal Afrikaner traits and are situated in a society where they are revered and placed at the top of gender and racial hierarchies of power. This minimises the harmful impact of hegemonic Afrikaner ideals on queer individuals because of the portrayal of these characters as ideal Afrikaner men. Therefore, it can be suggested that the representation of gender and sexuality in films such as *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* reinforces hegemonic masculinity through the protagonists’ performativity of idealised Afrikaner masculinity in the form of homomascularity.

In this dissertation, I have demonstrated how hegemonic masculinity, specifically Afrikaner masculinity as depicted in *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers*, is harmful to identities it deems ‘other’ and to the identity construction of Afrikaner men in conservative communities. However, even though I suggest that these films legitimise hegemonic Afrikaner ideals, they are also very successful in exploring the complexities of the performance of gender. Films such as these that portray heterosexually identified characters with homosexual desires in an environment that suppresses and violently discourages those desires, are extremely important because they give a voice to people who face the same struggle. The characters of Francois and Janno represent the struggle of so many queer Afrikaners throughout South Africa – a struggle characterised by oppression, desire and longing. The films also show how the hegemony of Afrikaner identities and societies frequently prevails, suffocating its members and leaving little or no room for the expression or inclusion of any ‘other’ identities within Afrikaner communities. While this certainly is not true for all Afrikaner communities in South Africa, the films show how the restrictive and heteronormative conventions in these communities negatively affect its members. It forces them to conform to these conventions and may make it difficult for Afrikaners to accept racial and sexual ‘others’ as an integral part of the identity construction of community members.

Contrasting the idyllic landscape of the Free State with the controversial and ‘un-Afrikaner’ actions taken by the protagonists, *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* beautifully explore the complexities of Afrikaner masculinity and successfully underline the struggles faced by men who

have homosexual desires in Afrikaner communities. For this reason, I suggest that such an exploration is critical within a contemporary South African context because of the urgent nature of the problem: the underrepresentation of queer Afrikaner men in Afrikaans cinema and the struggles they face within a contemporary context. *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* are two especially important films because of the portrayal of men's experiences who have homosexual desires in Afrikaner communities. As a white Afrikaans woman, I can relate to the protagonists and their contexts, and have had similar experiences to some of the characters. I therefore feel that these portrayals are quite honest and realistic. I also know that these communities often reject any form of homosexual desire or expression, and impose harmful hegemonic ideals on its members, leading to rejection and oppression of the 'other' within the *self*. Given the impact of film on social development, films such as *Skoonheid* and *Die Stropers* can function to help conservative Afrikaners realise the harmful impact of their actions and beliefs on queer individuals in those communities. Therefore, despite their shortcomings, these films can help show conservative Afrikaners how their perpetuation of heteronormativity is harmful to the identity construction of its members.

### **5.3. Shortcomings of the study and suggestions for further research**

I think that this study was successfully able to fill a research gap by providing a scope for scholarship about *Die Stropers*, a film that, to my knowledge at the time of writing, has not yet been explored or researched. However, I do also acknowledge that there are a number of shortcomings in this study which mainly revolve around areas of research that I was not able to address within the scope of this study. One such shortcoming is the depth at which I discussed the context of Afrikaner nationalism. While I acknowledge that more context could have been provided, I do not feel that it would have benefitted my analysis of the films. This is because Afrikaner nationalism was mainly used to provide context on the filmic societies and the ideologies and beliefs I observed within these societies. My discussions on Afrikaner nationalism also serve as a pretence to hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity, which, as I argued, was heavily influenced by Afrikaner nationalist discourse.

There are some topics of interest that I was not able to explore due to the scope of this study, for example, Marie as a mother figure and embodiment of the *volksmoeder* ideal. In the context of *Die Stropers*, a study can be conducted into the influence of Marie as *volksmoder* on the identity construction of her husband and children (i.e., her influence on the construction of masculinities and femininities). Some other potential studies could be the urban/rural dichotomy present in *Die Stropers* with Pieter as 'urban outsider' and Janno as 'rural insider', as well as the

relation and seeming contradiction in the belief that homosexuality is both 'un-African' and 'un-Afrikaans'.

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