



# **A Reflection on the Internal Fluctuation of Vegan Fields in Johannesburg**

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# Dedication

For Ouma, whose kitchen taught me to belong, even when I did not.

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Nothing can be achieved in solitude; the people I mention above are proof of this.

My shortcomings are, however, my own.

# Abstract

When entering the field of veganism in Johannesburg, I found it to be a contested field, instead of the homogeneous community I expected to find. When I entered the field, I focussed on how vegans create communities through commensal practices, leading me to explore the field through participant observation at vegan markets, get-togethers, through conversations with vegans, and noting how my own vegan practice shaped my interactions with the people around me. With the focus on vegan foods, commensality, and the creation likeness, I found that the field centred nostalgic diacritics, like vegan boerewors, that recreated a sense of belonging for a white consumer base. This highlighted how the market was spatially and infrastructurally organised to exclude vegan praxes that differed from the dominant animal-rights position; how both the markets and the “plastic proteins” that carried the nostalgic flavours relied on racialised cheap labour; and how this caused vegans in the field to deploy “counter-narratives” as a means of dealing with the contradictions inherent to the field of veganism in Johannesburg. Ultimately, I demonstrate that the field of veganism in Johannesburg actively reproduces Maldonado-Torres’ “coloniality of being” through the moral experiences it offers vegans, revealing that the narrative resources it provides keep them in a constant cycle of narrative repair.

# Summary

The field of veganism in Johannesburg foregrounds an animal rights approach, as seen in the gathering of people and their concerns. Through participant observation at the Free-Love Vegan Market, Vegan get-togethers and conversations, I map the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) of veganism in Johannesburg and show how competing “matters of concern” (Latour, 2010:478) animate it. I argue that the field traps vegans in cycles of narrative repair through the nostalgically situated narrative resources that it offers. First, I show that the markets use nostalgic diacritics like boerewors and phish and chips to provide vegans with a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging caters to and creates a white, Afrikaans and English-speaking public. Second, I demonstrate that the infrastructure on which the market depends reproduces racialised hierarchies that both centre and reinforce the nostalgic diacritics that it offers its clientele. Third, I show that the markets structurally devalue alternative veganisms through the infrastructural centring of stalls that cater to the nostalgic diacritics. Then, I show how the foods that act as vehicles for the nostalgic diacritics are rooted in the devaluation and exploitation of racialised people for their labour. Finally, I analyse how vegan get-togethers function as spaces that facilitate the creation of counter-narratives aligned with the dominant animal rights approach that veganism in Johannesburg centres. This thesis demonstrates that veganism in Johannesburg actively reproduces the narratives it claims to break with. The field’s morality is fragile and sustained through constant cycles of exclusion and narratives aimed at repairing said morality. This cycle forecloses the possibility of a decolonial veganism that does not compromise on care for both human and non-human life.

# Key Terms

Veganism, Field, Capitals, Coloniality, Violent Care

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|     |                                      |
|-----|--------------------------------------|
| NWU | North West University (Abbreviation) |
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# Introduction

In 2018, I returned home to the east of Mpumalanga after a year teaching English in Thailand. I came home a vegan, not understanding the effect it would have on my family life. The familiar scents of boerewors filled my home, and my family tried to reincorporate me into rituals like Friday-night Braais. I could no longer partake in the meeting my father and his friends held around the braai while my mother and her group of friends prepared salads, rolls, and potato salad in the kitchen. These events were more than meals; they anchored me to my family and me to them. They offered me a sense of belonging, an identity linked to the people and the food they made.

My veganism meant breaking with this world. A simple question—" *Ouma, is daar botter in hierdie?* "[Grandma, is there butter in this?] –meant that I became the "*soutie*", a shortened version of '*soutpiel*', a vulgar ethnic slur derived from military slang. Although my family used it in jest, it is in reference to "'English' servicemen" who, with one foot in South Africa and the other in the United Kingdom, had their genitals hanging in the ocean, thus '*sout*' [salt] '*piel*' [dick] (Henderson, 1997:116). This term positioned me as the outsider at the table. My friends no longer invited me to braais. I found myself being the butt of jokes and felt alienated from the social spaces I had previously belonged to. I found myself searching for a space that accepted me, a place I could belong. At first, I tried to find other vegans online, but I found the constant debates and arguments tedious and repetitive. I could find no online space where I could be myself before I was vegan. It felt as if my identity had been swallowed by the very word. Either I had to be an activist, asking people on the streets, "How can you morally justify eating meat?" or I had to be a moral philosopher sitting in a high-backed leather chair. I wanted to have friends again, a family. I turned to the physical world, where my search led me to the Free-Love Vegan Market and the vegan field of Johannesburg. On my first day at the Free-Love Vegan Market, after Betsie and I had completed an informed consent form and discussed my involvement as a researcher, she took me on a tour of the market.

Before going on the tour, I drew a “map” to understand the market. However, the tour Betsie offered me provided a personalised understanding of the space. Betsie organised two vegan markets, the Free Love market in the central suburbs at the Lion’s Club, a popular sports club and pub, and the Big Tree market in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg at a popular vegan restaurant. At both sites, Betsie knew the vendors and hosts, which allowed me to observe the marketgoers’ practices and interact with both them and the vendors who sold their products there. However, I did not view her as or position her as a “key informant” in the fashion of a colonial anthropologist. Instead, I treated her within the dynamics the market afforded me, positioning me as researcher, marketgoer, and assistant. Her leading me around the market entailed “action, going, moving, speaking”, and “route-finding” (Ross, 2010:59), and offered a less “objective and distant” understanding of the market, thus emphasising her narrative of the space. In this sense, she became like Mary Soga, an active participant in Monica Hunter’s work, *Reaction to Conquest* (Bank, 2008), shaping and creating the work alongside me. Alongside her, another major actor in the space was Abraham, whom I had come to know over the 6-month fieldwork period, often assisting him with the market’s setup. As he set up the cables powering the food court, the market’s power grid, I spent much of the mornings at the market helping him lay, cover, and keep the cables dry. His management of electricity distribution at the market positions him as integral to the market’s continued functioning. Helping him with the market’s organisation offered me a space as part of the team of people who worked on setting up the market. From here I participated in conversations with Betsie and Abraham while observing the interactions of vendors, consumers, and the people working at the pub. My interactions with both vendors and consumers, however, were only in passing. My work with Betsie allowed me to tag along with Abraham as he set up vendors’ stalls, affording me a position where I observing their interactions with consumers as they browsed through their products became my principal means of interaction. Moreover, to maintain their positions there I, following ethical guidelines, changed aspects of their appearance, their names, and other defining aspects to maintain their confidentiality and anonymity. Despite the technical knowledge Abraham offers regarding cable thickness relative to the food court’s electrical needs, which the pub that hosts the market distributes. Due to the precarity of the markets’ dependency on the pub, I worked primarily with Betsie to keep from affecting the vendors’ security in their positions there. Here, my use of sensory and observational field notes allowed me to emphasise the smells, the infrastructural

dependency and the spatial positioning of the markets. I then used autoethnographic vignettes as a means of reflecting in the my fieldnotes, allowing my position to add to the analyses rather than adding to the biases that a purely material basis would evoke (Tracy, 2015:75). Abraham, along with Betsie, contribute to the maintenance and negotiation of vegan practices at the market, but is dependent on the pub for electricity, through which they maintain, subvert, or elevate their practices over others. These stories, along with my own observed and lived experiences, allowed me to weave multiple voices into a single account that afforded its crystallisation into a one that embraces the entanglement and multiplicity of both the field and that spaces that comprise it (Morgan, 2024:1852).

Past the stalls, Betsie entered a section of the market made up of eight stalls encircling a central island of two plastic tables, each with an umbrella to protect patrons from the sun. She noted, “The food court is the main attraction,” motioning towards the area we now entered. She had strategically positioned each vendor across the lawn, stretching from the pub to the aisle. She gave each stall a space measuring six steps across, matching the width of the vendor’s gazebos. If they were more popular, they were given more space based on how much space they needed for their equipment and the products they sold. I noted that stalls selling food were more popular. Their popularity afforded them more space in the food court. I had only ever heard the term ‘food court’ applied in the context of a shopping mall. In this context, it depicted an area in shopping malls where shoppers can eat while at the cornucopia of consumption. Betsie’s association of this area with the food court, a malapropism of this term in the context of a market, jerked the entire Free-Love Vegan Market into a consumer-oriented space rather than one that I associated with leisure. The dogs on leashes, the children playing in the designated play area to one side of the market, and the pub at its centre had misled me.

The smell of boerewors dominated the air here, drifting from the stall making boerewors rolls all the way to the other side of the food court, Vegan Meats, I read on the banner hanging from the storefront. The smell blended with the thick aroma of French fries, emanating from the vegan Phish and chips stall, Vegan Eatery, near where we entered the food court as they fell into the deep fryer, and collided at the centre of the food court, where an island of plastic tables and benches stood, seldom occupied because of the hustle and bustle of people ordering and

collecting their food. The smell of spices emanated from Ve-riyani, one of the two stalls occupying space at right angles from the Phish and chips stall. PlanT, the other stall, specialised in Tofu curries and Ve-riyani, in Biryani and Samosas. These vendors composed the food court and attended all the markets at Lion's sports pub, and three were present at the Big Tree market.

At each market, they presented a set list of foods with a new product making its way to marketgoers on the odd occasion. At the back of the biryani stall, a white plastic table covered in a thick black fabric displayed the three dishes on offer. To the side, behind a gas-powered pan, stood a middle-aged Indian woman wearing a blood-red sari, cooking a lentil curry. Behind her, like the other stalls in the food court, stood three black women. The image of the woman in a sari brought back the memory of Somaya, my friend Ram's mother, who would cook Biryani while her son and I played football on their lawn. The multiracial friendship, along with my reliance on English as the primary language, brought with it a sense that I did not belong in the Afrikaans-speaking spaces that I grew up in. The friendship brought with it hope for possibilities beyond the imposing characteristics of the pub, the boerewors, and the rugby games that I never fit into. The market awkwardly straddled this difference, intermingling people I associated with my football-playing childhood afternoons with the cold mornings around the gazebo where my mother's friend sold boerewors rolls. In considering the aromas in the air and my reminiscence, I asked myself, "Is veganism a 'white thing' as Dickstein *et al.* (2020:9) contended?"

In Chapter One, I argue that the Free-Love Vegan Market reproduces white, Afrikaner-nationalist nostalgia through both its sensory and spatial organisation. To make this argument, I draw on the tour I offer here, in the introduction, with Betsie leading me through the market that she organises. I draw on the sensory aspects of the food court to lay out an array of characteristics I argue form nostalgic Afrikaner diacritical inventories showing how the foods, specifically boerewors, function as props that afford people like myself a sense of belonging. I frame this analysis using Latour's "matters of concern" (2005:6), allowing me to consider how the collection of "things", objects, issues, and networks that gather people, their interests and values compose publics around their concerns. In keeping with his call for a stubborn realism, I consider my interactions with my family and friends in relation to my concern (Latour, 2004:231). The concerns I focus on offer a diverse set of practices. I use Bourdieu's field to

understand the manifestation of power through the assets people have available to them, and how they use them (Little, 2011). This allowed me to consider vegans' practices in relation to one another, who had power in the field and in relation to whom. This concept allowed me to consider the space, composed of different groups, as a "social arena" where these groups compete for dominance (Little, 2011; Kay and Laberge, 2002:27).

In Chapter Two, I turn to the material infrastructure, which I argue reinforces the hierarchies I note emerging from the market's field arrangements. I draw on my work assisting Abraham with the market's electrical infrastructure and Larkin's (2013) work on the politics and poetics of infrastructure to argue that infrastructure is inherently political. In this case, the pub hosting and providing the market with electrical infrastructure enacts exclusion that creates an enclave of whiteness, which relies on the invisible labour black women provide. This embeds the moral experience the market provides vegans within South Africa's political economy of race and class. Having walked through the market's "main attraction", Betsie and I started on our way to its entrance. We walked through an aisle that sported mismatched items, from hand-crafted jewellery to dachshund-decorated pillows and shirts, to a woman giving palm-readings, and the consistent medicinal cannabis vendor who controlled the music, without remark. "This is, sort of, the little bits and bobs aisle," Betsie noted as we moved along a narrowing of the aisle filled with stalls sporting a range of what looked to be unrelated items. It is in the "bits and bobs" aisle where the esoteric products of the market are apparent. These occupied a boundary at the market and in the field of veganism in Johannesburg. Although the "bits and bobs" aisle occupied the space bordering the car park, the haphazard, seemingly unorganised collection of products in the aisle positioned it on the boundaries of the field itself.

In Chapter Three, I argue that the "Bits and Bobs" aisle is not unorganised, but a spatially and epistemically marginalised area that reflects the devaluation of non-Western and alternative practices within the field. I use my interactions with Mandla<sup>1</sup>, a black man in his early 20s who sells dry foods and tonics for an alkaline vegan lifestyle, to contrast his positioning with that of vendors in the food court, demonstrating his epistemologies render him and his practices illegitimate. I draw on Mignolo (2007) and Maldonado-Torres (2017) to argue that this logic

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<sup>1</sup> All names included are pseudonyms

stems, first, from the taxonomising logic of the “coloniality of being” and, second, from Mbembe (2003), who extends this logic to South Africa. Throughout this chapter, I continue using both Latour and Bourdieu to show how specific “matters of concern” are denied legitimacy within the field.

As Betsie and I continued down the aisle, I noted an elderly Afrikaans-speaking couple selling horticultural plants. Near them were two black women in their late 50s, the Ngwane sisters, each sporting cropped, greying hair that they wrapped in colourful fabrics. They sold organic produce that they grew on a small plot in Orange Farm, a southern suburb of Johannesburg. I helped them to pitch their gazebo whenever I came to the market before them. On the opposite end of the aisle, Mandla, who was wearing beaded necklaces, secondhand flannel shirts, and billowing pants that close at the ankle. His characteristics align him with both hippie and vegan identities. Finally, the mushroom sellers, consistently sporting billowing pants, tie-dye shirts, and barefoot, align themselves with a hippie identity. Around them, people stood in long, billowing pants that came to a tight end at their ankles, swinging around their limbs like hula-hoops. They wore dreadlocked hair and patched “100% pure cotton” shirts as they made their way from one of the stalls to another, taking calculated looks over the haphazard makeup of the tables, only to leave with crystals and “pure jade” bracelets they had found there. I noticed labels reading “cruelty-free” and “plant-based” peppering the stalls selling food products. At this point, I noticed that this aesthetic differed from those I associated with the food court. In fact, the aesthetics here contrasted with those I expected to find at a market enveloped by the smell of boerewors emanating from the food court.

In Chapter Four, I argue that the “plastic proteins”, which, like the aforementioned boerewors, have the flavour-capacity to recreate nostalgic foods and thus offer a sense of both belonging and morality, are produced through global chains that depend on racialised labour exploitation. I draw on my personal memories of the tastes the market recreates, following the proteins used in those recreations along the commodity chains that produce them. I draw on Moore’s (2017) “four cheaps” to demonstrate how lentils, soy, and wheat gluten, and the producers’ lives in the Global South are cheapened to lower prices. I use Mbembe’s (2003) “deathworlds” to demonstrate how a necropolitical system produces labour that contradicts the moral experience vegans buy at

markets. In this way, the “plastic proteins” become a manifestation of van Dooren’s (2015) notion of “Violent Care”.

It is this diversity that Betsie, more than Abraham, had to manage in her attempts to maintain harmony between the people, spaces, and politics in the market. Spending my time away from the markets in restaurants, and at the get-togethers that Pradesh, a man of Indian-descent in his early twenties, organised. I met and shared meals with vegans who, through our conversations, told me how they dealt with the shattering of their omnivorous social relationships and their integration into vegan ones. Here, again, I worked with Pradesh, as the organiser, to maintain the commensality of the get-togethers. In this way, I approached him and followed his guidance in my role as participant and observer. Thus maintaining a close relationship with him while changing the names, appearances and order of events, while maintaining the core aspects of conversations, in order to maintain an ethical standard. I encountered a diverse range of vegan practices, each personalised to the person and each overlapping with a practice I had encountered at the markets. I found it easier to understand the micropolitics of veganism in Johannesburg through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu, the French anthropologist and sociologist, who used the concept of field to map out and analyse spaces. To make sense of the micropolitics of veganism and explore how vegans managed its impact on their social relations, I turned to Bourdieu’s concept of field. The concept helped me understand how vegans’ politics were distributed throughout the markets, restaurants, and get-togethers I had identified, enabling me to determine who had access to assets and were able to use them and in relation to whom.

Harmony here entailed consistent competition over three forms of capital—economic, in terms of stall income and product sales, social, relationships and reputation within the market and with the pub that hosts it, and cultural, where claims to nostalgic, authentic, and ethical praxes were made clear (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:119). These contests are the norm in markets, as vendors and marketgoers alike use their capitals to elevate their practices in pursuit of recognition and to influence and shape the vegan markets’ order. However, the discomfort I had experienced in the spaces where I used to belong made me ask: how do vegans deal with the break from their previous practices? And the belonging they found in them? How did these contests arise in the

field of veganism in Johannesburg? What were they based around, these “matters of concern” (Latour, 2005:6:)? How did vegans in the field use capitals to position themselves and others?

In Chapter Five, I argue that the narrative resources the field offers restrict vegans to the structures it depends on. I rely on my experience at a vegan get-together and at a dinner my grandmother hosted to show how veganism breaks with critical rituals that provide narrative resources to construct ontological narratives, offering participants a sense of belonging. Using Somers’s (1994) theory of narrative identity, I show how events like the two meals offer emplotment and thus narrative resources from which to form ontological narratives, allowing people to feel a sense of belonging. I contrast the two meals to demonstrate my grandmother’s lack of narrative resources and, thus, her inability to construct a counter-narrative that maintains her sense of belonging. Reflecting this, the field offers vegans narrative resources that restrict them to the field. I use Turner’s (1969) ritual process to analyse how vegans maintain these narrative resources, while I use Bossard and Bol’s (1949) family ritual to show how my grandmother’s meal anchors her ontological narrative. The crux is that vegans are restricted to public narratives based on racialised infrastructures, semiotic vehicles and exploitation, rendering the narratives available to them morally compromised.

In this thesis, I argue that the field of veganism in Johannesburg is a site of “Violent Care” as it projects morally sound concern for non-human animals while reproducing racialised colonial hierarchies. I use my fieldwork at the Free-Love and Big Tree Vegan Markets, at vegan get-togethers and the conversations I had throughout the field of veganism in Johannesburg. First, I show how the markets are structured around a dominant animal rights approach, positioning alternative practices in the “Bits and Bobs” aisle. I show how the “Bits and Bobs” aisle and the vendors who compose it are infrastructurally, spatially, and epistemically marginalised. I demonstrate how even the food that could offer vegans a sense of belonging is compromised. Finally, in a field composed of an array of compromised ways for vegans to attain a sense of belonging, I show how the narrative resources vegans have at their disposal reproduce compromised ontological narratives.



# Chapter 1: "I can't believe they've gotten to vegan boerewors"

As I approached, David beamed at me, "Lauwrence, what are you doing here, man?" and quickly turned to the hulking John on his left, "This is John, he's from the US, and he's just travelling around SA at the moment". "I love Johannesburg", John said with a strong southern US accent. For David and John, standing out was not a matter of presentation but rather one of being. Their presence at the market made them two of 11 black marketgoers who came during its peak hour. Between 11:30 and 12:30, when about 78 people entered, the black marketgoers were a minority group at the market. David and John stood in front of a stall, part of a line of 10 to 15 people waiting for their food during the brunch rush. I had met David at the restaurant where he worked, a popular vegan fast-food joint in the city. When I met him, he regaled me with stories of his family, his turn to veganism in his early 20s, and his work in the music industry. The fast-food joint also put him in contact with John, an African American man in his early 40s, whose greying beard gave him a wizened look. He was a traveller, moving from one country to the next in pursuit of food and adventure, which David offered him through his veganism, his music, and his friendship.

"Don't you just love this?" John asked both of us as he closed his eyes and lifted his nose slightly. "Reminds me of home," I said, referring to my family's love of braaiing. "I used to have so much boerewors", David said as he stood next to me. John displayed his passion for South Africa through his generosity, leading David and me to the source of the boerewors smell that had spread throughout the market. The smell, stretching across the samosas, tofu curry, and the deep-fried phish stalls that made up the food court, enveloped us. The smell of fried phish brought me back to when my mother and I would visit my grandmother in Sasolburg, an industrial town in the northern Free State. On Sunday afternoons, when the middle-class suburb where she lived was quiet, we would get fish and chips from a local chain store and eat them in the back of my grandmother's 1970 Volkswagen GTS. My mother and grandmother sat in the

front of the car, catching up and tearing pieces of the fish and chips out of the newspaper wrappings they kept on their laps, while I took the back seat. For me, the Vegan Eatery's Phish and chips captured that same feeling; the smell of the old oil and the oily hands that went with it, the salty taste of fish and the soft inside of the chips after I broke past the crunchy outside, even the batter around the fish itself, all took me to the backseat of the car in Sasolburg.

"It's crazy that they've gotten to vegan boerewors", John noted, despite his lack of history with the sausage, "back in the day we had beans and rice, maybe some tofu." His observation was accurate, but the boerewors he had bought for David and me was beyond my means. The meal came to R85 for the boerewors roll and chips, and the bucket of mini-doughnuts, which he had also given to me, came to R80, both of which were more than my budget would allow. However, their prices were lower than the fried phish and chips at R120, and the tofu curry at R100 per polystyrene plate. Despite this, queues stretched out in front of the two stalls in two long lines, one for ordering and one for collecting, to the point where they made passing by the stalls difficult.

Laden with mini doughnuts and a polystyrene plate carrying a boerewors roll and a handful of fries, I noted the group of five self-identified pagan marketgoers I had encountered in the car park that morning sitting squashed around a plastic table for four. The table was one of several in the open space amidst stalls selling a pastiche of vegan food, esoterica, and what I describe as the trappings of middle-class pet-owning culture that characterised the market. On one side sat a black-clad huddle, his sunglasses reflecting the sun, and flanked by two women, was Megadeth. Despite my jeans-and-t-shirt combination, the group and I stood out from the usual market and fitness clubgoers who wore tie-dye shirts and loose-fitting jeans or football jerseys and cricket uniforms. "Y'all want some doughnuts?" I asked, holding out the veritable bucket of mini doughnuts as I did so. "Of course!" they replied, almost in unison, "Who says no to free doughnuts?!" I placed the bucket in the centre of the table, and the group dug into the doughnuts, pausing every so often to exclaim "These are so good!", and "Are you sure they're vegan?!" with a laugh. Their surprise at the "vegan-ness" of the food sparked my curiosity, prompting me to think about how vegan boerewors is positioned in the field.

## The Free-Love Market

When I arrived at the market at 8:30, half an hour before the market's opening, I noticed the smell of boerewors that hung in the air over the Free-love market, my primary field site, as I spent a short while waiting at the decorative archway that acted as the entrance to the market for Betsie, the market organiser. Having spoken the day before, we agreed that I would meet her at the market entrance at nine, the official opening time. I noticed Betsie long before she reached where I stood under the pastel archway. She, a blonde woman in her forties, wore long, billowing pants, dresses, and robes every time I saw her. When I first met her, she had parked her car in the car park that acted as the boundary of the marketspace. The passenger-side door of her car, sporting a smashed headlight, cracked open, and two Ugg boots swung out. A puffer coat that came up to her ankles covered the rest of her figure. Short as she was, Betsie, her long blond hair covered in the hood of her coat, stood with an aura of control emanating from her. She reminded me of the Antjie Krog poem "Ek staan op 'n moerse rots" (I stand on a massive rock), which ends with the line "'n vry fokken vrou" (a free-fucking-woman) (1995). This poem, written as an expression of freedom, resonated with me when I thought of Betsie. Alongside this, Krog's work as an anti-apartheid activist reverberated through my mind, her words describing a powerful woman, standing up to the powers of oppression. A cut-and-dry bifurcation, a dichotomy, an easy choice to make, one of either right or wrong.

As the organiser of the market, Betsie's world was more nuanced than Antjie Krog's. Her concerns with the market as an economic, consumerist space, with veganism as an alternative to omnivorous foodways, its economic viability, and her care for both human and non-human animals put her in a position where compromise was a requirement. Her understanding of the market, consisting of different "knots or nodes" connecting her to the market and to colonial and apartheid infrastructures (Anusas & Ingold, 2015: 549), trapped her in its politics. Her look, that of a "*Vry fokken vrou*" (Krog, 1995), may have been one of victory, like Krog's mutual victory when South Africa democratised in 1994, but it was not one of freedom. The economic relations of the market chained her to the people, the place, the system, the products, and, below these, the markets' political economy.

As this was a vegan market, the smell was not that of boerewors but an assemblage of olfactory compounds that simulated its aroma. The smell brought with it memories of my childhood, the food serving as a mnemonic device through which I could recall “memories of time, place, and belonging” (Kravva, 2001:141). It took me back to Saturday mornings in the small town I grew up in, in the far east of Mpumalanga. My mother’s friend Elizma used to set up a gazebo, a white plastic table, and a gas grill in the car park of the local fuel station overlooking the only Pick n’ Pay in the town. With the help of her gas grill, the sizzle of boerewors and the associated smell, she drew scores of men, women, and children to her stall. She sold boerewors on bread rolls that were fit for the hands of her customers. She maintained this for some time in an effort to collect money for her son’s wedding. As such, on days when the neighbouring town’s club rugby team came to play at the local rugby club, Elizma was there too, selling boerewors rolls to the spectators. Around her gazebo, rolling Rs from utterances of “lekker” filled the air. Khaki shorts, checkered shirts, long dresses, and tight jeans adorned the people around the stall. Their feet, either bare or in vellies, kicked up the dust in and around her gazebo as she sold the boerewors rolls. It was a smell that I associated with the Springboks, South Africa’s national rugby team, Saturday evenings filled with shows of braai skills, copious amounts of brandy and coke, provincial rugby, and the sound of a concertina offering a final vibrato to the last song of the Boereorkes.

The smell, playing an integral role in shaping my identity, was a characteristic common to music festivals, school sports days, and church bazaars, and has been incorporated into the everyday life of South Africans. In response to the migration of South Africans to Aotearoa/New Zealand after the political ending of apartheid, stores started stocking South African products (Meares *et al.*, 2011:12). Noting that a large swathe of the migrants spoke Afrikaans, specialist butcheries started stocking Biltong and Boerewors, anticipating demand for these products from the migrants (*ibid*). Although Boerewors is a South African food, it is particularly associated with Afrikaners. In fact, acclaimed novelist Marlene van Niekerk explicitly mentions Boerewors in her description of the “Old Sort of Afrikaner” or the “Patriarch of the Round Plate”, in reference to the round plate to be delivered to him by “his own wife”, and as an integral component of “the Braai” (2011:69). Her description of the “Old Sort of Afrikaner” points to the nationalist

Afrikaner who upholds the ideologies of apartheid, “the counterpart of his ideal black employee, whom he would refer to as ‘one of the old sort’” (*ibid*).

She emphasises the gendered and racialised orders of being that structured Afrikaner social relations during apartheid and in the present (Maldonado-Torres, 2017c:248). Boerewors, here, functions as a collection of Afrikaner diacritics, incorporating the food, its origins, where people consume it, and the historical context from which these emerge. The historical context brings the political economy of race and class to the fore. The “ideal black employee” and the subservient wife collect around boerewors, the joy of “the braai” (van Niekerk, 2011), the Springbok rugby games, and the “beer, bands, and Boeretrots” overshadowing these racialised and gendered modes of being that stem from the apartheid era (Groenewald, 2006). My association of boerewors with, particularly, Afrikaners is, thus, sustained on an international and local level, as well as through my experience of being Afrikaans, however contested that being may be.

My school years at an English-medium school led to my estrangement from people displaying these diacritics. During apartheid, “(standard) Afrikaans and English” were the officially recognised languages (Abongdia, 2014:63), a move that legitimised white identity while marginalising indigenous languages to markers of ethnicity, demarcating ‘tribes’ for categorical, and inferiorising, use (Mafeje, 1971). This fragmented African identity and reinforced whiteness as a requirement for citizenship, leaving black people politically invisible and materially vulnerable—a state of “bare life” (Agamben, 1998). At school, the history of Afrikaner identity clung to me, while in Afrikaner circles, I was seen as erasing my identity. In my family, I became a *hans khaki*, a term attached to traitors to the Afrikaner cause in the Anglo-South African War (Bentz, 2012:122). This alienation afforded me a position on the edges of Afrikaner commensality, the practice of eating together (Jönsson *et al.*, 2021). Here I was allowed to eat with, but always, in terms of my lack of boerewors, bobotie, or *braai broodjies* and what I believed, apart. The loss of a recognised position at the dinner table meant a distancing from this identity, leaving me wanting the belonging, acceptance, and commensality I had felt, a nostalgia for “my own fantasy” of Afrikaner life (Boym, 2007:7). My grandfather himself played in a Boereorke, my uncle drinks brandy and coke while listening to boeremusiek, my grandmother,

with no exception, listens to the Springboks play on the radio, and I remain the “soutie” of the family.

The boerewors which I associated with Afrikaans-ness, finds its origins in the combination of French and Dutch influence (Ordoñez-Araque, 2021:12), but draws its distinct flavour from the Cape enslaved Malays who the Dutch brought to South Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries (Hamid, 2009:32). The fact that it is associated with Afrikaansness speaks to the erasure of Cape Malay history in South Africa and the hierarchical positioning of the white population over their black, coloured, and Asian counterparts (Maldonado-Torres, 2014:651). However, the associations I make here are not specific to me, they rely on a familiar elements from the past that can be “view[ed], taste[d], smell[ed] or [felt]... in the present” leading to a sense of the familiar, removing it from the context it was situated in (Widdows, 2016:38). These elements, like boerewors, act as mnemonic devices that elicit feelings of “loss and displacement” or of longing for a romanticised past of “one’s own fantasy” (Boym, 2007:7). Alongside boerewors, koeksisters, a deep fried, syrup-soaked dessert food, also stemming from the Cape enslaved Malays, has become a staple at “tuisneuewerhede”. This “fantasy” stems from a past that leaves the people who brought the distinct flavours of these foods erased, and appropriates the flavours, without the people, into their own romanticised version (*ibid*).

This nostalgia, embodied in the boerewors and biryani, a variant of the curry and rice popular at the “kerk bazaar” or Saturday rugby game, allows for the brushing over of the political economy of race and class shaping the vegan markets. In emphasising the sensorial and emotional aspects of foods like boerewors, it displaces the diverse origins of boerewors to foreground characteristics associated with white Afrikaner-speakers, together “recreat[ing] visions of the past” composed of Afrikaner diacritical inventories (Kopytoff 1986:73).

The markets obscure the material and historical legacies of what Mbembe argues is the necropolitical apartheid state that made an exploitable black working class (2003). Mbembe uses the word necropolitical to speak to the rendering of people of colour killable (*ibid*). He derives his reasoning Foucault’s Biopower, the sovereign power to decide who lives and who dies or being rendered sovereign or resigned to the state of exception, and Agamben’s Bare Life, the

state of survival, which he, Agamben, derives from the notion of the camp, exemplifying the state of exception (*ibid*:12). Brushing over this and operating as a form of symbolic capital, this differs from the economic, social and cultural capital I lay out in the introduction in that it is capital the value something has if it is recognised as legitimate or meaningful in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:119). The nostalgia captured in the foods confers legitimacy and a sense of belonging to the people it hails, while covering up how economic and social capital remain structured by historical inequality. In this way, the recreating of events typical to afrikanerness, through food, beer, and music, offers a restorative, even reproductive, sense of being to the vegan markets where these elements are present.

Alongside boerewors, the idea of “Beer, bands, and Boeretrots” (Groenewald, 2006) conveys more than celebration; it depicts three aspects tied to the project of Afrikaner nationalism. These elements, central to the construction of Afrikaner identity, are pervasive at the vegan markets. Beer and bands speak to the creation of solidarity within an ingroup that also creates boundaries, defining who can join in the drinking and singing and who must serve. These boundaries extend into the emotional infrastructure through the notion of “*trots*” (pride). The nostalgic association with “boer”, imagined as a white Afrikaans-speaking farmer, speaks to the creation of an image of Afrikaansness that connects to “*trots*”. “Trots” legitimises practices that exclude along the lines of race and class, naturalising the social order of apartheid.

The Afrikaner nostalgia, associated with the nationalism structuring social relations under apartheid, was supported through another set of white South African diacritics. An English nostalgia, evident in the popularity of vegan fish and chips, contributed to the creation of familiarity in the market as a “space of experience” for said group (Widdows, 2016:38). The emotional infrastructure of the markets, aligning with Afrikaner nostalgia, “recreat[es] visions of the past” (Boym, 2007:13). I consider these ‘restorations’, as these “visions of the past” are based in a recent past that politically accommodated, affording a sense of belonging, to these groups (*ibid*). These restorations are not neutral. They are made possible through the erasure of the historical roots on which these restorations rest. These afford exploitative relationships between expendable, poor, black people and the wealthy, white, English and Afrikaans speaking

middle class who made, and continue to make, use of this power dynamic to have readily available cheap labour.

At Free Love Market, aesthetics cover this dynamic, setting up the two aforementioned sets of emotional infrastructure in the process. The first, Afrikaner nationalism, is seen in the diacritical inventories of boerewors, rugby, beer, and the central hub of the pub. The second, however, adopts the countercultural ethic of the hippie movement from the 1960s and 70s. The flowing fabrics in pastel colours wrapped around the arched entryway, Betsie's constellation moomoo, Hindu and Buddhist motifs and ideals like chakras and "ohm" signs, aligned with the countercultural movement. In this sense, the "bits and bobs" aisle, sports the archway, the motifs and small stalls that sell feathered wands, trinkets with the "nazar", and gem stones associated with chakras, offers the same counter to the food court that the hippie subculture did to the militarised, capitalist, government they opposed (Noble, 2019:11). Like the hippie subculture, the "bits and bobs" aisle offers an aesthetic counter to the overt Afrikaner nationalism of the food court. Despite the aesthetic counter, the "bits and bobs" aisle uses the same exploited labour force as the food court, depending on the pub's infrastructure, and maintains a non-combative air to keep its position in the market.

Betsie, who organised the positioning of the stalls, wore a blue moomoo decorated in motifs of constellations and spinning galaxies on this occasion; her hair hung loose around her head and down her back. The moomoo covered her Afrikaner ethnicity, a move I always assumed was deliberate, as it associated her with the market's hippie-esque qualities. She added to this aesthetic by selling organic, homemade "paraben-free" soap from a stall near the food court. Betsie, as both organiser and mediator, between the hosts of the market—the pub—and the vendors and marketgoers, needed to understand the complex interplay of care, authority, inclusion, and exclusion at the market while managing the tensions stemming from this. Her universalism, captured in her moomoo, enabled the mediation of conflicting concerns and constellations into a single space, while maintaining the image of a harmonious, unified universe. She brushed over the tensions stemming from the racial hierarchies that allowed for labour extraction with ease. Her roles reflected the dynamic interplay between the agency of vendors, hosts, and marketgoers

alike. At the heart of her personal investments and affective commitments, embedded in the political economy of race and class, was a tense harmony that ensured the market's coherence.

In this chapter, I focus on the interplay of nostalgia with the “matters of concern” that animate the market. That is, referring back to the introduction where I spell out “matters of concern” as a collection of “things”, in reference to the issues, networks, and objects calling for realist mobilisations of the loose compositions of people that gather around them (Latour, 2004:231). These concerns, which I map out below, are imbued with nostalgia evident in the diacritical inventories of the people in these compositions. Nostalgia, which Boym (2007:9) argues can be seen as “history without guilt”, in this case is of the restorative kind, that is, recreating a fantasy of the past, rather than the reflective kind, which looks at the past with a more critical eye. The presence of nostalgia leads to a smoothing over of the violence of the political economy of race and class, which South Africa depended on during the colonial and apartheid eras (Mafeje, 1971). The array of elements drawn from nostalgia that form part of the identity of the people I refer to are what Kopytoff (1983) calls “diacritical inventories”. These come to the fore in the aforementioned concerns to which I now turn.

### A typology of veganism at the Free-love market

Foods explicitly labelled vegan offer vegans the experience of moral action while providing nourishment. The vegan label, the use of the term vegan, or terms associated with it, imbue the commodity with this morality in the same way commodity fetishism obscures the process of production from the commodity sold to the consumer (Harvey, 1990:442). However, in this case, it does not obscure the production process but highlights an aspect of it, thereby making that aspect more valuable than the commodity itself. In terms of products labelled vegan, the highlighted aspect is the non-exploitation of non-human animals. A point that offers the consumer assurance that they are not exploiting or harming animals and are thus more moral than those who do. This system, however, is flawed in that it offers vegans moral experiences, but obscures the labour relations enabling this moral position. Morality, here, is relegated to either animal advocacy, environmentalism, or health. Although these three categories offer a

reductionist/essentialist reading of veganism in Johannesburg, people practice veganism differently; however, the field's language dictates that I group vegans into these broad categories.

This discourse, based on the definition set in 1988, notes that veganism is:

“a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of animals, humans and the environment. In dietary terms, it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals” (Vegan Society, 2022).

This definition highlights a primary concern for animals and animal exploitation, seen in the emphasis placed on consumption practices. At its core, the Vegan Society is overtly concerned with animal advocacy. However, this offers a reductive understanding of what it means to be vegan. Some vegans emphasise the health benefits of a vegan diet. Others include environmental aspects in this discourse, highlighting the positive environmental effects of a vegan diet. As these three points, animals, humans, and the environment, were emphasised, the markets would showcase these concerns explicitly. To cater to the ways people practised their veganism, I used another of Latour's theoretical tools: compositionism (2004). Compositionism allowed me to consider that veganism in Johannesburg is composed of more than one “matter of concern” that comes together around a central pillar of veganism. The market became a manifestation of veganism formed through the collaboration of social actors' “matters of concern” (Latour, 2010:478).

These categories serve an organisational role for me and for the people who compose the field in Johannesburg. The majority of vegans fall into one of two categories: health vegans or animal-advocacy vegans. However, the focus on health does not align with the dominant discourse on veganism. Consider that the Vegan Society of the UK's (2022) definition of veganism is, first, a move away from injustices and then a promotion of vegan alternatives. Health can factor into the promotion of alternatives, but it is not an explicit focal point for the definition. The focus thereon, then, is a move away from veganism as a line of flight and toward

it as a way to be healthy. This, if taking into consideration the dominant discourse, positions Health veganism as somewhat heretical in the field. It stands out as a spontaneous response to the historical conceptions of veganism as ascetic and vegans being weak and sickly (Cole & Morgan, 2011:135). Included in this response is an extension of the strength and healthfulness that veganism imparts, melding religious purity into asceticism.

Common to both groups is their concern with the abolition of non-human animal cruelty and exploitation. For animal-advocacy vegans, the concern rests first on non-human animals and then on humans. Their veganism, although not a requirement, is a means through which the speciesist notion positions non-human animals, and some human bodies as less valuable than some of their human counterparts, and is opposed. This devaluation becomes a means of enabling the extraction upon which modernity rests. That is the extraction of life from land, resources that grow on that land, the bodies that tend to this land and to the non-human animal bodies that fuel both the labour of the bodies tending and extracting (Moore, 2017:7).

In this sense, I understand coloniality as the destruction from which modernity emerges, denoting the mechanisms through which this extraction is perpetuated (Mignolo, 2011). The speciesism and racism enabling this, enabling a coloniality of power, is what Maldonado-Torres calls a “coloniality of being”; it describes a hierarchy of being through which power is exercised (2014:651). Thus, animal-advocacy vegans address non-human animal exploitation first, inverting the speciesist positioning, and then consider human animal exploitation, which can reinforce the racially based exploitation practices modernity is dependent on. The typology I describe here indicates who has the power to walk away from the practices of cruelty, extraction, and exploitation. I do not mean that the people ‘below’ them in this “coloniality of being” cannot do so, but they may have more difficulty in doing so (*ibid*).

With these organisational categories in my mind, Betsie and I moved through the centre of the market, the food court, quickly to avoid bumping into the marketgoers queuing in front of the stalls. Betsie motioned to the five stalls we passed, “These mark the bottom edge of the market.” On the other side of a downhill slope, the length of a swimming pool, there stood the relics of a beach volleyball court. Sand now lay strewn around in haphazard heaps and valleys where it

once evenly covered the court. Hiding the carcass of the volleyball court stood first a stall that sold mushroom biltong and next to it another that sold preserved vegetables, jams, and sauces. Both fed into my association with the pub that reminded me of Auntie Elizma's stall at the garage parking lot on Saturdays. I stopped at the latter stall to greet Bob, a white man in his mid-fifties. He wore his uniform of khaki shorts and an oversized button-down shirt that clashed with his small circular spectacles, which belonged more on the nose of a philosopher or psychologist. After greeting him with the warmth of an old family friend, we quickly moved past the stall next door, where a woman with black-dyed hair and wrinkles, like rivers on a map, extended out from around her eyes. The contrast between her hair and her face gave me the impression that she was trying to cheat age. The sign in front of her stall read "R300 for a 15-minute palm reading", and under that, "R320 for a tarot reading". Although her stall had no customers when we passed by, later, when I went through the market by myself, I noticed a frequent trickle of marketgoers coming to and from the woman.

Having trekked through the market, Betsie left me so she could manage the tensions there, juggling the needs of the vendors, the hosts (the sports club), and the marketgoers. Jotting down notes, snippets of our conversation, and Betsie's own observations of the market. Using the bonnet of my car to rest my notebook on, I took notes with a freshly rolled cigarette hanging out of the corner of my mouth. Despite my attempts at steering clear of the market goers, a group of people, two men and three women, all dressed in black, tattoos peeking out from beneath their shirts and piercings glinting in the sun, made their way up to me. "Yo! Is that a joint?!" one of the men, this one wearing a Megadeth band shirt, asked, laughing as he sidled up around my car. The group contrasted with what I came to characterise as the typical marketgoer. The large leather boots worn by the two women on either side of Megadeth contrasted with the open shoes worn by most. Their black jeans differed from the loose-fitting cotton trousers I had seen on the marketgoers before. Even their heavily lined tattoos, creeping out from beneath one woman's black tank top, contrasted with the embroidered dachshund and bulldog pillows for sale at the surrounding stalls. A pentagram hung around one woman's neck. "Sarah", Megadeth had called her. "We're pagan", Sarah noted to me when she saw my eyes flit across the pentagram and to the tattoos crawling across her neck.

Once we established that the group could trust me with their religious orientation, they started to show interest in my research, veganism, and, by extension, the larger ramifications of the market. They were concerned about the veganisation of food popularly associated with meat, like biltong, boerewors, steak, and sushi. This fascination stemmed more from their disbelief at the replication of flavour, a non-factor for me and other vegans who had not eaten meat for so long that we have forgotten what it tastes like. This replication also baffled them, “Why would you want something to taste like meat though?”, “Well, it’s not that we don’t—” I replied before a rottweiler, dragging a family along with it, interrupted. The interruption prompted the group to disband and follow the rottweiler and its family.

The size of the pagan group afforded me intimacy, and yet, I was disappointed. Despite the anti-racist and anti-exploitative elements inherent in the punk scene that the pagans associated themselves with through their clothing, they were oblivious to the women making their food. Moreover, despite the pro-environmental stance and the consequent strict vegan lifestyle punks adopted (Haenfler, 2006:16), this group was neither vegan nor explicitly environmentalist.

Their complacency with the occurrences at the market confused me. However, I chalked it down to the gentrification of both veganism and punk, through which both movements lose their power as oppositional or alternative movements. That is, although they presented themselves as alternative, different from the people bringing and indulging in the nostalgic inventories present at the market, the group of pagans were no different from the people they were distancing themselves from. In fact, through their complicity in the structures that enabled the market to function, they removed the same inequalities and injustices they aesthetically distanced themselves from. This tension between marketgoers and labourers, and between gentrified and oppositional veganism, was more prominent at the gatherings, where intimacy foregrounded practices. The lack of intimacy made the markets spaces of display and consumption, whereas the gatherings became spaces wherein discourse was facilitated and made.

Vegan boerewors: ethical or erasing

Beyond its position in the field of veganism in Johannesburg, vegan boerewors encapsulates the field through the different ingredients that compose it, the places from which its makers source its ingredients, and how these are peripheral to the associations made with the sausage. The field's diversity only holds up when left unquestioned. The ingredients, derived through colonial exploits in the global south, are only questioned when the sausage is questioned, and then only in terms of what maintains the idea of boerewors as truly (white) South African. In this case, and in the case of South African colonisation, the French and Dutch influences are strong (Ordoñez-Araque, 2021:12). However, boerewors draws its distinct flavour from the Cape enslaved Malays that the Dutch brought to South Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries (Hamid, 2009:32).

The primary components of the sausage are beef, pork, or mutton, with the distinct flavours defining it coming from the mixture of coriander, sea salt, black pepper, cloves and nutmeg. The legal requirements of boerewors, requires the sausage to be constituted of “the meat of an animal of the bovine, ovine, porcine or caprine species or from a mixture of two or more thereof, shall be contained in an edible casing”, of this “90 per cent” must consist of meat with “no more than 30 per cent fat content”, it cannot contain offal, and may only contain “0.02 of calcium per product mass” (*ibid*). As such, no ingredients other than cereal or starch, “vinegar, spices, herbs, salt or other harmless flavourants”, only the approved additives and “water”, can be added to the raw boerewors (Department of Health, 1990). These legal requirements, I argue, do the work of the Vegan Society UK’s definition of veganism in that both impose a set of doxa that legitimises some and rejects others. It positions other approaches to veganism or boerewors to the periphery and legitimises only one position, regardless of its diverse composition. Despite this, boerewors and the field of veganism derive their compositions from multiple modernities because of their contested compositions (Eisenstadt, 2003:130), and because both obscure the labour on which they rest.

In this case, the legal definition I use to understand the composition of boerewors excludes vegan boerewors from being recognised as boerewors. Despite this, in a social and practical sense, vegan boerewors is boerewors because it acts in the same way that animal-based boerewors does. That is, in the same way as *Braai*, of which boerewors, along with other meat products, are

central, boerewors can bring together a distinctly South African social constellation. As the late Arch-Bishop Desmond Tutu put it: “We have, what, 11 official languages but only one word for this wonderful institution: its braai. It’s braai in Xhosa, it’s braai in Afrikaans, it’s braai in English, it’s braai in whatever” (Jethro, 2020:138). Boerewors, similarly, is not known by any other name and, due to the variety of spices it offers, can be remade and varied according to the maker’s preferences. As such, it can bring together a group of people despite their varying historical backgrounds. However, due to its rootedness in the Afrikaans language—*boer* meaning farmer and *wors* meaning sausage—the sausage is associated with Afrikaans-speaking white people. In this sense, then, it replicates and reinstates, through these nostalgic reiterations, the legacy of the apartheid regime, running from 1948 to 1994, and its creation of a state wherein an Afrikaans-speaking white minority dominated.

However, being vegan comes with social costs, whether anticipated (Piazza *et al.*, 2018) or experienced through the labour of managing identity (Paxman, 2021). Among these is the loss of commensality, stemming from the “stereotyping, mocking, teasing, [and] do-gooder derogation” that vegans experience because of their consumptive choices (Veen *et al.*, 2023). I associate this derogation with Afrikaans households where “[m]eat is absolutely essential” (van Niekerk, 2011:68). The boerewors first covers the social exclusion vegans experience, then, through the apparent commensality that it affords, the labour needed to make it. In this way, boerewors and vegan boerewors are a divisive prop in that it caters, on a social level, to a group with a set of Afrikaner-nationalist diacritics. Moreover, as the institution of *braai* requires the participants to have sufficient economic capital to afford the props that make a *braai* a *braai*, being able to afford boerewors indicates economic class. Within that economic class, boerewors can unite but also exclude. In this way, inclusion is always exclusion. Including people of colour in a specific class at a *braai* means excluding anyone below that class.

However, vegan boerewors differs in that it serves the same role as boerewors; it includes people from a class that can afford it, but it can also exclude based on the context of its use. At the market and vegan events, it brings non-vegans into a space that caters specifically to vegans, creating a sense of commensality between the two groups. However, it retains the ability to exclude based on class because, despite the use of products that are far cheaper than meat, wheat

gluten, and spices, vendors sell vegan boerewors at nearly twice the price of boerewors itself. The price puts it into a class of products that are not only healthier but are also more expensive to consume. High prices are a common feature of products labelled vegan. When levelling accusations of expensiveness at veganism, the accuser must consider the requirements necessary to live a healthy life. That is, as the South African Food-based Dietary Guidelines (FDG) indicate, a base of grains, a large portion of vegetables, smaller portions of legumes, meat, and dairy, with oils and fats as the smallest portion (Fernandez *et al.*, 2021:6). The macronutrient requirements are addressed in this through the size of the portions given (FAO, 2024), and, as such, vegans, who cannot consume two of the portions represented in the FDG, require more food stuffs to fill their nutritional gap. Thus, highly bioavailable protein and fat-rich foods like tofu, soy chunks, and seitan are essential for vegans to meet the requirements for a healthy life. However, due to their rarity, these products and the processing required are often more expensive when bought at a store or market. Vegans must thus pay more than omnivores for them to eat vegan food in spaces that cater to them. The price, rarity, and difficulty of making the products create the perception that vegan food is both expensive and inaccessible, leading to the association of the food with the people who can afford it.

Boerewors comes to incorporate into it a set of power relations that speak to the composition of the field of veganism. It takes on a particularly colonial flavour when considering the diversity of locations from which it draws its ingredients, with whom it is associated, and how this association marginalises its diverse origins. Parallels connect the legitimacy of Boerewors' association with Afrikaans-speaking white people, with the frequency of the sausage's consumption at the market, the popularity of the stall selling it, and the market's location around a pub filled with predominantly white marketgoers. The infrastructure on which the market depends, in turn, speaks to the practice of worlding at the market. Despite the possibility of worlds otherwise, neither the infrastructure nor the worlding possibilities can remove the influence the colonial worlding project has on it. The smell of boerewors thus acts as a semiotic vehicle for modernity wherein "world history" centres Europe and relegates 'the rest' to the periphery (Mignolo, 2007:453). Pervading the air of the market and, despite mixing with the smells of biryani and tofu curry, boerewors becomes the attraction in the market centre, the food

court. In the process, it marginalises the labour that produces it, the other foods sold at the market, the interactions taking place in it, and obscures the infrastructure that facilitates them.

This obfuscation, in turn, leads to a revision of vegans' "matter of concern" (Latour, 2010:478), all of which are based on a care for something that Global Value Chains affect. Despite the inherent claim of not being exploitative, veganism and thus vegans cannot claim that they do not exploit. The mere fact that we live in a state of global capitalism, vis-à-vis Global Value Chains and their dependence on labour exploitation, makes a non-exploitative veganism impossible. Vegans who know this must wrestle with the understanding that they, too, are contributing to exploitation and that their vegan practice is compromised. This compromise, however, is a point that allows vegans some lenience. In this sense, it establishes veganism as not rooted in dogma but as an evolving lifestyle that fits into a compromised world. This veganism, in turn, allows vegans to interpret the dominant discourse and mould it, while standing as a world-making point around which their practices revolve and strive towards.

### Of infrastructures and the material relations of the field

The field sites, both markets and get-togethers, offer a multifaceted space in which people from different backgrounds, and with differing "matters of concern" (Latour, 2010:478), are brought together around a core veganism. The Vegan Society's definition of veganism defines the core of veganism. However, vegans, as I have specified above, "come [to the field] with varied agendas", each of which contributes differently to "guiding world-making projects" (Tsing, 2015:132). Here, I draw on Somers's concept of narrativity (1994:618-619). She argues that public narratives are the stories we associate with networks and institutions; they "inform [our] lives" in these spaces (*ibid*). As such, I view these projects as grounded in the interplay between the public scripts stemming from narratives of vegan praxis and their ontological narratives, which the field plays on through the provision of nostalgically laden products like boerewors. As such, the field sites offer a coalescence of concerns, all intertwined around the central pillar of veganism, despite being pitted against one another in their attempts to control the narrative of veganism in Johannesburg.

Through attempts at controlling the world-making project's narrative practitioners of these concerns engage one another through subtle acts of subversion, attempts at secession, or moves to maintain their dominance of the field (Kay & Laberge 2002:27). That is, vegans associated with an animal advocacy concern attempt to subvert their health-based or environmentally-concerned counterparts and vice versa, depending on the capital, I define in the introduction they have in the field. Actors practising their veganism make these moves by buying or selling products, or providing information on the subject to the people around them. Again, these practices, although they adhere to the field's public scripts, are composed of an interplay between the actors' ontological narratives and the field's public narrative. Finally, due to the field sites' position in Johannesburg and South Africa, the colonial history of the space, which asserts colonially derived labour dynamics and modes of social interaction (Maldonado-Torres, 2017c:248), shapes the practices and dictates the interactions occurring in the field sites. The field's position means that people from different backgrounds interact with their worlds in different ways, and that these ways are historically informed. That is, "worlds world worlds", to borrow from Donna Haraway (2013:15).

Bourdieu's notion of field, a "social arena" in which actors leverage their capital, be it social, economic, or cultural (Little, 2011), offers a framework to consider how the actors maintain or succeed their positions in the arena (Kay & Laberge, 2002:27). Latour provides a framework for understanding the way people in the field come together around their concerns (2010:478). I understand that binding the field are the central concerns composing veganism. I thus focus on the "matters of concern" that animate the field's internal dynamics (*ibid*). That is, I consider how actors in the field maintain, subvert, or attempt to succeed their counter-concerns while remaining true to veganism (Kay & Laberge, 2002:27). Although coming together in a central definition, veganism is necessarily understood differently based on the ontological narratives of the actors adhering to it (Somers, 1994:618).

Somers's narrativity (1994) allows me to consider how the interplay between the narratives of a public institution—such as veganism—shapes the ontological narratives of the people adhering to it and, consequently, how their ontological narratives shape it. Through the use of a strawman argument, Bauman offers the (false) notion of 'community, providing security and stability in a

liquid modern world, which I use to examine the ‘security and stability’ that a ‘community’ of, apparent, “sheer likeness” offers (2000:94). This leads me to question how the field of veganism in Johannesburg presents the opportunity to create worlds-otherwise through a ‘community’ of “sheer likeness” as each person, drawing on their ‘community’ offers a personalised agenda through which they shape “world-making projects” (Tsing, 2015:132). I address this throughout this thesis using Somers's narrativity (1994) to understand how identity is made and shaped through adherence to the “matters of concern” that animate the field of veganism in Johannesburg (Latour, 2010:478). In each case, I argue that vegans engage in world-making projects, regardless of their concern, through the practices concretised at the field sites on which I base this thesis.

The field is as diverse as the markets suggest; it is composed of three competing “matters of concern” that come together around veganism (Latour, 2010:478). These competing concerns are manifest in the field's aesthetic and social dynamics, producing an image of veganism that is at once caring yet racially exclusive. Although these dynamics stem from the social actors who embody them, the social structures, infrastructures, and geographies on which the field depends shape it as much as the people who compose it. This assemblage is evident in the popular foods sold at the food court, which cater to the diacritics of specifically white, English, Afrikaner, and South Asian racial and language groups, while making use of cheap black labour-power to produce them. The interplay between cheap black labour and foods derived from white nostalgias concretises public narratives of the field and the physical space as catering to white, English, or Afrikaans groups to promote vegan “matters of concern” and care (Somers, 1994:619; Latour, 2010:478).

In doing so, the field, and in particular the food court, offers a vegan version of ‘authentic’ South African cuisine, exemplified in the nostalgic reproduction of boerewors, fish and chips, and curries. In the chapter on plastic proteins, I consider how the veganised reproduction of this cuisine, on the one hand, removes it from the direct harm of deriving the protein source from a non-human animal, while, on the other hand, covering the human and more-than-human relations required to produce it. The substitution of non-human animal harm with human harm forms part of the general theme of this thesis, in which I focus on how the field of veganism in

Johannesburg holds itself as ethically distinct from mainstream foodways while relying on the same infrastructural and structural elements that perpetuate them. This contradiction undercuts claims to ethical distinction and exposes the vegan field of Johannesburg's entanglement with these. In the next chapter, I turn to the infrastructures that compose the field as an entry point into this entanglement, focusing on the distribution of power through electrical cables.

In this chapter, I argue that vegan markets, such as the Free-Love Vegan Market, are not neutral spaces of ethical consumption. I use Krog's (1995) positioning of post-apartheid identities, linking it to van Niekerk's (2011) depiction of Afrikaner diacritics to show how they fit both Mbembe's (2003) necropolitical and Maldonado-Torres's (2014) decolonial framing to show how these sites are structured on—and reproduce—the race and class-based hierarchies of South Africa. I then use Latour's (2005:6) "matters of concern" and Bourdieu's Capital and Field as a means of analysing how the vegans negotiate morals, identities, and exclusion to show how the narrativity (Somers, 1994) present in Afrikaner-nationalist diacritics, like the *boerewors* I which are used to create a sense of belonging for a white, middle-class customer base, while rendering black women's essential labour invisible. I offer a critical understanding of vegan ethics and demonstrate how vegans practise them in the market's apparent diversity, which obscures its alignment with historical structures of exclusion and extraction.

## Chapter 2: Organising Power

“Hey, Lauwrence,” Abraham greeted, his speech slurring a bit, but no more than usual. “Have you got a laptop?” I was hesitant; my laptop was sacred at this point, carrying my fieldnotes, my papers, and my entire research library for my thesis. “Yes,” I responded, my hesitation more apparent than I would have liked. “What do you need it for?” I asked him. “No, I just want to get some songs for the market ready, maybe if you have some music that has good vibes, you know? We can add that to the playlist for the market tomorrow?” Abraham, from my understanding, was in control of supplying the vendors with electricity, so the request seemed out of place, but I complied, “Yeah, sure, I’ll bring it along.” “But I’ll also need some help with the cables, hey, you’re not gonna be the DJ, hey,” he said, laughing. I did not join in, as I had not expected to. Abraham had called me at eight that evening, minutes after I had responded to his request on one of the WhatsApp groups we subscribe to. He had asked for “help with setting up the cables”, which had no implications of being involved with the music. Usually, the middle-aged woman selling edibles and marijuana related trinkets controlled the music. A live musician was scheduled to play, leading me to believe that Abraham was being presumptuous in this venture. Little did I know that I was not there for the cables either, but for the infrastructure connected to them, and the power conveyed through it would become my primary concern. After a moment of awkwardness, he said, “Blessings, Lauwrence, I’ll see you tomorrow at six.”

I arrived at Lion's sports pub at six that morning. The sun's light peeked over the horizon. The cold of winter cut through the three layers of clothing I wore in preparation. A light rain fell in light sheets, gradually soaking through each layer of clothing. This was out of the ordinary for me; usually, I arrived at the market an hour before it started, when the vendors had all arrived and were adding the final touches to their stalls. Today I was alone. Someone had opened the gate before I got there, but the hands that had unlocked it were nowhere to be seen. I assumed that the security guard I had seen sitting in a lone wooden guardhouse on previous visits to the market had done the work, but the little shelter was empty. I hoped that someone else had relieved him of his duties and opened the gate early so that they could get back home into their warm beds. The cold came with its own set of comforts: the smell of rain on the red parking lot

ground, and the silence that echoed through it. I craved a warm cup of coffee, but none of the cafes in the area were open yet, and I had rushed here from the friend I was sleeping over at. The night before, I had to tell them I would have to leave earlier than I originally planned, as Abraham had called me in response to my answering his request in the Vegan WhatsApp group.

At around quarter past six, the wheels of two small cars crunched onto the parking lot's wet gravel. Both were Kia Atos'; one had a broken headlight that gave the car the appearance of having lost in a brawl with a lamppost. This reminded me of the market's infrastructure. Only exposed when cables showed, through the breaking of cover, or the failure of consistent electricity provision. The pub that hosted the market and provided the electricity powering the food court provided only a single outlet from the back window of an unused old bathroom. Much like the hiding of exploitative labour relations popularly relied on during apartheid, the pub regulated how the market was laid out, how much power they had access to, and when the market could run. The market rests on a set of connections laid down in the past; it, through the people composing it, is constantly in the process of adding, incrementally, to the connections as they continuously break down, block access, or demand political attention (Barry, 2020:97). In this way, the infrastructure, continuously breaking and mending according to the accretion of parts that its users add or remove from it, allows for life to continue (Anusas & Ingold, 2015:551). The car, too, with its broken but somehow functioning headlight, had lost its fight and flew forward blind, or, at the very least, seeing only some of its way.

"It's cold, hey," she stated, "thanks for being here so early. I hear Abraham got you to come help out with the electricity." "Yeah," I replied, "where is he, by the way?" I asked her as I looked around the sparse parking area for his small black 1996 Toyota Tazz. "Ag, you know him by now, mos. He'll be here when he's here," she responded, rolling her eyes and pursing her lips together. As much as she was in control of the market, no one was in control of Abraham. "Since you're here, you can help us with the setup, if you're not too cold," she said, alluding to the stoicism and resilience imbued in Afrikaner masculinity (Morrell *et al.*, 2012), her smile flashing in the shadows of her coat's hood. It left an ominous feeling in my stomach. Her face was enveloped in a flash of light, beaming out of and exposing the shadow places, only bright in contrast to the darkness. This exposed a relationship of dependence between the two, with things

covering connections, like her hood, showing off a smooth exterior and obscuring the deeper expressions of her face or the infrastructure.

As the sunlight crept across the space around the pub, it brought life as the vendors began arriving and setting up. Betsie, whom I introduced in the previous chapter, assigned greater importance to the stalls that sold food as they were part of the “main attraction”: the food court. Betsie had an embodied understanding of the space through her interactions with vendors, marketgoers, and infrastructure providers. She had a set arrangement for the stalls, strategically positioning each vendor across the space. She gave each stall a space measuring six steps across, assigned based on how much space they needed, their contribution to the market, and the products they sold. The difference: stalls that sold food and stalls that did not. This meant that Betsie afforded some vendors more space than their counterparts based on the equipment they used. I noted the concretisation of a hierarchy, based on the popularity of the stalls, which I highlighted in the previous chapter, manifest in their allotted space. She also gave them the prime spots surrounding the market's central open area. In contrast, she assigned stalls selling other commodities spaces confined to the gazebos she required them to vend in.

The basic requirements for each vendor were a fee of R350 for a space to sell, a table on which to display their products, a Gazebo under which to place their tables, and a tablecloth to cover their tables. They also needed to ensure that their products were vegan. Although the gazebo, a tent-like covering that shaded the vendor and their products from the weather, was a requirement for the vendors, it served more as a marker of the space for Betsie. The six steps I had noted her taking when assigning spaces were based on the gazebo's size and, depending on how much space each vendor required. She used the gazebos, an infrastructural node, as a means of organising space, imbuing the market with meaning she derived from the nodules that came together in its composition.

In this chapter, I follow Larkin (2013) in arguing that infrastructure is materially manifest but imbued with politics, both in its use and in its implementation. I use von Schnitzler's (2008) work as a physical manifestation of this, focusing particularly on the implementation of water meters in Soweto to speak to the politics of their implementation and consequent use of

infrastructure. Lefebvre (1991) allows me to view space as active and socially produced, meaning that social actors there produce space through their use, perception, and consumption of the space. Working with both Betsie and Abraham allowed me to access the market's infrastructure directly, and the above paragraph showcases a set of ideas particular to Betsie. However, these ideas were brought into conjunction with the ideas of the material world, through the size of the gazebos, onto the market space, her implementation of these ideas thus shaping how marketgoers, vendors, and labourers relate to one another and to the material world (Barry, 2020:97).

I found that the consumerist language Betsie used to speak about the market related to a concept touched on in von Schnitzler's *Citizenship Prepaid* (2008). Von Schnitzler (2008:899) draws on Michel Callon (2002), who offers the concept of a "space of calculability": a space that enables and encourages the monetary calculation of the objects, actors, ideas, and things that populate it. For the food vendors, this infrastructure implementation meant stretching their stalls from one gazebo to two, allowing them to display more food options to their marketgoers while also preparing more food in the small area behind their display tables. Here, behind the tables, is where vendors could control, dispense, and exercise hierarchy, labour dynamics, and economic ability, in ways dependent on the infrastructure she provided them. The concentration of electrical cables, cheap labour, and the equipment for preparing the food required the owners of the stalls to control access to the ingredients and the equipment, relegating women preparing the food in their attempts to remain economically viable and politically relevant in the field.

At half past seven, an hour and a half before the official opening time of the market, Abraham's car rolled into the parking lot. Its left front wheel splashed through a puddle that had collected near the arched entrance of the market. The obsidian exterior of the car was broken only by the grey of a homemade, poly-concrete patch on the rear bumper, giving it a weathered appearance. Abraham swung a rainbow-coloured sock and sandal-covered foot out of the car and stood firmly on the wet soil of the parking lot. Strolling towards me, Abraham waved a hand in greeting. "Howzit, Lauwrence man? We need to get these cables out as quick as possible, hey. So why don't you start untangling the ones I have there in the back seat?" he said with a wave towards

his car. Not waiting for a greeting in return, he continued his stroll past me, his long blond beard, tie-dye t-shirt, jeans, rainbow socks, and sandals only coming to a standstill next to Betsie.

I, my lips pursed in annoyance, left them in conversation to fetch the cables from the back seat of the car. The right back door was open a crack, revealing the grey seats inside. The lingering scent of marijuana hung in the air immediately outside the car. On the right-hand side of the back seat stood a plastic laundry basket. It would have been well worn if the pieces of plastic that held up the sides and connected the top to the bottom had still been intact, and if the insides of the basket, lengths of black, white, and grey cable, were kept there by the basket itself and not the multicoloured carpets Abraham wrapped them in. I was afraid that if I picked it up, the entire basket would break apart and its contents would spill out onto the muddy ground. There were eight lengths of electric cable: two were thick and black, with a white plug point on the edge of each; the other six were white and about 10 millimetres in diameter. The black cables were larger than that.

These cables, running from vendor to central electrical hub, enabling production and consumption alongside cheap labour, also distributed power—both social and literal—highlighting a hierarchy dependent on visibility, access, and infrastructure. Their role is twofold. They connect vendors to the electricity they need to actively participate in the market and to a relational infrastructure that positions them socially in the vegan market. Their positioning, although never explicit, offers me an entry point into, first, the market's hierarchy and, second, the infrastructure available to it. The latter point I noted when I looked at the cables. They were old, some dilapidated, and kept in an even older wash basket that was falling apart. Even when stored, Abraham wrapped the cables in old pieces of carpet, and, as I note in the next section, he covered them when he connected them to the pub. Their age and dilapidation spoke to an incrementally growing nest of cables, the vendors, Betsie and Abraham, slowly adding to the infrastructure they relied on (Barry, 2020: 96). They were informal, almost insurgent, seemingly unorganised, but, as I note in the following section, this was planned. There was an order to the cables that was clear to the vendors, an order that required negotiation and displays of power.

The cables, collected over time and their connection and reliance on the pub, came with their own set of politics, materially manifest in both the cables and buildings (*ibid*: 97). In this sense, they offered me a material means to analyse the market's power relations. Where Betsie had offered me her embodied understanding of the space through her walking tour of the market, this gave me a map, offering a material rendition of the hierarchy based on the space's infrastructure. Having delivered the basket and all its malcontents to Abraham, he started, "First, we must get electricity to the guys with the big machines in the food court; the fryers and such. We can sort out the music a little bit later." Although this clearly meant a lot to him, I realised, following Larkin (2013:327), that through his control of the cables, Abraham also controlled the relational infrastructure, the "goods, ideas, waste, power, people, and finance", at the market. "But the big guys, they're gonna need the bigger cables because they pull more current, neh, and that's gonna mean that we have to sort out who gets the heavy cables and who doesn't." Betsie, overhearing the conversation, interjected, "Be careful where you put the cables! You remember how they complained last time about how it's dangerous for their customers. Just cover them up and make sure that people can see that it's electric cables, please." Her eyes showed little expression, and her mouth was placid, emphasising the annoyance in her tone and alluding to her dissatisfaction with the politics that came with the pub's infrastructure. Abraham responded with an audible sigh that Betsie ignored, "Jaa, you know I will," and turned on his heel with a scrunch as the wet gravel turned underfoot. His calm demeanour broke for the first time as he clenched his jaw shut and glanced skyward. Although the cables enabled the functioning of the dominant stalls in the food court, the politics of safety, of being tolerated in the space, flowing from the pub through the electricity, also came to affect the politics of the market. From this encounter I noted that Abraham's role, in his view as the orchestrator of power at the market, albeit hierarchically reigned in by Betsie, was in actuality concerned with the maintenance and repair of the connections as they were either systematically replaced or damaged ((Barry, 2015) as cited in Barry, 2020:92)). "Let's get these cables done man. Then we can finally catch a break, hey", he said, walking towards the basket of cables.

The hierarchy that Abraham had shown me, as reflected in his vendor placement, rested on the popularity of their food. This hierarchy was translated through the market's electrical infrastructure, manifesting the "moment of social selection" integral to the composition of

infrastructures (Larkin, 2013:332). I saw this in the number of people at their stalls, what the marketgoers returned for, and what they told other people about. I selected the stalls I discuss in this chapter because of an interaction I had with a middle-aged man while waiting in line for vegan fish and chips. I do this because I use Larkin's point that "defining an infrastructure is a categorising moment" (*ibid*:330). Therefore, my reliance on a social actor, the middle-aged man, to consider the "environment of everyday life" that the infrastructure generates and he interacts with, allows me to define the infrastructure of the market (*ibid*:328). As we waited, I asked him what he recommended at the market. He noted that I should try "the Biryani from that place, the tofu curry from that place, the boerewors from that one, and this is also obviously something I recommend". He pointed an extended finger at each stall he mentioned, momentarily halting, and then moving on to the next until it finally rested at his side when he returned to the Vegan Eatery for the fish and chips. Emphasising the intertwining of the social and material aspects of infrastructure, each stall had lines of people extending from where it sold its product and lines stretching out behind it, leading electricity to their appliances.

Abraham selected a white cable first, more grey than white from the accumulated dirt of previous markets, and handed it to me, then dove in again to emerge with a thick black cable. "This one's for the fryers on the far side of the food court," he said as he took it out of the basket. "Ok, we gotta get these guys hooked up to the power inside, so run back there, and I'll pass the cables through to you, ok?" Abraham motioned to the side of the length of the white wall that made up the backside of the main building of the pub. Running through the middle of the building was a hallway connecting the pub's main deck, the large hall at its centre, and the former changing rooms converted into public restrooms. Through one of the windows at the very back of the bathrooms, I had to receive a length of cable and plug it into a large wall socket of the building. This cable, one of the thinner white cables, served as the main conduit for extending electricity to the food court. In my mind, I worried about the longevity of the stalls relying on this precarious connection. Would this small cable that Abraham had mentioned was not going to be enough to maintain power for the "big guys", be enough to supply electricity to the central hub of the market? It seemed to me that this was a connection made out of necessity and not convenience. The necessity driving this connection highlighted the contentious existence of the market, a single three-point plug in a bathroom at the back of the pub, the only thing ensuring the existence

of its most profitable area. This precarity and likelihood of breakdown made the cables and the relations that enabled this connection “most visible” (Larkin, 2013:336). More than this, the plug, the entry point for the pub's politics, afforded a foundation, constantly added to, mended, and moulded to, for the market. The pub's politics through this plug shaped the market according to its own politics.

At the endpoint of the first length of cable, Abraham added an extension adaptor that could connect up to eight other cables, but he only used six of these, remarking that “we don’t want to overload it. Now-now we trip the power and get in shit from the club.” He noted, acknowledging the infrastructural grid and its associated politics (Barry, 2020: 97). He then connected the two thick black cables, three plug points away from one another, and carefully extended them from the walkway behind the food court, laying the extension point underneath some of the bushes of the garden that separated the two spaces from one another. “We don’t want people to see the cables because it makes the place look ugly, you know,” he said as he pointed towards the broken plastic basket that stood about two metres from us, “get me that mat so that we can cover this up”--grabbing the piece of carpet, riddled with holes from years of use. I laid it over the cable, thinking it odd that infrastructures are often hidden, taken for granted, or are exposed once they break down (*ibid*: 92). In this case, covering the cables speaks to two sets of politics rooted in the market, one, based on the commercialisation of the space, the other, based on the concerns for “potential [safety] failures” from the providers of electricity (*ibid*: 97). “No man, we have to make it nice”, Abraham said, lifting the mat from one side and flipping it over so that it now covered most of the cable. Only some of the cables poked out from beneath the holes in the mat. In obscuring the cables from the market because of their ugliness, Abraham obscures the ugliness of the infrastructure on which the market depends (Anusas & Ingold, 2015). Covering the cables with a mat draws attention to the ‘ugly’ but necessary aspects of infrastructure that the market relies on, thereby exposing the market's dependency on the pub (Larkin, 2013:329). The market itself, like the mat, covers the ugly parts of the pub nostalgia.

The market's aesthetic was not allowed to be tainted by the reality of the infrastructure that enabled its functioning. In hiding the cables, Abraham both enables the connections that the infrastructure affords and hides the relationships of dependency that rest on it. The black cables

he “hid in plain sight”, placing them along the sides of the food court so that they became the borders of the space, each leading to one of the stalls that needed to run a deep fryer, fridge, or large pieces of equipment. One led to Vegan Eatery, while the other led to Vegan Meats, both of which required a steady power supply to operate the two-basket deep fryers they used to prepare their food. Then two white cables led down the side of the food court, the first to PlanT and the other to Ve-riyani. Each supplying electricity to their main appliances, for Ve-riyani, the furthest stall, the cables had to reach, this meant running a large crock pot, and for PlanT, about two metres away from the extension point, this meant the containers of food were placed on a heating tray to keep them at a constant heat throughout the day. In the same way that the cables allowed Ve-riyani to keep the crockpot at a constant temperature, so too the cables allowed production, and thus the labour on which this depended, to remain constant. Two more cables ran down the side of the food court to supply the coffee stall and the candied nut stall with electricity.

The two black cables, which Abraham indicated could handle more current due to their thickness, led to the two most popular stalls in the food court: Vegan Meats and Vegan Eatery. Vegan Meats drew long lines of people to its stall, the smell of boerewors emanating from it and spreading across the market. Vegan Eatery, similarly, drew lines of marketgoers to its storefront with its staple fried phish and chips. Both had a deep fryer, with Vegan Meats adding a small steel braai on which a black woman with a headwrap slowly turned vegan boerewors, chorizo, and a sosatie skewer. They also occupied space under two gazebos, needing more space to prepare the copious amounts of food that their marketgoers demanded. The cables leading into the stalls indicate their consumption, while the lines of people indicate the consumption of their work. In this sense, the marketgoers were caught up in a web of consumption that connected them to the market space, the vendors, the labourers, and the spaces the vendors relied on to produce food. With the vendors in the food court caught in a constant struggle for dominance, the two stalls took up space directly opposite one another, with one stall’s front looking out onto the other’s. The marketgoers were active creators of the relationships in which the vendors participated. The competition, although foregrounded for the vendors, acts more as a composition of the world outside of the market. Through the cables that connect to the pub and the city of Johannesburg’s infrastructure, people come together around elements like boerewors and fish and chips, which I establish in Chapter One as playing on the nostalgically derived

diacritical inventories (Kopytoff 1986:73), while also coming together around supposedly universal elements like veganism. Together, these connections create the muddle that is the market, with these diacritically loaded elements standing out as dominant parts of a composition specific to the market.

As if to divert the attention of both marketgoers and vendors, two more stalls occupied space at right angles from these two stalls, PlanT and Ve-riyani. PlanT specialising in Tofu curries and Ve-riyani in Biryani and Samosas. The smell of deep-fried phish, samosas, and biryani collided at the centre of the food court, where an island of plastic tables and benches that marketgoers seldom occupied, given the hustle and bustle of people ordering and collecting their food. These foods reestablish the market-specific compositions through the smells, around the commensality there, and through the reservations of both marketgoers and vendors. No cables extended past this section into the area behind the food court. Primarily because there was no need for electricity on that side of the market, but also because it felt like an addendum. An extra part of the market, arguably more important to the discourse of veganism than the food court, but much less lucrative. People came to the market to eat, drink, and talk to their friends, and not for the malnourished puppies, well-cared-for pet rats, and stalls representing the animals that cannot be exposed at the market itself. This took the form of a stall dedicated to collecting funds for feeding feral cats, another for collecting funds for owls that have suffered at the hands of human infrastructure, and finally, one for collecting funds for stray dogs or shelters. Extending out of the food court is what Betsie calls the “Bits and Bobs” aisle. Here, vendors sold preserved or dried food, and vendors selling jewellery, new and second-hand clothing, plants, and cosmetics occupied the spaces between them. Vendors here drew on elements like hippie clothing and artisanal skills to connect with marketgoers’ values rather than their nostalgia. Playing on these alternative aesthetics or values made tangible through their products, the “bits and bobs” aisle relied on their appeal to niche groups to remain somewhat economically viable. Their reliance on niche groups, lack of consistent economic appeal, and their physical location away from the market centre made their marginalisation, both physical and economic.

In laying out the cables supplying electricity to vendors, Abraham maps out the space and the hierarchy that comprises it. In this sense, he shows the material dependency of the vendors on the

infrastructure, all of which relies on the relative stability that the pub, at the market's centre, provides. The interplay between the hierarchy and the market infrastructure results in a map showing that the food vendors, concentrated in the food court, are afforded greater power, both in the electrical and the social sense. The market reflects this in the “Bits and Bobs” aisle, where there was no sight of, and no need for, electricity, much less labour for food preparation. Anusas and Ingold (2015) offer an understanding of infrastructure as a meshwork of nodes, allowing me to see the marketspace as one of constant negotiation through and across these nodes. This section, relegated to the outskirts of the market, arose, over the writing up of my fieldnotes and their accrual into an argument, as the space from which to imagine worlds-otherwise, because of the ambiguity imbued into the “Bits and Bobs” aisle.

## Centring Power

The connections coming into and spilling out of this section of the market reminded me that “worlding is always practiced in relation” and that, through the encounters, “worlds come into being” (Tsing, 2010: 63). This is, perhaps, best seen in how Betsie produced space in the sense that she gave it meaning through her experience of the social instances that occurred in it (Lefebvre, 1991). That is, she, when planning the layout of the market, orchestrated the “networks and pathways which facilitate[d] the exchange of material things and information” that contained the “great diversity of objects” that, in turn, made up social space (Lefebvre, 1991:77). Yet, in her view the sociability of the space was concerned with consuming the commodities, the food, that the stalls in the food court produced, thus giving rise to Betsie’s use of consumerist language like “food court”. Despite this, the pub infrastructure's ability to generate the environment in which she can use this language cannot be underplayed, as “flow of goods, people, or ideas” depends on it (Larkin, 2013:328). The pub, as I specify in the first chapter, exudes Afrikaner nationalist diacritics as an enclave recreated through nostalgia. I emphasise to argue, as von Schnitzler does (2008:909), that infrastructure was the material manifestation of the apartheid state’s strategies for governing, particularly black bodies.

In contrast, the “Bits and Bobs” aisle depended on the interactions vendors had with their potential marketgoers to sell their products. It is in their interactions that the vendor’s “matters of

concern,” which I use in the same way as I do in Chapter One, were foregrounded (Latour, 2010:478). The “bits and bobs” aisle’s reliance on interaction, and thus cultural capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), which differs from social capital in that I derive it from the ability to navigate worlds based on embodied or institutionalised understandings of said worlds (*ibid*:119), in this case, an understanding of how to interact with marketgoers in the aisle. When I compare the food court’s reliance on the infrastructure through the production of foods that depend on it, the hierarchy I highlight in Abraham’s cable layout is made apparent.

This hierarchy is manifest in the practices of production and consumption that take place in and at the market, including the exchange of “material things and information” (Lefebvre, 1991). These, in turn, relate to the previous chapter, in which social practices take centre stage. Here, Lefebvre (1991:12) offers an understanding of space as a composition of active social actors, showing the market as containing within it “sensory phenomena”, “products of the imagination”, “symbols and utopias”, each adding to a deeper understanding of the space.

The “sensory phenomena”, that is, the smell of the boerewors, the associations it brings along with it, and the vegan discourse positioning it, I relegate to the food court (*ibid*). Here, the smell of food, depending on the cables and their associated connections, positions the space as one centred around food. While the food court is concerned with literal and economic consumption, the “Bits and Bobs” aisle relies on the things and understandings associated with them to, first, sell products and, second, position those products within the politics of veganism in Johannesburg. Despite their reliance on understanding and thus on information, the products in the “Bits and Bobs” aisle add to the undefinability Betsie associated with the aisle. Both spaces, however, align themselves with sets of diacritics integral to the identity of demographically dependent groups that I identified in the previous chapter. The contrast and depoliticisation of these groups draw three questions from me: Where are the concerns? Where is the veganism? Who can position their “matters of concern” in the market?

To address these questions, I follow the cables, literally the power, to the stalls they serve in the food court. I consider how the cable infrastructure offers a gathering of connections (Anusas & Ingold, 2015), nodes, and networks that position the concerns of the stalls and the people and

ingredients that compose them. This consideration allows me to show how infrastructures offer a “way of living in the world” (Larkin, 2013:331), seen in the way the post-apartheid government of South Africa shaped its citizenry through the imposition of water meters (von Schnitzler, 2008). Similarly, the concerns, highlighted in the previous chapter as animal-advocacy-based, environmental, and health-based concerns, correlate with the infrastructural hierarchy. To make this argument, I examine how popular stalls position themselves in relation to the dominant discourse on veganism and the concerns of the marketgoers. That is, how vendors position themselves through their practices, their products, and their interactions with both labourers and marketgoers. The infrastructure, which I highlighted in the section above, comes into play through the vendors’ reliance on it, the relations it affords the market, and thus its composition, and the field of veganism in Johannesburg. Finally, I look at the market’s concerns, focusing on the “Bits and Bobs” aisle.

## Channelling Power

Abraham’s cables, the connections he sets up between the vendors and the pub that supplies electricity, indicate a hierarchy in the food court. With all the vendors depending on the pub for space and electricity, its presence is, due to its dominant position, invisible. Bound together through the infrastructure the pub provides, it is always at the back of the vendors’ minds, mediating both the security it provides through space and electricity, emphasising their, and the consequent hierarchies, dependence on it (Larkin, 2013:335). The four vendors I mentioned earlier are thus not directly concerned with it. Instead, they constantly compete to maintain their position in the market. As such, they compete for customers, space, and recognition in the larger vegan community of Johannesburg. This correlates with their popularity, not just at the market but also in the city’s field. The vendors assert themselves onto the market using three methods: their fresh food, their ingredients, and their frozen or dry foods. First, their food needs to stand out in terms of flavour, novelty, and popularity. To achieve this, the vendors need to source their ingredients based on their appeal to marketgoers and their alignment with the dominant discourse on veganism, and they need to know how to make foods that can incite commensality amongst the marketgoers. This depends on their understanding of the marketgoers’ diacritical inventories

and the added element of innovation, wherein they need to draw on longstanding flavours to create meals that marketgoers find exciting.

Although they veganise their food, giving them a competitive edge, vendors need to maintain this creative exploit. For the four vendors I mentioned, this is less of a necessity as they have established themselves at the markets. That is, these vendors were there for each market I attended at Lion's sports pub, and three of them were also present at the market in Fourways. At each market, they presented a set list of foods with a new product making its way to marketgoers on the odd occasion. As Betsie highlights in her organisation of the market, the food court is the centre point around which she arranges the market, again orchestrated through the pub's provision of infrastructure. The food court, where vendors sell fresh food, and clients sit at the three tables and benches at the centre of the lawn to eat their food. Like the citizens of Soweto, infrastructurally shaped to use "water wisely" through the implementation of water meters (von Schintzler, 2008:913), marketgoers are made into an eating, drinking, and sitting group. The food here is, first, a sensory phenomenon, the primary one at the market. As such, the three points I mentioned above are vital to maintaining the market's customer base.

The cables that Abraham and I laid out at the market, leading from the pub to the food court, lead, as I note in the previous section, to the four dominant stalls. They thus depend on the market's infrastructure, as I have made clear. For Vegan Eatery, the stall selling vegan fish, the ingredient that sets them apart from the rest of the vendors is quick-rehydrating soya. They use this to make their best-selling item, fried phish. The phish and chips drew me to the memory of eating fried fish in the back of my grandmother's 1970 Volkswagen GTS. My experience, however subjective, is what drew me back to the stall time after time, yet for Ira, a man in his early twenties with long hair and an athletic physique, it was the dry product that drew him back; "it's just so quick. I can leave it in hot water for ten minutes and use it quickly for a stir fry or something like that". For him, it was the speed at which the soya rehydrated that made it attractive. It provided him with a relatively high-protein source that was convenient, effective, and versatile. As soy can soak up almost any flavour without dramatically changing it during the rehydration process, it enables a range of dishes that can be recreated using it as the primary

source of protein. This contrasts with Dave's, the owner and manager of Vegan Eatery, who appears to have a basis for engaging marketgoers.

Dave, a middle-aged white man with short white hair and a long white beard, runs Vegan Eatery. His figure is outstanding, both in terms of his physical appearance and how he interacts with marketgoers at his stall. He captures, first, with his colourful tattoos and long beard—his chef's jacket and black slacks indicate his profession, but they blend into the stall's kitchen space alongside the women he works with—and, second, with the interpersonal engagement of a salesperson. As people walk by the stall, he shouts, "How about a delicious burger or one of our famous fried fish meals!" The marketgoers are forced to interact by virtue of social obligation, and so he draws them in. His focus is on the "sensory phenomena" his stall provides. He positions taste, smell, texture, and the nostalgia they evoke as the primary points of engagement for marketgoers. However, his body, the way he positions himself in the stall, and what he does with it, act as a further point of captivation.

He moves around the deep fryer with the confidence of someone who has done this work for a long time. The machine became an extension of Dave, "a key to his identity" as a man (Mellstrom, 2002:472). The scars on his hands and arms affirm this and display the sacrifice he made in dedication to his profession (*ibid*:470). His face is expressionless as he concentrates on dropping the burgers, phish, and fries into the hot oil, betraying no sense of pain as oil spits up against his uncovered hands and tattooed arms. The same experience is clear when he removes the products, now ready to eat, from the depths of the hot oil. His identity from behind the deep-fryer, that of a 'man', is connected to his relationship to and through the infrastructural component, again relying on the pub's provision of electricity, allowing him to be in control of the stall (Larkin, 2013:334). His eyes dart between marketgoers and the submerged products throughout the two minutes the food is covered. His black apron, covering his white t-shirt and jeans, and the faded tattoos of baby animals and vegetable arrangements on his arms and chest, poke out from under his shirt, indicating a particular dedication to veganism. The animals indicate a concern for non-human animals, while his practice at the deep fryer, submerging what is considered healthy food, suggests a lack of care for health-based veganism. Through him, the stall becomes an enclave for the animal-advocacy concerned branch of veganism at the market.

Markedly, although Dave's work behind the deep fryer is integral to the production of the food items the stall sells, he is not involved with the prep work. Instead, the staff who do the prep work required to get the product to the final stage of the production chain stand behind the two tables forming the front of the stall. Each person working behind the main table has a station where they perform a single function, allowing Dave to deep-fry the food items and interact with the marketgoers. All of them are black women in their mid-twenties to thirties who wear black clothing. Their shoes, Tomi tekkies or vans, jeans, t-shirts, and head wraps are black. The only blink of colour comes from the Vegan Eatery logo adorning their aprons. The logo is also clearly visible on the packaging of the pre-packaged products that the stall sells. These are either stored in the freezers at the back of the stall, except for one glass-topped freezer that displays the frozen products to marketgoers at the front of the store and separates them from the deep fryer. The deep fryer, the glass-top freezer, and the row of deep freezers at the back of the stall all serve to seclude the women working in the stall from the marketgoers they serve while Dave interacts with them.

Dave's reliance on and proliferation of the "sensory phenomena" position him as a point of integration in the market. First, he acts as a point of attraction for the market, thus drawing marketgoers back through his proliferation of "sensory phenomena" that (Lefebvre, 1991), for myself and others with similar experiences, evokes "a nostalgic response" to (Widdows, 2016:38). For those of us who do have this nostalgic connection, he sells the feeling of the familiar. However, for others, like Ira, it is the convenience of his soya protein that draws them back. Dave, among others, capitalises on this to secure his position in the market and within the broader field. Integral to his positioning is his ability to position. That is, he can only position himself if he has the power to do so, which, as I have shown through the infrastructural map of the market, is only afforded through the cables that compose the market infrastructure. His ability to mediate positions through control of resources and to attract marketgoers' attention stems from the capacity afforded him through the pub's infrastructure (von Schnitzler, 2008:907). His dependence on infrastructure for his positioning of marketgoers and employees normalises the relationships that stem from and occur through said infrastructure (*ibid*).

At the back of the stall, where the freezers separate Vegan Eatery from the adjacent stall, two women prepare the frozen food that needs to go into the deep fryer. They remove the frozen products from the freezers, placing them onto another table on the side of the stall where they remove the plastic packaging covering the blocks of frozen soy protein prepared to form the mock fish, or the brown patties made of marinated soy protein and beetroot—for the bleeding effect sought after in mock meats—that the stall specialises in. They also remove large aluminium scoops of pre-cut, prepared potato wedges, placing them into the cardboard containers they will later fill. From here, they hand the products to Dave, who then cooks them in the deep fryer. While they do this, two women control the front of the stall, taking orders from marketgoers, ensuring payment, and preparing the containers that house the burgers once the patties are ready. First, the buns are buttered with margarine or plant-based butter, then an assortment of lettuce, onion, and a slice of tomato is placed onto the buttered bun as a garnish. Upon completing the patties, Dave gives them a signal: “A burger here!” he calls, or “Fish is ready,” signalling their presence with the holder for the fried product, and they then hand it to the marketgoer.

The women, as part of a uniform, are made to wear black clothing that both unifies them into a single labour force and reduces their individuality. His commanding of the women speaks to an extension of neoliberal rhetoric of black people, stemming from notions of ““dependency syndrome”” under apartheid, as “waiting for others to do something for them” (von Schitzler, 2008:907). This rhetoric itself stems from a larger rhetoric of subservience that comes from the racist social Darwinian understanding of a hierarchy of humanity that Maldonado-Torres calls “the colonality of being” (2007:451). At the stall, in their uniforms, the black women are melded into and reduced to their function. They become a collective defined by their use-value; workers, not people working, rendering them invisible. Here, I follow Honneth (2003) as cited in Heer (2019:107), in understanding invisibility as entailing not being recognised as a “fellow human being”, a position typically afforded to domestic workers during apartheid.

In contrast, Dave, who, to marketgoers, becomes an embodiment of meat-eating nostalgia with the added moral stance of not exploiting beings for that experience. In this sense, Dave and the stall sell, not phish and chips or burgers that ‘bleed’, the nostalgia of eating fish and chips in the

back of an old VW without the crushing guilt that comes with the knowledge of taking a life for that pleasure. He sells moral happiness, and the marketgoers return to him because of this. However, the marketgoers seem oblivious to the uniformity of the women who work there. Maybe this is because they are used to seeing black women working in spaces like these? An extension of the racialised orders of being that the “coloniality of being” sets in place (*ibid*). Maybe they have become used to this group of women’s only interactions with Dave being in the form of barks; “hand me the patty”, or “get me that fish quickly”, or even “the oil is hot! Where are the fries?!” Often leading to a look of annoyance when he is not given the product at the speed he wants it, at least, and a shout of “Come on! Customers are waiting!” Maybe the marketgoers’ satisfaction with their commensal needs distracts from this norm of control at the stall.

The same holds for Ve-riyani, a stall to the left of Vegan Eatery that specialises in South-Asian cuisine, which does the same. Their set menu includes samosas, biryani, and curry, served with rice or rotis. Here, Shameen and Prem, a married couple, own the store and sell its wares while supervising the cooking staff that occupies the back part of their gazebo. Their samosas and biryani define the stall. These products were partly prepared in advance and then reheated or cooked at the market. Selling the samosas and biryani, Shameen and Prem, the owners and operators of the stall, take on the highest positions in the labour hierarchy. They, like Dave, also wear clothing that expresses their individuality, in contrast to the all-black attire of the two women who prepare the food the stall serves. For Shameen, this takes the form of long pants that vary each time she comes to the market while maintaining a consistently colourful theme.

In contrast, Prem, who also runs the deep fryer in their stall, consistently wears jeans and, if the weather allows, a white tank top. From his position, he has a view of both the front of the stall, where the money comes in from marketgoers, and the two stations used to prepare the food for cooking, and then going from where the food goes out to the marketgoers. In this way, he, like Dave, can exert his ability to run the deep fryer, displaying a “performative quality” that dignifies this ability as “the touch” (Mellstrom, 2002:467). Their position as “economic actors” allows for the reproduction of their politics within their domains, in this case, their individual stalls (von Schnitzler, 2008:916). This affirms their belonging in the position behind the deep

fryer, behind the heavy machinery at their stalls. This vantage point enables a level of control that neither Shameen nor the two women working beside him has from their respective positions. In much the same way as Dave, Prem can orchestrate the production of the foodstuffs they sell without having to deal directly with the marketgoers.

In contrast, Dave interacts directly with the staff, giving them orders and orchestrating the stations that prepare food on the way to either the deep fryer or the marketgoers, and indirectly with the marketgoers, letting the staff handle that for him. This speaks to a difference in hierarchy between the two stalls, placing both stall owners at the top. I note this: Dave, Shameen and Prem control the flow and process of production, yet Dave does so as the sole controller of the stall, whereas Shameen and Prem share responsibilities in the stall. Despite this, one factor remains the same between the two stalls; both men are in control of the heavy equipment. Here, control over these heavy machines is both a performance of their masculinity and a communication to both the women working for and with them, as well as to other men doing the same work, that indicates their mastery of the machine and thus enables a “homosocial bonding” experience between the two men (Mellstrom, 2002:460). That is, both Prem and Dave operate the deep fryer, a machine that not only draws a lot of power but can also inflict serious injury on the operator, as Dave’s scarred forearms indicate. This shows that both stalls depend first on the labour of black people, suggesting a complacency with the infrastructurally provided labour, and then on the diminution of women, through the patriarchal components of coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007:245), manifest in the two men’s control over the deep fryers, and Abraham’s control over the electrical cables. This then becomes an extension of the “coloniality of power”, in the form of “economic and political” power, into and dependent on the “coloniality of knowledge and of being”, pertaining to the “gender, sexuality, subjectivity and knowledge” of people, thus reestablishing and maintaining a colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2007:451). This elicits a question: what does it mean that patriarchal dominance, colonial logics, and extractive labour dynamics actively shape a field predicated on care?

What differs from Ve-riyani and Vegan Eatery is, apart from the front of the stall where product displays differ according to the products they sell and the distinct colours that the owners associate with their brands—yellow and green for Vegan Eatery and blue and green for

Ve-riyani—, or that at Ve-riyani, Shameen takes on an active role in dealing with the marketgoers. The difference between them is that it is difficult to discern what “matter of concern” they cater to. Where Dave offers a clear experience of moral nostalgia, Shameen and Prem offer food based on a South African Indian set of ethnic diacritics. The food, apart from the samosas, is relatively healthy. However, they refrain from positioning it as such; instead, they position it as “authentic” Indian cuisine, reiterating the ethnic diacritics the food plays into. Again, the food is sold under the auspices of, on the face of it, “authentic” Indian cuisine and, in the market's context, as an alternative to the mainstream of this cuisine. Although the stall offers an entry point from which to create “worlds otherwise”, its complacency with the “matter of concern” politics within the food court aligns it with the dominant “matter of concern” at the market.

In this chapter, I show how the vegan field of Johannesburg depends on more than the ethical commitments that actors composing it have to veganism. Instead, as I show through the interactions between Betsie, Abraham, and the pub's unspoken politics, this is an infrastructurally dependent space. The meshwork of cables, market organisation, and ethical commitments speaks to the curation of the market according to the nostalgic wants of the marketgoers, the moral commitments of the vegans in the space, and the profits of the vendors. The infrastructure, which both organisers and vendors constantly add to through maintenance and repair, does more than provide electricity to the field; instead, it distributes power and thus assigns value, controls labour, and organises those who have narrative control over the field into bubbles separate from those who cannot. What emerges from these intersecting concerns is a tightly interwoven field, both materially and politically at stake in the valuation systems stemming from a colonial matrix of power.

Based on the stalls' complacency with the dominant “matter of concern” at the food court and the similar complacency regarding the labour black women provided (Latour, 2010:478), I argue that vendors are primarily concerned with profit. Moreover, this is normalised; the women's invisibility, extended to them through their roles in domestic labour on a social level and materially through their physical position behind the owners at the back of the stall, is relegated to invisibility (Heer, 2019:107). The labour I saw at the market confirms this, as it focused on the consistent production of food that stalls sold. The labour dynamics and the associated economic

incentives that the stalls afford speak to infrastructure's ability to shape and mediate relations (Larkin, 2013:330). However, as I have shown through my nostalgic recollections, the foods engage with sets of diacritics that appeal to marketgoers, appealing to the need for commensality and then to the vegan moral economy. Although this remains consistent across the stalls as they engage in extractive relationships with labour, the nostalgia that extends through the pub's infrastructure shapes how these relations are physically manifest in the field of veganism in Johannesburg (*ibid*). This dependency leads to a contradictory relationship between vegans' moral economy and their reliance on infrastructure that functions on a colonial matrix of power.

Despite the flexibility of the foods at the market, their ability to mimic meats and animal-derived products allows vegans and vegetarians to engage in the nostalgic flavours without directly contributing to the exploitation of more-than-human animal bodies. Moreover, due to the food's flexibility and diversity, the food court embodies Massey's sense of space as one of "coexisting heterogeneity" (2005:9). Vegan Eatery offers phish and chips, PlanT a tofu curry, and Vegan Meats an array of seitan meats spiced to taste like animal-meat products. Finally, Ve-riyani offers a biryani rooted in decades of history, each of which adds to the food court's heterogeneity. As such, each stall brings a distinct preparation style to the space, shaping the space accordingly. The presence of these styles alludes to the owner of each stall's exposure to the food they make and, by extension, to their different backgrounds. This suggests a coalescence of experiences drawn from said backgrounds to form a space of "coexisting heterogeneity" (*ibid*).

The heterogeneity of the composition consists of different diacritical inventories that link them to particular groups (Kopytoff 1986:73). These groups, Afrikaners, Hippies, and vegans, although being inherently political, lose their political opposition to one another at the market. Instead, they take on a collective opposition to mainstream foodways that align with Eisenstadt's Multiple modernities. This is because the practices utilised at the food court draw on "multiple institutions and ideological patterns" that enable an "ongoing reconstruction" of the contemporary world (Eisenstadt, 2003:536). Additionally, the social actors at the market, and in this case, in the food court, do this reconstruction in "close connection with social, political, and intellectual activists" (*ibid*), seen in the market as a space that collectively opposes dominant food practices. Finally, as the market is in opposition to dominant food practices, it also

“[pursues] different programs of modernity” (*ibid*). The collective diacritical inventories thus compose sets that I, drawing on, call pastiches because of their lack of political conviction toward one another at the market. Instead, due to their lack of political opposition to one another, they become parodies of the groups they mimic. They become “blank parodies” of those groups (Hoesterey, 1995:508). My point here is that the commercialisation of vegan products that cater to specific diacritical inventories shapes them, from diacritically specific acts of worlding to gentrified worlding projects.

Although the market, and especially the food court, embodies the notion of “multiple modernities,” it may be more specifically a space that embodies “alternative modernities” (Eisenstadt, 2003). I note this due to the move of the vegan market and vegans towards an apparent counteracting of modernity in terms of the non-exploitative component, and, thus, the moral economy that vegans are afforded based on their veganism. As such, the food sold in the food court is an act of resistance against a dominant omnivorous eating practice, reflecting their commitment to an ideology that espouses a distinctly meat-free society. However, the food court is rife with tension as the dominant “matters of concern” at the market clash over control of the discourse of veganism.

Despite this, the market rests on infrastructures that reassert coloniality. As the veganism enacted at the market, relying on the apartheid style labour organisation that dominates the market, falls away under the “matters of concern” that the predominantly white, middle-class vegans hold (Latour, 2010). Although this creates a point of tension between the labourers at the market and the vendors and marketgoers who reinforce their positions in the market’s hierarchy, it creates an additional point of tension. This latter point of tension stems from the care that vegans claim to have, particularly the contradiction of care, care for non-human animals versus care for the labourers who enable the alternative lifestyles that allow for the aforementioned care. In this chapter, I show how the market elicits a valuation system applied across the market space.

This rests on the power of vendors that bring marketgoers to the market, which, in turn, relies on an infrastructure that reasserts nostalgic diacritics affording specific groups of people at the market power. The infrastructure itself is compromised, relying on a colonial logic that

marginalises based on “gender, sexuality, subjectivity and knowledge” (Mignolo, 2007:451). In this chapter, I emphasised both the gender and the race of the marginalised group. While the racialised and gendered aspects of marginalisation will remain relevant throughout this thesis, in the next chapter, I continue to address the marginalisation I noted at the market, focusing on the knowledge aspect alongside the two aforementioned aspects. This allows me to show the full extent to which the valuation system at the market affects the worlding projects that it engages in. More than this, it allows me to ask: Is this the furthest extent to which colonial logics shape the field? How do vegans manage their care practices knowing that these practices are compromised? Finally, who has the privilege, and thus the power, to practice narrative control over veganism, here in the heart of veganism, at the food court?

In this chapter, I argue that the Free-love Vegan Market’s apparent moral underpinnings are materially and politically sustained through infrastructural arrangements that reproduce coloniality. Following von Schnitzler’s (2008) approach to pre-paid water meters in Soweto I trace the electrical cables from the pub hosting the market to the stalls in the food court, and I demonstrate how the infrastructure distributes literal and social power to the vendors who align with the market’s dominant “matter of concern”. Much like how the pre-paid meters in von Schnitzler’s (2008) work show how infrastructure is shaped through colonial matrices like Maldonado-Torres’s (2014) “coloniality of being”, so too the market’s infrastructure depends on the invisible and racialised labour that black women do behind the stalls and in the pub. My analysis of the market’s organisation reveals that it is not neutral but a curated space that centres white nostalgic diacritics, which I highlight using Krog’s (1995) and van Niekerk’s (2011) descriptions thereof, while marginalising practices that are alternative to those related to the dominant concern. In doing so, I demonstrate that the field of veganism is entangled with the infrastructures of extraction and erasure that Mafeje (1971) refers to, compromising the moral experience they offer.

## Chapter 3: “Cheap” Care on the Margins

I stood in the “Bits and Bobs” aisle holding a tub of peanut butter in my hand. A month into my fieldwork, I moved down the aisle, looking for noticeable patterns in the stalls' positioning. Having noted three “matters of concern” animating the field of veganism in Johannesburg (Latour, 2004:24), I first turned to the products, like I do in Chapters One and Two, to see how these were manifest in the aisle. Although I address “matters of concern” in the introduction of this thesis (Latour, 2004:24), in keeping with my use of the concept to speak to the differentiation between vegans and vegan praxes at the market, here they are seen extended and spatialised (*ibid*). The collections of networks, objects, and issues I noted people gather around (Latour, 2005:6), here come in the form of the poetics of the space, the aesthetic manifestations of the categories, which I also address in the introduction, that I found composing the aisle (Larkin, 2013:332).

While I use Larkin to argue that people who use and implement infrastructure imbue it with their politics, I use his concept of poetics here to focus on the meaning removed from the technical aspects of infrastructure and how this communicates larger narratives to people through the infrastructure's material aspects (*ibid*:335). I noted the “organic” produce, an array of wands, crystals, and bundled herbs for smudging. A sense of familiarity struck me as I passed some stalls, and a sense of discomfort when passing others. The woman, who ran the stall behind the plastic table where she displayed tubs of peanut butter, three types of vegan cake, and her own granola mix, reminded me of my mother, who also had a penchant for making granola.

The market positions itself, at the outset, as a place of exchange. From the consumer's perspective, it is a place to buy, and from the producer's perspective, it is a place to sell. An exchange of commodities. More than this, the markets act as spaces where vegans get together to indulge in commodities that cater specifically to them and to conserve their specific “matters of concern” (Latour, 2004:24), while subverting or succeeding another (Kay & Laberge, 2002). Despite the dominance of an animal advocacy “matter of concern”, a health-based “matter of concern” is evident at the markets (Latour, 2004:24). Mandla's stall and stalls in the “bits and

bobs” aisle that use labels that appeal to said “matter of concern” when describing their products (*ibid*). Moreover, the vendors often engaged in talks about health and health products, primarily the ones they sold, but only when asked about them.

This hesitance to assert their views, while being informed about both their concerns and the products they relate to, shows how their compliance with the public script of the aisle (Somers, 1994:619), and the market shapes both. Although Somers does not speak on the market, she allows me to understand the public narratives, the script informing people how to uphold narratives I note the market upheld(*ibid*). The public narrative of the market and thus the aisle is one of the “self-sacrificing vegan” or the “morally pure vegan”. While the public script enforced a praxis of silence in the “bits and bobs” aisle, as this would upset the aforementioned “self-sacrificing vegan” narrative, it shifted the focus to the vegan person without the ascetic element. The food court at the market’s core sold food not necessarily associated with health, and thus did not add to the “self-sacrificing” narrative. However, it did uphold the “morally pure vegan” narrative. This narrative connected to the space, arranging the court at the market’s centre, and appealing to the sizable the population at the food court positions it as both politically central to the markets’ continued functioning and, thus, the most trafficked space at the market (Low, 2014:34). Emphasising the interplay of infrastructural arrangement and political integration, positioning the food court here while considering its popularity afford it a platform to establish and maintain a hierarchy at the market and, due to its prominence, in Johannesburg’s vegan field. Despite competition between these concerns in the market, they are practised and made visible through vendors’ products, stalls and clothing.

In this chapter, I use the same unit of analysis as in Chapter Two. I focus on the material aspects of the market, noting the connections these have to the vendors' and marketgoers' “matters of concern” that manifest there. I follow these connections to speak to the social relations and the narratives that social actors adhere to, here, to show how the spatialised concerns point to the power dynamics structuring the field. The power dynamics lead me to question: who has the power to know in the vegan field of Johannesburg? Who has the power to seize, maintain, and repair control of veganism in Johannesburg?

## Mapping “Matters of Concern”

I noted that the vendors in the “Bits and Bobs” aisle appealed to customers through their “matters of concern”. Decorating products concerned with health are labelled that read: “100% organic”, “probiotic”, “naturally fermented”, “organically grown”, “100% alkaline”, or “made from fresh fruits and veggies”. Although the range of labels and products in the aisle resists categorisation, the poetics imbuing them offer precise categorisation, affording me a view of this space as a social arena. The “bits and bobs” label becomes devoid of the meaning that the categoriser imbues it with as the ‘uncategorisability’ of the aisle adds to the “enthusiasm of the imagination” that the poetics of infrastructure afford it (Harney & Moten, 2013:96; Larkin, 2013:332). Because of the “bits and bobs” aisle being “literally off center” (Harney & Moten, 2013:141), and thus on the margins of the market and the field, it requires governance, which its resistance to categorisation affords it. Betsie, whom I introduce as the market organiser in the first chapter, imbues the aisle in her organisation with what she understands to be the “offered up, and accumulated” interests of the vendors, the consumers, and of her own (*ibid*:55).

The woman at the stall next to me, before I moved to where I now stood holding a tub of organic peanut butter, noted, “Some of us do this for a living, about a quarter of us”. I considered this in terms of the market layout, with the popular food stalls in the food court and the less popular ones spread out along the “bits and bobs” aisle. “Most of us who do this stockpile our products at home. We restock whenever we go to a market.” I did not think this held for all of the vendors, as four of those I noted in the food court were either stalls with limited stock from their main outlets or restaurants. Some of the more popular vendors even provided stock for speciality stores and grocers. While I use Bourdieu’s concept of *capital* in Chapter One to speak about how vendors in the food court use nostalgia as a form of symbolic capital, here I use it to conceptualise how people make use of the assets recognised in the “social arena”. That is, the field in which people interact with one another, to subvert, conserve, or uplift the focus of their social actions (Kay & Laberge, 2002). With this in mind, their position in the food court afforded the vendors Social Capital, that is, social networks or individuals that can aid in accessing assets in the field. Because of the proximity to high marketgoer traffic, the vendors’ existing economic and social capital directly correlates with their positions in the food court.

The “bits and bobs” aisle, where vendors compete over their “matters of concern” and popularity to maintain their positions there, needs to be seen as a Bourdieusian field in its own right. That is because here, like the entirety of the market, vendors in the “bits and bobs” aisle rely on the markets for their income. Their reliance on the aisle meant relying on the social networks made at the markets to inform them of upcoming or new markets to visit. They thus needed to compete with, bolster their allies, or maintain their own positions through the legitimate capitals in the field. Here, social capital, the real or potential value a social actor attains through belonging to a network of relationships (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:119), became the primary means of doing positioning work in the “Bits and Bobs” social arena. Two months into my fieldwork period, I noted another vendor saying: “We need to trust each other. We have to move around a lot, and sometimes we need help to do that or to get to new markets, sometimes we need them [vendors] to vouch for us”. Knowing this, Betsie positioned the aisle between the food court, where fresh food is made and sold, and the car park, allowing customers to move through it on their way in and out of the market. As such, for the vendors in the “bits and bobs” aisle, visibility and product appeal are integral to having customers buy the products they have available.

As a person of such distinction in the aisle, I rely on Mandla, whom I introduced in the introduction, in this chapter because of the contradictions he poses and the courage with which he maintains his convictions. He became a valuable person to think with in this chapter. His vegan praxis is informed through a health-based “matter of concern” and is integral to understanding how he asserts himself at the market and, in particular, in the “bits and bobs” aisle (Latour, 2010:478). With his praxis centred on achieving health through veganism, he opposes the dominant discourse, centred in the food court, and the public narrative of veganism that the market upholds. Because the food court makes no explicit moves other than selling vegan food, maintaining an exclusion of “exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose” (Vegan Society, 2020), it informs public scripts to which vegans adhere, maintaining the public narrative of the “self-sacrificing vegan” or the “morally-pure vegan” in the market. Somers (1994:619) argues that these narratives preserve a sense of stability, the market's stability centred around the animal-advocacy-based concern that dominates the food court. Deriving this from the aforementioned definition, the narrative does not denote an exclusion of

health or environmental “matters of concern” (Latour, 2010:478), and as both overlap with this definition of veganism, the space does not cater specifically to them. Moreover, with a focus on excluding “exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose”, the food court acquires a subject to focus their practices on (Vegan Society, 2020); the “animals”. With the food court, as Betsie had previously declared, the “main attraction”, and its focus on “animals” as subject for their veganism, the food court espouses a non-human animal-centred approach to veganism.

Thus, while the market boasts terms like “organic”, selling moral experiences to consumers concerned with their impact on ‘Nature’ (Foster, 2005:10). However, the use value of the products is not confined to the moral positions of the “matters of concern” that I outline in the introduction. Instead, the products depend on the political economy of race and class established during colonialism and extending through apartheid, calling into question the very morality that the market projects. As with organic produce, the products’ affordability requires the cheapening of an aspect along the commodity chain. Here I extend Moore’s point, which I use in chapter one, to point out that the consistent over-supply of labour is integral to a capitalism that relies on the “free [gifts]” of Nature (Moore, 2017b:11). Nature was to be controlled, dominated, and taken from, by Society, its conceptual other, in terms of what was necessary for the accumulation of capital, consequently requiring a cheapening of the category (Moore, 2017a:18). This meant “forcibly [extracting] by empire, science and capital” cheap labour-power, cheap food, cheap energy, and cheap raw materials, what Moore calls the “four cheaps”, from Nature (2017b:19). Cheap labour, in this case manifests in the over-supply of labourers in the production of organic food, implies a cheapening of the lives of the people supplying their labour-power. Although I offer an example of labour dynamics in the USA, a similar labour supply structure exists in South Africa.

At the market level and, by extension, the field of veganism, Mandla offers overt resistance. He does so first through his dedication to a health-based veganism and, second, in his adherence to Dr Sebi’s alkaline diet, he resists the dominant approach to health-based veganism in the field. Finally, through his consistent practice of Nda spiritualism, Mandla resists colonial ontologies that perpetuate dichotomous worlding projects in which the world of the living is separated from

that of the ancestors. The first level of resistance opposes the dominance of an animal-advocacy-based concern at the market. On an economic level, his resistance serves to secure his livelihood. However, it also opens an opportunity for other health-concerned vegans to position their concerns in the field. The second level speaks to the validity of alternative approaches to health in the field. At the outset, referring to an approach to health as an ‘alternative’ implies that it is not at the centre, thus marginal. Moreover, the ‘alternative’ is more than an approach to health; Dr Sebi rooted his approach to healthfulness in African-American attempts to reclaim health within a (health-care) system that actively marginalised them, thereby fostering their lack of trust in said system (Martin *et al.*, 2023:544). More than this, however, Mandla’s final resistance encapsulates the former: resistance against a colonially informed health-care system, as well as a resistance against colonial ontologies that centre Eurocentric ways of knowing over others.

I noted his resistance through how he addresses health concerns, and by maintaining an “animal-free” product range. Through this, Mandla appeals to people who become vegan for the purpose of improving their own health. Often, these overlap with spirituality in the association of asceticism in the form of strict vegetarianism with spiritual purity (Donaldson, 2016:40). That is, the person’s veganism, abstaining from animal and animal-derived products, becomes spiritually motivated and maintained. In turn, this overlap of health and spirituality comes together in the diacritical inventories (Kopytoff, 1983:73), which I set up in Chapter One, composed of nostalgically derived aspects that form part of people’s identities, of people who follow “alternative”, “hippie” or “esoteric” lifestyles and thus consume within said aesthetic, which are present at the markets I visited. As an animal-advocacy “matter of concern” dominates the markets (Latour, 2010:478), particularly the food court, and gatherings, it informs the public scripts vegans follow to adhere to the public narrative of the “self-sacrificing vegan” or the “morally-pure vegan” (Somers, 1994:619). Despite their opposition to an animal advocacy approach, both the health-based and animal advocacy “matters of concern” maintain the exclusion of “exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose” as integral to their praxis (Vegan Society, 2020).

What I find through my interactions with vegans is that they, too, rely on alternative health to maintain their everyday health. During a vegan get-together at an Italian-style restaurant, Bob, a man in his mid-40s and of Middle Eastern descent, and Clive, a white man in his early 70s, discussed their consumption of dates, a sweet dried fruit. “You have to get the right dates. Those juicy Medjool dates are great! And they're so good for iron deficiency. They're very high in iron.” Clive noted. “Yes, but I can't have them, they're too high in sugar,” Bob noted. “I use figs,” Clive offered, “I used to ship them from the US, but the shipping is something like R7000 just to get them to me!”. “But you get the ones that don't use sulphur to dry them?” Bob asked, addressing the negative consequences of sulphur ingestion. “No, I got them from Tanzania, they're air-dried!” Clive noted, countering Bob's pointed inquisition. Note that both Bob and Clive approach their respective concerns, iron deficiency and diabetes, from an alternative perspective. The men understand both ailments through Western medical discourse; they perceive them through Western medical logic, whereas Bob and Clive address them through practical alternative means. This conversation indicates a reliance on Western medical discourse when speaking about health, but an alternative practical approach. Moreover, as both Mandla's presence at the market and the changing of eating habits to address a bodily ailment indicate, alternative approaches to health are practised.

## Practising Politics

As space and spatial arrangements are never transparent, political management is here translated into the twofold physical and political marginalisation of the “bits and bobs” aisle (Low, 2014:34). Like the food court, the aisle is a politicised space, but, where the vendors in the food court display their “matters of concern” through their food products, the vendors in the aisle did so using the aesthetics of their products, their stalls, and their clothing. The decorative aspects I note follow Larkin in noting that infrastructures, like the tables, tablecloths, and gazebos, “exist separate from their purely technical functioning” (2013:328). My focus fell on the labels in particular, in the aisle, they become “concrete semiotic and aesthetic” vehicles for the vendors’ “matters of concern” (*ibid.*; Latour, 2010:478). The labels afforded me an understanding of the different tactics at play in the market: the food court's vendors remained silent about their concerns, their products the manifestation of an animal-advocacy “matter of concern” through

the market's overt exclusion of animal-based products. As mentioned earlier, the guise of professionalism and collegiality kept the vendors in the "bits and bobs" aisle quiet, compelling them to show their concerns through the poetics of infrastructure, the capturing of fantasy and desire through semiotic vehicles like labels (Latour, 2010:478; Larkin, 2013:328). Thus, the vendors in the food court's silence stems from the market infrastructure that allows them to position their animal advocacy through their businesses. In contrast, the vendors in the "bits and bobs" aisle advocate a health-based concern through aesthetics such as labels, which double as marketing strategies that emphasise the purity of ingredients, and through their style of dress, or how products are displayed. These subtle strategies show that the aisle is itself a field of concerns rather than an uncategorisable mess.

In understanding each section of the market, its arrangement, and the people therein as political, it became clear to me that concerns were themselves spatialised through the arrangement of the market. The "bits and bobs" aisle was reserved primarily for vendors with a health-based concern, while Betsie reserved the food court for the animal-advocates. I noted how vendors in the aisle labelled their products using words like "Organic", in particular, a word associated with health, rooted in health-related "matters of concern" from the late 1960s and early 1970s in California, when the University of California, Santa Cruz, started an organic agriculture initiative (Guthman, 2003:499; Latour, 2010:478). After a group of "self-proclaimed hippie farmers" joined the initiative, it gained a distinctly counter-cultural flavour that lives on in the esoteric products collected on the tables near the produce (Guthman, 2003:499). Although initially a resistance against dominant agricultural practices, organic agriculture quickly became more popular and, as demand for organic produce increased, so too means of cheapening the commodity became necessary (*ibid*:501). "Cheap" calls on Moore's argument that Nature, as a political category, is cheapened as a means of extracting cheap labour-power, cheap food, cheap energy, and cheap raw materials, what he calls the "four cheaps" (2017b:19), by "empire, science and capital". For the organic farmers noted above, this meant a reliance on the "exploitation of racialised and marginalised immigrant workers" for some. Similarly, others used "labour contractors" who, through the system, kept wages low through the "structural over-supply" of labourers (Guthman, 2003:499).

The word littered the tables that I walked past in the “bits and bobs” aisle. “Organic peanut butter”, “made from organic fruits and veggies”, and “organic date bars” crowded the table of a couple in their late 40s. They positioned their stall on the corner of an intersection that stretched from the pastel fabric-swaddled archway that acted as the entry from the carpark into the market to the foodcourt. It was one of the busier stalls in the aisle. Both men wore loose T-shirts, one blue, the other a deep green, over rugged jeans and dusty boots; their style reminded me of the people from the farms populating the east of Mpumalanga that I grew up around. Next to them, a greying woman sold “100% organic hemp” clothing that I could not afford. The label on the patchwork jackets and billowing pants, like the ones Betsie often wore, captured the “fantasy” and “desire” of a health-based “matter of concern” poetically (Larkin, 2013:329), but also allowed her to embody her affiliation with said concern (Latour, 2010:478). The line of jackets and pants strung up on wire hangers formed a curtain along the edges of her gazebo, cutting off other “matters of concern” in the space (*ibid*).

In the food court, one of the popular stalls, Vegan Eatery, sells soy pieces that are labelled “vegan” and “MSG Free”. Vegan Meats offers different cuts of seitan ‘meat’ in plastic packaging that is labelled “100% vegan” and “Vegan and Vegetarian friendly. In this sense, the vendors in the food court follow in using the poetics of their stalls to display their politics, yet (Larkin, 2013:335), because the market orients itself towards veganism, their claim to “100% vegan” becomes one that reads “100% animal advocate friendly”. Although PlanT and Ve-riyani do not sell separate packages with their protein sources, as they are available to their customers in grocery stores and supermarkets, they offer a service that provides the consumer with an experience that they cannot easily replicate at home. Through their use of spices that show a particular diacritical inventory, they sell the idea of an “authentic” East Asian or South Asian dish, prepared at home and brought to the market to be sold ‘freshly made. Ve-riyani’s samosas are fried at the markets, while their Biryani is brought to and kept hot in large pots. This contrasts with the Vegan Eatery and Vegan Meats, both of which appeal to mainstream western cuisine--fried vegan fish and hamburgers, meats and sausages--relying more on the meatiness of their products. As such, they make their meat-like products before bringing them to the markets, then cook them quickly in either deep fryers or an open-flame grill (braai). They thus made use

of the same methods and the same infrastructures that “the meat companies”, as one of the participants called them, use to advertise and supply products to consumers.

Building on this, the foods prepared in the “food court” are vegan and thus plant-based; however, they are not necessarily healthy. In light of this, consider that both Vegan Eatery’s soy chunks and Vegan Meats’ seitan are highly processed foods. To produce soy chunks, the soybeans that form the chunks go through seven steps to become chunks, the first five of which consist of soy oil extraction, and the latter two consist of superheating and forming the chunks. For seitan, the process is slightly longer because additional steps are taken to separate the starch from the protein. This means that the wheat grain goes through nine steps before becoming seitan, from cleaning and conditioning, gristing, crushing, sifting, and adding minerals like iron and calcium, until the flour is ready for use. At this point, the flour is mixed into a dough, which is then washed until only the wheat gluten remains. The wheat gluten is then spiced and boiled so it can be cooked at a later point. Tofu, which PlanT uses, is slightly less processed, and lentils, which Ve-riyani uses in their Biryani, are the least processed ingredient used in the food court. The latter two, however, do not emphasise that their food is less processed; instead, they, like both Vegan Eatery and Vegan Meats, emphasise that their food is vegan.

Relying on the assumption that veganism and health are related, the stalls fail to note that plant-based ultra-processed foods (UPFs) have been linked to increased cardiovascular disease and, correspondingly, to higher mortality (Daas *et al.*, 2024). As such, the vendors at the markets do not advocate for a health-based veganism through the foods that they produce. Instead, in line with the valuation system I outline in the previous two chapters, as seen both in their labelling and in the relative disregard for health, they show a consideration for their products’ conformity to vegan standards, and thus an animal-advocacy-based vegan praxis. The markets thus position animal advocacy above all other “matters of concern” in the field (Latour, 2010:478), while appealing to health-based veganism.

Noticeably, none of the stores market their products as healthy; rather, what is evident is their declaration that it is “vegan”, “100% vegan”, or “Vegan and Vegetarian friendly”, except Vegan Eatery, who claim that their products are “MSG Free”. The overwhelming inclusion of items

claiming to be vegan and declared safe for vegan consumption indicates an equally overwhelming care for vegans, regardless of their reasons why. What this does is conserve the dominance of the dominant “matter of concern” in the vegan field (Latour, 2010:478). The inclusion of “MSG Free” indicates that the market is not without resistance. Due to the product’s association with weight gain, “metabolic disorders” and neurotoxicity (Niaz et al., 2018), monosodium glutamate (MSG) is avoided out of health concerns. However, this appeal to a health-based “matter of concern” takes on a performative dimension, as Vegan Eatery, while playing into this concern through its overt exclusion of MSG, uses deep-frying as its primary cooking method. As with MSG, deep frying food is associated with increased risk of heart failure, weight gain, and the development of type 2 diabetes (Gadiraju *et al.*, 2015:8428). A consideration for a health-based vegan praxis is thus evident in the “MSG free” labelling; however, as the market is primarily focused on the sale of vegan food products at the food court, the dominant concern in this space is not contested and “complacency is complicity”, showing a commitment to said matter of concern.

Mandla grounds his attempts at subverting the animal advocacy “matter of concern” that pervaded the food court in an appeal to the vegan consumer’s health and longevity (Latour, 2010:478). Through the products on his table, he addresses three health-related aspects that apply to vegans and also intersect with a health-based “matter of concern” (*ibid*). First, he appeals to energy, in terms of the calories the body needs to move, through carbohydrates. He appeals specifically to vegans who, due to the lack of animal-derived products in their diet, often lack calorie-dense foods and so struggle with sustained energy levels throughout the day. However, carbohydrates alone do not satiate enough to keep the consumer satisfied for prolonged periods (Langyan *et al.*, 2022:10); thus, the appeal of his second product, chickpea (chana) flour. Chickpea flour is a versatile source of protein and carbohydrates, allowing consumers to use it in creative ways. I, for example, use chickpea flour to make omelettes, ‘egg’ scrambles, frittatas, dhokla, and even gnocchi with sweet potato. In this versatility, the consumer can satisfy their need for protein, the lack thereof being an accusation often levelled at vegans, as well as keeping them satiated.

Mandla stands as an example of this, as he, when I approached his stall on my way through the “bits and bobs” aisle, stood behind it. A thin man, the only exposed parts of his arms were his wrists, his skin only peering through the slits of his copper bangles when he moved. Barely visible under the same copper bangles were single bracelets made of red and white beads, signifying a dedication to the thokoza spiritual tradition descending from Ndaau spiritual teachings. Deferring from his usual style, he wore his dreadlocks out; they hung long down his back, bringing variation to the red and black blocks of his flannel shirt. Around his neck and from his ears hung crystals, a band of copper encircling each, forming the loop that attached them to the string, and stainless-steel bands that kept them attached to his body. He set his stall up with a stretchy black tablecloth covering the white plastic table he used to display his products. He did this in a way that betrayed a highly structured approach to selling his products. Three reed mats formed a line across the table, the central mat a shade darker than the other two, creating a contrast in his display. On top of these, he had placed three wooden circles, horizontal cuts of tree trunks, thinly sliced into three-centimetre-thick boards that still had the bark covering the sides, giving the display a rustic authenticity absent from any of the other stalls. He packaged his products in thick cardboard packets with a transparent plastic film in the centre of each, allowing the products to be displayed while allowing visualisation. The display, showcasing rough-hewn wood and raw cardboard, establishes a direct connection between health and a fantasy of Nature (Larkin, 2013:329).

In this way he establishes a ‘logical’ connection between health and nature, or the anthropocentric logic suggesting that the closer humans are to Nature the better they are off, as opposed to the logic of modernity that suggests that human control over nature leads to ‘progress’ (Moore, 2017a:2). Playing into this Mandla displayed three sources of carbohydrate: teff, millet and sorghum, displaying them alone, emphasising their purity. Alongside them, he had positioned powdered chickpeas--chickpea or chana flour--and on the far side of the table, so that the reed mats were in between them and the three hexagonal jars of sea moss gel, his best-selling and most exotic product, which he had positioned there. Defying the theme of indefinability cast upon the “Bits and Bobs” aisle by its name, Mandla’s stall was arranged around a display centred on health, with the elements he used acting as the “semiotic vehicles”

(Larkin, 2013:328). His stall, structured and ordered, defied the public script of ‘defying categorisation’ imposed onto the “bits and bobs” aisle (Somers, 1994:619).

With sea moss, his third product, Mandla caters to vegans’ need for B12. He markets it as a promoter of energy, vitality, libido, mental health, and good skin, and he lists the vitamins and nutrients it contains in a bullet-point list on the side of the hexagonal jars that store the sea moss gel. These include zinc, magnesium, omega-3s, and vitamin B, and it carefully notes that it does not explicitly refer to vitamin B12. Despite his not listing it as present, he does not need to, as the possibility of the vitamin’s presence therein is enough. This ploy works because information about B12, such as the fact that bacteria living symbiotically with algae produce B12 (Kazamia *et al.*, 2012:1472). Sea moss, also known as red algae, is thus imbued with the possibility that it contains B12-producing bacteria and so can be a plant-based source of the vitamin. While algae does provide a sustainable source of B12, the amount thereof varies from source to source. For example, sources such as spirulina, a blue-green algae, contain approximately 15 micrograms of B12 per kilogram and chlorella, a deep-green algae, contains more than 30 micrograms of B12 per kilogram. In comparison, sea moss contains only about 0.4 micrograms per kilogram (Rastogi *et al.*, 2023:28). Due to their low B12 content, they make for an unreliable source of the vitamin. However, it is also a relatively new entry to B12 supplementation and is seen as exotic. Mandla inadvertently aids in this perception, when I asked him where he gets his sea moss from, he replied, “I get it from a Kenyan guy here in Jozi. He ships it down from Kenya, close to the coast, in big bags, and then I get it from him in bulk”. As such, both the partial validity of sea moss as a B12 carrier and its exotic nature aid its sales. However, key to this is the product’s viability to a customer base that cares about their health and about being vegan.

Mandla draws on two spaces to inform his approach to health. That is, his teachings on Ndau spirituality and the teachings of Alfredo Bowman (or Dr Sebi). With Ndau spirituality informing his knowledge of indigenous herbs and plants alongside the alkaline foods that Dr Sebi prescribed, Mandla offers an eclectic approach to health that is both vegan and alternative to the Western medical model. In drawing on the teachings of his ancestors, who show him “the plants in [his] dreams”, Mandla can identify and use herbs and plants as medicine. To learn more about these teachings and to commune with his predecessors, he needs to travel to eastern Mpumalanga

to study the plants and their uses with both current Ndaou herbalists and his ancestors. In this way, he taps into a line of medical teachings drawn from ancestral knowledge. The red and white beaded bracelets indicate to those who know Ndaou spirituality that he is a qualified herbalist, an *inyanga*, while his products associate him with Alfredo Bowman (Dr Sebi).

Throughout the conversation, Mandla resists the dominant form of health-concerned veganism at the market, whereas Ira's response maintains it. Ira, a frequent marketgoer whom I introduced in chapter two, emphasises the 'naturalness' of Mandla's alternative approach to health, calling it "natural stuff". Although he outright doubts the effectiveness of the "natural stuff", he also naturalises the approach. His naturalisation of approaches to health outside of the Western medical system is reminiscent of the logic used in the taxonomising of the Americas during European expansion. This period, also termed the second Nomos of the Earth (Schmitt, 2003), included the redefining of newly 'discovered' lands into European discourse. This categorisation, which I use in chapter one to make the same point, shaped the colonial hierarchy, derived from the "great chain of being", positioning entire worlds along it (Maldonado-Torres, 2014:651). As I have established, the system depends on "racialised, gendered and class orders" to produce and maintain an exploitable working class (Moore, 2017:3). At the time of expansion, the Spanish word *Naturales* was used as referent to the indigenous population, naturalising them and thus playing into the cartesian logic underpinning the taxonomisation of this period (Moore, 2017:18). Said logic served to separate Nature from Society, separating the naturalised from the socialised (*ibid*). More than this, the dichotomy offers a separation of "those who were not subject to civilizing instruction" from the 'civilized', their naturalisation trapping them "in a bestial state without language or reason" (Rollo, 2018:65). Naturalising an approach thus renders it within the realm of unreason, which poses the western medical system as reasonable and, thus, trustworthy.

In doing so, he does not offer consumers 'healthy' products; instead, he offers them the ability to attain healthfulness. He does this, as I have shown in the previous section, by appealing to vegans' energy, satiety, and need for B12. For the former two aspects, there are alternatives available that can do the same work, but for the latter, there is a clear gap. The gap here stems from the overlap of the reaction to stigma that considers vegans weak, unhealthy, and veganism untenable due to the lack of naturally occurring B12 in the diet. A B12 supplement is thus a

necessity for combating the latter stigma and for being seen as healthy in the field of veganism. It is fair to say, then, that vegans have an emotional connection to B12. Mandla caters to both the necessity of B12 to human bodies and the emotional connections that come with being a ‘proper’ vegan within the field. He thus plays on elements that consumers associate with “authenticity”, “locality, history, ‘culture’, and collective memories” (Foster, 2005:8). He plays into the feeling of health that the products are imbued with. It is this selling of an experience that obscures the network of labour and production that enables the consumer to obtain it (*ibid*:9). Yet it also allows Mandla to contest the marginalisation he experiences in the field of veganism in Johannesburg.

### The Poetics of Marginalisation

As I stated in the previous sections, vendors in the “Bits and Bobs” aisle assert themselves through the poetics of their products (Larkin, 2013:328), using labelling to display their health-based “matters of concern” (Latour, 2004:24). With some vendors defining their products using labels that include the aforementioned; “100% organic”, “probiotic”, “naturally fermented”, “organically grown”, “100% alkaline”, or “made from fresh fruits and veggies”. “Organic”, which I highlighted earlier as contentious due to the production of organic produce relying on exploitative labour to maintain relative affordability (Guthman, 2003:501), is a manifestation of modernity. That is, it offers an ‘ethically sourced’ product that ensures the consumers of said product are rendered guilt-free, another label used at the market, yet hides the dark side of that product, which, to echo chapter one, entails the exploitative relations required for its production; what Mignolo (2007:451), whom I draw on in my first chapter to understand decolonial theory alongside Maldonado-Torres (2014), labels “coloniality”. The complacency with which vegans, as consumers, partake in supposedly ethical products (and those not labelled as such) renders them complicit in the exploitative practices that are required in the production of these products.

The irony of this relationship, the supply of ‘ethically sourced’ ‘organic’ produce through exploitative labour, encapsulates the relationships at the market. In the previous chapters, I set the market as an apparently diverse space that packages the politically charged diacritics of the

space into depoliticised products; in doing so, the market becomes a reiteration of the colonial worlding projects that inform its logic and the value system applied there. The market and its valuation system, derived from colonial worlding projects and thus reinforcing them, is further cemented in colonial logic through the infrastructure on which the market depends. So far, I have shown how the market establishes a system of valuation which extends through the infrastructure on which the field of veganism in Johannesburg depends. I show how this logic, the “coloniality of power”, extends into “economic and political” power, in the form of vendors and infrastructure, and into the “coloniality of knowledge and being” (Mignolo, 2007:451).

As with organic produce, products’ affordability requires the cheapening of an aspect along the commodity’s chain of production. The consistent over-supply of labour is integral to a capitalism that relies on the “free [gifts]” of Nature (Moore, 2017b:11). Nature was to be controlled, dominated, and taken from, by Society, its conceptual other, in terms of what was necessary for the accumulation of capital, consequently requiring a cheapening of the category (Moore, 2017a:18). This meant “forcibly [extracting] by empire, science and capital” cheap labour-power, cheap food, cheap energy, and cheap raw materials, what Moore calls the “four cheaps”, from Nature (2017b:19). Cheap labour, in this case, continues to manifest in the over-supply of labourers in the production of organic food, which implies a cheapening of the lives of the people supplying their labour-power. However, I offer an example of labour dynamics in the USA, similar to necropolitical relationships that structure labour supply, the infrastructural arrangement, and, stemming from Moore’s argument linking racialised, gendered, and naturalised groups to Nature, ‘legitimate’ knowledge in South Africa.

Vendors like Mandla, whose knowledge has the potential to destabilise the hierarchy at the market—in the fashion of what Harney and Moten (2020:10) refer to as the “subversive intellectual”—are seen as “unprofessional, uncollegial, passionate and disloyal”, leading to their being put in the “bits and bobs” aisle where they are subject to social restrictions. Mandla, who was distinct because of his educational capital, in his knowledge of herbs and an alkaline lifestyle, needed to restrain how he dressed, spoke, and otherwise interacted with either vendors or consumers. He did so to adhere to the public script, the narrative positions that vendors had to fulfil to maintain the public script of indefinability Betsie imposed on the aisle (Somers,

1994:618). Usually, he dressed in thrifted clothing, with each piece carefully curated to afford him a distinguished air, bronze jewellery that glittered when sunlight caught it, and he kept his afro combed out. Achieving the space between too forgettable and too memorable, required him to either dull down or brighten up the stall and himself. His appearance changed over the course of my fieldwork from a more reserved look, where he wore duller colours and kept his hair covered, to the more expressive look I describe above. He and the other vendors maintained personae that both appealed to their particular “matters of concern” and to the public script I refer to (Latour, 2010:478). Taking Low’s argument that people are “mobile spatial [fields]” to heart (2014:35), I argue that people display their politics through their clothing and adornments, which allows me to claim that vendors in the “bits and bobs” aisle embody their politics through these personas.

Thus, Mandla and the other vendors in the “bits and bobs” aisle needed to remain professional and collegial to one another and the market staff, while maintaining their loyalty to the market through an adherence to the imposed public script (Somers, 1994:618). In adhering to the public script, he played down his passion for the products, and more so, the logic he followed in sourcing them. This logic, which I discuss later in this chapter, relates directly to his concern for health. His passion, as an extension of his concern for (personal) health, albeit muted, bled into his interactions. However, he made a point of withdrawing from interactions that led to debates on his concern for health.

Now, the focus on health through veganism implies the positioning of the practitioner alongside the subject of the definition of veganism: “animals” (Vegan Society, 2020). Vegans who are concerned with non-human animal advocacy, which they view as the subject of the definition, find that this definition deviates from it. That is, health-based veganism implies an anti-speciesist approach in which the practitioner views themselves as part of a whole that includes non-human animals, and they serve as a node where connections to the whole meet. An animal-advocacy-focused veganism implies the imposition of a hierarchy wherein the practitioners save the non-human animals from the evils of Society. This tale of “humans ‘overwhelming the great forces of nature’” ((Steffen, Crutzen, & McNeill 2007), cited in Moore, 2017a:2), requires the employment of a dichotomy between Nature and Society, the logic of

which Moore calls “Green Arithmetic” (*ibid*). This oversimplified reiteration of colonial logics—inserting indigenous people into the Nature category justifies controlling them in the same fashion that the category itself is controlled (*ibid*:7)—is all too common in environmentalist discourse where society, ‘some’ humans, is viewed first as separate from Nature and second fatefully connected to it (*ibid*:4). Thus a dogmatic adherence to this interpretation of the definition is seen in moments when vegan praxes are made explicit, vulnerable, and thus malleable. However, in the food court, where there is no deviation from an animal-focused praxis, an animal advocacy “matter of concern” is evident through the subject of praxes espoused in the space.

A dogmatic focus on the “dietary terms” denoting the removal of “derived wholly or partly from animals” (Vegan Society, 2022) is manifest in the absence of health or environmentally focused marketing, which instead relies on the nostalgia their food evokes in consumers. The reliance on vegan products as ethical care itself is a contradiction, as the focus on the commodity is disconnected from the global value chains that produce them. The tunnel-vision-like focus on the commodity as ethical invisibilises the labour that produces it, conforming to the logic of the immediacy of the markets and gatherings.

The difficulty for Mandla is two-fold. Mandla encounters resistance to his approach to veganism and health in the field. At face value, this is a significant hurdle for him to push against; however, his second hurdle is commodification. He must compromise his refusal to his products’ sales; however, he must also rely on exploitative labour practices to source and supply them. He also needs to exotify his products, capitalising on informal networks to deliver a more ‘authentic’ product to his customers. In doing this, he reinforces the colonial logics, allowing him to exoticise the products. This reliance on capitalism, through the commodification of his products, compromises his refusal to align with the field's animal-advocacy-based concern and the colonial logics that exclude him and his beliefs.

The resistance that Mandla experiences leads me to the point of my argument: that the ‘naturalisation’ of alternative approaches to health and the people that practice it are rooted in the “coloniality of being” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007:245). This categorisation and consequent

inferiorisation is evident in the field of veganism in Johannesburg and perpetuates a hierarchy of class and race that mirrors the “coloniality of being” (*ibid*). However, because of the vast reaches of capitalism as a mode of “organising nature”, the markets, get-togethers, meetings, fast food chains, “matters of concern” (Latour, 2010:478), and the beings living in each, cannot escape. In this sense, the field of veganism in Johannesburg is as much a victim, and an enforcer, of structural and infrastructural violence as the city which it calls home (Farmer, 1996:263; Rodgers & O’Neill, 2012:405). Despite the historic constraints on the agency to be and practice alternative means of healthfulness, Mandla maintains his practice and resists through his appeal to vegans’ health-based concerns.

The irony here is that, referring back to the vignette in which I showcase an interaction at a get-together, Mandla, Clive and Bob are at odds over their “matter of concern” (Latour, 2010:478). Mandla, as I have established, maintains a health-based concern, while Clive and Bob follow an animal-advocacy-focused concern. Despite their opposition in the field of veganism, they rely on the same structure to obtain a commodity imbued with a similar idea of health. However, Clive and Bob differ from Mandla in that people do not frequently question their ‘alternative’ approaches to health. The two men do not oppose the dominant discourse on veganism, nor do they oppose Western medical knowledge. In fact, both men rely on their relative hierarchical positioning to engage in ‘alternative’ approaches to health, capitalising on networks of rare or exotic commodities to achieve health. In contrast, Mandla is explicit in his support of a health-based “matter of concern” which he draws from ancestral knowledges in conjunction with a liberation-theology-inspired health approach to inform his approach to health (*ibid*). His significant deviation from Clive and Bob is his resistance to the field and, particularly, to its underlying knowledge politics.

## Tracing Tensions

The intersecting physical and political marginalisation that Mandla and the other health-based vegans experience at the market is evident outside the space. At gatherings, I found that vegans associated with the former concern undergo rituals in which their peers bring their praxes into line with those of the dominant concern. Thus, despite his conviction in a health-based veganism,

Mandla has no choice but to ground his practice in the dominant discourse of veganism to maintain a position at the market. He must, thus, also compromise on his conviction to a health-based “matter of concern” to maintain his position in the market (Latour, 2010:478). He takes on the role of negotiator rather than hero. He depends on being at the markets; thus, his refusal of the politics of an animal-advocacy-based concern allows him to be politically committed to a health-based concern, but it also entangles him in the very politics he refuses.

During the tour she gave me of the market upon my arrival, Betsie, the market’s organiser, made it clear to me that to suit the customers’ needs, she needed to ensure that the vendors here were more visible, in relation to the food court. The food court, being the “main attraction”, she gave the centre of the market as its products maintained a steady stream of returning marketgoers. She thus positioned the “Bits and Bobs” aisle at the boundary between the market and the car park, so customers could see the products as they entered the market and collect them on their way out. In doing this the aisle is, first, spatially marginalised, and, second, is maintained as an “uncategorisable” space, as per its name, through the maintenance of a public script (Somers, 1994), a narrative convention of the space, that silences vendors’ “matters of concern” through demands of professionalism and collegiality (Latour, 2004:24). One vendor here, an older coloured man sporting an aging sports jacket and a pair of black dress pants, told me that “he would disappear” here in the corner of the aisle as I walked past his stall. Although her positioning of the aisle displayed the consumerist logic of the market, it also showed care for the vendors who depended on selling their products to return to the market.

In this case, centring an animal-advocacy-based concern means marginalising a health-based concern. As the dominant discourse already does this, it implies a continuation of the field as it stands. A continuation of which also suggests the field’s continued reliance on colonial and apartheid structures and infrastructures. These, as I have stated, (re)enforce colonial structures that reroute power, both political and economic (Mignolo, 2007:451), to those who already have it, either through historical processes or through more recent accrual. To maintain this process of capital accumulation (“economic and political” (*ibid*)), the powerful require cheap labour (Moore, 2017:7), which they extract once they implement a system of subjugation that sorts people into labourers and users of that labour. To echo the argument I draw from Mbembe in the

first chapter, during apartheid this manifested in policies like the Group Areas act (1950) and the Separate Amenities act (1953), in which the state engineered the “spatial arrangement” of South Africa in ways that positioned people of colour “continually outside the normal state of law” segregating, subjugating, and suffocating the living and moving practices of South Africans (2003:12-13).

Through the imposition of her own categorisation, even as indefinable, and despite the vendors' earlier protestations, she imposes a public script, and with that a silence (Somers, 1994:619), onto the aisle. The public script here entails a conformity to the aesthetics of the aisle, and, through the apparent lack of conversation about or opposing any one of the “matters of concern” in the aisle, a silence (*ibid*). Her categorisation silences the vendors' categorisations as she “speak[s] *for, on behalf of*”, silencing because her categorisations speak over others “*because [she is] speaking*” (Mason, 2020:164). The script is one of conformity to the silence, a subjugation of any “matter of concern” that would oppose the animal-advocacy concern emanating from the food court.

This compromise, relating to Mandla's resistance to epistemic suppression and the field's approach to care, intersects at the “bits and bobs” aisle where the field's hegemony crumbles and the resisters emerge. The “bits and bobs” aisle thus has the potential to offer refuge against the suppression of the field, resist its hegemony over both concerns and economy, and through this, afford an entry point from which worlds otherwise can arise. In this way, the more-than-material implications of the structures that the field relies on and which implicates me. In the chapter that follows I show how the “coloniality of being” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007:245), allows for a cheapening of lives (Moore, 2017:8). I consider my own position in relation to the social actors in the field, how my life as an educated white man is afforded more value than my “racialised, gendered, and classed” counterparts (Moore, 2017:3). Caught between the care I can administer because of the markets and the compromise of that care, focussed on the cheapening of non-human animal lives, my position affords me a critical perspective on the structural and infrastructural violence that compromises said care. Although I move away from the market now, it still forms the hub where a reliance on “cheap food”, in turn, relies on “cheap raw materials”, all of which form part of the same living web of capitalism (Moore, 2017:18). The cheapening of

labour power, through the hierarchies of coloniality (Mignolo, 2007), have farther reaching effects in terms of the inferiorisation of indigenous knowledge systems, as I show in this chapter. At this point in the chapter, I am left with questions such as: where is the violence of the system? How are vegans connected to the violence of the system? How do vegans care if the system they rely on is violent?

The manifestation of the field's valuation system, imbued with the colonial logic stemming from its reliance on modernity's order (Moore, 2017:3), intersects with people like Mandla, who are black health-based vegans. While he may be subjected to both the structural and infrastructural violence that both the country and the city impose, he faces resistance against his vegan praxis in the field of veganism. He thus faces two modes of resistance to his presence at the market, albeit not from the market itself: the aforementioned violence and the ideological resistance of his praxis. On an analytic level, the violence Mandla experiences can be attributed to coloniality, as the dark side of modernity (Mignolo, 2007), which requires a system of violence to maintain the "racialised, gendered and class orders" that enable the modes of extraction and control it uses to sustain consistent capital accumulation (Moore, 2017:3; Mignolo, 2007:451). This can be understood as the "coloniality of power" (*ibid*), which explains why there are so few black vendors and consumers at the markets and get-togethers. The resistance to his "matter of concern" remains shrouded as the field relies on capitalist structures of capital accumulation regardless of vegans' concerns (Latour, 2004:24). Regardless of why this happens, he is met with resistance that he subverts through his conversion of cultural capital into economic capital (Swartz, 1997:24). His compromise is symptomatic of a larger epistemic marginalisation within the field of veganism.

The reason for Mandla's compromise manifests in the field through its maintenance of an animal-advocacy-based approach to veganism, which marginalises vegans with a health-based approach. At the market, this is seen through the spatial exclusion of health-based vegans from the centre of the field, the food court. This is reinforced through the provision of power in the form of both electricity and optimal positioning for the vendors. This power, in turn, manifests in the economic exclusion of health-based vendors from the centre. Finally, the food court, at the centre of both field and market, makes use of exploitative labour practices that position

particularly black women as the doers of domestic labour at the market. The locus of economic activity at the market, through the use of black women as the primary practitioners of labour and its reliance on nostalgic diacritical inventories, then becomes the locus of coloniality at the market. By positioning the “Bits and Bobs” aisle as a ‘non-category’ at the market, the aisle becomes the space where the organisation of the market as an ethical and inclusive space begins to unravel.

The unravelling of the myth of an inclusive veganism in the field stems from the organisation of the field itself. This irony here is that although the field inadvertently contributes to its own unravelling, this is common to all resistance in the field. Although Mandla resists the dominant concern in the market, he does so using the same methods as the actors supporting it. More than this, he resists using the same system of exploitation and oppression that extracts labour from the “racialised, gendered and class orders” that includes him in (Moore, 2017:3). Yet, he is successful in his resistance as he manages to subvert the dominant concern from within the “bits and bobs” aisle. That is, within the marginalised space at the market. His resistance becomes one that embraces the messiness and ambiguity of his position at the market and the aisle. His position here is precarious; should he make too much noise, he may be removed from the market. This precarity speaks to the maintenance tactics of actors supporting the dominant concern, as well as to the precarity of black people and people of colour in the field. This is due to the resistance they face from structural and infrastructural violence (Farmer, 1996:263; Rodgers & O’Neill, 2012:405), which, in turn, stems from the logic of coloniality in the form of the “coloniality of power” and the associated “coloniality of being” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007:451). Both these concepts pertain to the material exclusion, marginalisation, and exploitation of the global south, yet, in this chapter, I add an exclusion of knowledge originating in the global south from legitimacy. I noted this in the field’s hypocritical adherence to ‘alternative’ approaches to health, but not when they stem from knowledge systems outside the Western doxa, such as Mandla’s reliance on ancestral practices.

Another manifestation of this contradiction in the field is the reliance on the cheap labour of primarily black women who use the aforementioned public transport to travel, more than likely from a home in a Group Areas Act-designated area, to the markets. To put this more

theoretically, the field relies on cheap labour-power, thus depending on the “appropriation of unpaid work/energy delivered by ‘women, nature, and colonies’(Mies)” (Moore, 2017:1). Yet, this is done, without consideration, to further veganism in Johannesburg, specifically an animal-advocacy focussed veganism over the other “matters of concern” that compose the field (Latour, 2004:24). This is done through the markets and get-togethers, both of which rely on commodity exchange to provide consumers with a nostalgic sense of commensality, a sense of validity, and to maintain narrative control over the dominant discourse on veganism. The field thus positions itself through the colonial logics of the capitalist system, reinforcing itself within the “racialised, gendered and class orders” modernity relies on (Moore, 2017:3).

For South Africa, the consistent supply of cheap food, fuel, and natural resources were ensured by a political economy of race and class v a system of ‘bantustans’ (Magubane, 1973:1703) that created labour reserves and a steady pool of superexploitable (Bond, 2020:2) black South Africans in racially segregated urban ‘townships’ (Mbembe, 2003:26). From here “[extracting] as much labour at as little cost as possible” was normalised and thus became the *modus operandi* for labour provision in the country ((Schwartz, 1970:317) cited in Moore, 2017a:23). The labour dynamics arising from this were also normalised as a means of justifying these extractive praxes, the continuation of which is present at the market in terms of both the invisibilised labour of the women working in the back of stalls in the food court and in the invisibilised labour imbued in the produce sold across the markets. Thus, while the market boasts terms like “organic”, selling moral experiences to consumers concerned with their impact on ‘Nature’ (Foster, 2005:10). However, the use value of the products is not confined to the moral positions of the “matters of concern” that I outline in the introduction. Instead, the products depend on the political economy of race and class established during colonialism and extending through apartheid, calling into question the very morality that the market projects. This meant that black people were restricted to, and offered employment in, industrial sectors far from their ‘designated’ areas. The apartheid government legally enacted and physically manifested itself in infrastructural elements such as “fast bypass roads” (Mbembe, 2003:28), housing (Nord, 2022:73), and water provision (Bulled, 2015). Contemporary labour and housing remain demographically similar to those in both the colonial and apartheid eras. As such, the same constraints on agency are exacted through the perpetuation of “historically given...process and forces” (Farmer, 1996:263).

The constraints exacted through the “historically given” infrastructures, the parts of spaces that allow for their “mechanical functioning” (Rodgers & O’Neill, 2012:405), the planning that goes into them, and the reasoning that informs their implementation continue. Note how the Moroka bypass still separates Soweto, historically a township for the black population working in the industrial area of Johannesburg, and separates the suburb from the rest of Johannesburg (Czegledi, 2004:66). Or how the city facilitates car traffic, while most of the black population, who are working class, cannot necessarily afford a car, and thus rely on danger-filled public transport (Eagle & Kwele, 2021:NP8036). Leading the majority of the working class through a gauntlet of violent possibilities afforded them through the “consequences of the smooth functioning of [the city’s] economic and political systems” (Zizek, 2008: 2). This poses a contradiction in the field. Although the ethos of the field, both markets and gatherings, suggests inclusivity, the above paragraphs show how, through a reliance on colonial and apartheid systems, the field is, in actuality, skewed toward catering to a white, middle-class consumer base.

As I walked through the market from the “bits and bobs” aisle reflecting on the politics of the spatial arrangement (Low, 2014:34), I considered myself caught between the subtlety of the nostalgic reproductions of boerewors and an animal-advocacy “matter of concern” in the food court and the overt claiming of a health-based “matter of concern” in the “bits and bobs” aisle (Latour, 2010:478).

Reflecting on my suspension between the dogmatic adherence to a nostalgic dominant discourse, seen manifest in the vegan boerewors and the phish and chips, aligning with the public script, one where the narrative of veganism is not consuming animal-derived products, of the market (Somers, 1994:619), and my ethical commitment to a decolonial vegan praxis, I noted how entangled my ontological narrative (*ibid*:618), my identity, was with the market. My presence as a consumer meant that I supported, at least economically, the dominant discourse and the structures it relied on. This creates a moral contradiction between care for animal advocacy and care for the invisibilised labour done to maintain the market over the space. At the same time, my role as a researcher afforded me an ethical commitment to expose the structures to address the markets' reliance on them. The ambiguity I was cast in because of my negotiation between the

two positions shapes this chapter. Stemming from this, my focus is on how the three “matters of concern”- animal-advocacy, health, and environmentalism- that I noticed in the marketspace, shape the field of veganism in Johannesburg. The use value of the products sold here, being imbued with the nostalgia playing on Afrikaner nationalist and white diacritics, which I show in the first and second chapters, served to create both an animal-advocacy and white consumer base. Having noted that the spatial arrangements of the market relate, maybe not overtly, to the politics of the vendors, what their concerns are, and how they leverage these.

The market's spatial positioning manifests in Mandla's first two products, that is the grains and the protein, where he converts his own cultural capital, in the form of his education in herbalism and the teachings of Alfredo Bowman, into economic capital (Swartz, 1997:24). Yet, at the market where Western medical discourse is the standard measure for all health related concerns, Mandla's use of cultural capital based in the aforementioned health related fields opposes the standard. This, his positioning of herbal and alkaline based health as legitimate, is a contestation against the market's, and the field's, doxa and thus an attempt at attaining recognition in the field (*ibid*:43). Mandla thus gains symbolic capital, and economic capital, through this contestation in that his legitimization of herbal and alkaline medicine converts the self-interest of the consumer into a disinterest in the Western medical discourse that dominates the market (*ibid*). In so doing, he garners symbolic capital and uses it, along with the charisma he gains, to convert the consumer's self-interest, to legitimise the health-related knowledge he imparts.

However, Ira's resistance, in doubting the effectiveness of natural medicine, serves to maintain the dominance of Eurocentric approaches to health. He resists the presence of ‘alternative’ health approaches at the markets while Western medical approaches dominate the field. For example, at the largest plant-based and vegan event in South Africa, held biannually in Cape Town and then in Johannesburg, free iron level tests are available. The necessity for this stems from the stereotypical notion that vegans have low levels of iron, a point levelled at vegans where health claims are concerned. Although it is more the absence of ‘alternative’ medical practices and the presence of Western medical discourse present at vegan events that delegitimise ‘alternatives’, Ira's resistance thus implies a reliance on the Western medical system. Although it is neither political nor based on any group's social practices, this system is rooted in the idea of progress

(Macleod, 2022:1-2). Progress, in this sense, is progress for Society despite Nature. That is, progress, “[s]ecuring resource extraction, trade, commerce, and governance”, is only achievable through the continued “pacification” of Nature through “coerced education and assimilation” (Rollo, 2018:62). Naturalisation, here, is thus inferiorisation.

This reproduction of the “coloniality of being” and the “coloniality of power” is manifest through the vendors’ “matters of concern”, aiding in their positioning in the market (Maldonado-Torres, 2007:245; Mignolo, 2007:451). Moreover, this reflects the spatial engineering that both Magubane (1973) and Bond (2020) point to in their analyses of the cheap labour derived from apartheid-era bantustans. The dominance of the animal-advocacy “matter of concern” at the markets thus stems not from its legitimacy but from its position and its role in upholding the public narrative of veganism. Where vendors with a health-based “matters of concern”, like Mandla, were positioned, on the periphery of the market, revealing the limits of its inclusivity. This is also indicative of necropolitical infrastructures imposed through the aforementioned apartheid-era bantustans, which I understand through Moore’s (2017) four cheaps and Larkin’s (2013) poetics of infrastructure. This allows me to see how the markets’ commodities are neither ‘ethical’ nor ‘organic’ as they rely on the same necropolitical structures that supply cheap labour and offer vendors like Mandla resistance. The resistance he faces at the market and in the aisle, which he resists, is based on both the physical and “matters of concern”. However, it remains rooted in the commodity, bringing with it the baggage it drags from the exploitative and extractive logics of coloniality. He thus resists the dominance of the animal-advocacy concern but reinforces the coloniality that excludes him and his beliefs. In the following chapter, I show how this extends to the vegans buying vegan products, connecting them to the very structures they struggle against.

In this chapter, I argue that the “Bits and Bobs” aisle in the Free-Love vegan Market is not unorganised or indefinable but a politically and spatially marginalised zone reflecting the broader hierarchy of the vegan field of Johannesburg. I draw on Bourdieu’s concept of capital, Latour’s “matters of concern” and Larkin’s “poetics of infrastructure to analyse how vendors like Mandla—who practise a health-based veganism—are relegated to the periphery while the food court’s animal advocacy focus is centred. I demonstrate how this spatial ordering is founded on

colonial logics where health-based practices rooted in non-Western knowledge are “naturalised and cheapened, while the market’s ethical claims depend on black women’s cheap labour. In doing this, I demonstrate how the market’s apparent diversity obscures its complicity with structures of coloniality that render alternative vegan practices possible as long as they remain on the peripheries.

## Chapter 4: Global Labour and Local Nostalgias

“I’m worried my products will get damaged,” one vendor told me, her voice straining to hide her anxiety. “How come? The sun’s not out,” I noted. “When it does, there’s no coming back, the peanut butter can get rancid, and the brownies will get sweaty,” she noted as she combed her greying blonde hair behind her ear inattentively, and she hurried to move them under the table. In the third month of my fieldwork, the August winds drove away both customers and vendors. Despite the wind, a rugby match was taking place at the Lion’s pub, where tens of spectators filled the benches encircling the pub and the tables inside. Betsie, whom I introduced in Chapter One as the market organiser, noted that the “bits and bobs” aisle was exposed to the high winds, advising the vendors there to relocate to the food court, where they could huddle together around the solid main structure, offering the food court some shelter from the wind. The rugby match reminded me of my hometown in the far east of Mpumalanga, where the smell of boerewors drifted across the people gathered around Auntie Elizma’s gazebo, waiting to buy one of the rolls while they watched the game. The smell of boerewors is a crucial part of my recollection of this event. Its pervasiveness in these stories relates to the nostalgia I feel for my childhood, similar to the nostalgia that the smell of boerewors evokes in the other people around the gazebo. Foods, such as boerewors, allow us to affiliate with and distance ourselves from people, whether based on race, class, gender, or ability, depending on the context in which they appear (*ibid*). These nostalgic recollections collectively contribute to public narratives associated with institutions such as these social gatherings focused on a rugby match (Somers, 1994: 619). Food adds to the contextual depth of the narratives we use to situate ourselves in the relations we engage in. The smell of boerewors at the pub, the markets, and gatherings, punctuates, accentuates, and emphasises these narratives (Twiss, 2007: 1).

“We’ll have to invest in a new one with the profits from this market,” Sarah, the older Ngwane sister, noted. The sisters were usually positioned in the “Bits and Bobs” aisle, as I noted in the tour I included in the introduction. “We’ll have to use all the profit from today to get one,” she said through silent tears. Their gazebo had blown away, swept into the air as they ran after it, shouting to anyone nearby to help them collect it. The approximately R2000 this would cost

them, added to the R350 for a place at the market, and the cost of transport to and from the market for both them and their products. I was one of the people running after the blown-away gazebo, noting how the wind forced the market to rearrange. I sat down at one of the tables that remained at the centre of the food court and watched as marketgoers moved in huddled pairs underneath the heavy jackets they wore, rendering them penguin-like as they took shelter. I overheard one of the few marketgoers saying, “The market is just so expensive.” She noted to her partner, “We can’t afford to buy anything else.” The bleached tote bag slung over her shoulder had the green leaves of freshly harvested onions extending out. They looked like the Ngwane sisters' organic produce. The sisters were not as popular as the vendors in the food court, with marketgoers rarely crowding their stall, possibly because they provide organic ingredients rather than meals, like the boerewors I smelled where I sat.

When I foreground the smell of boerewors pervading the market in Chapter One, I demonstrate how markets rely on staple foods in white, English, and Afrikaans foodways, such as boerewors, fish and chips, and curry and rice. These foods are historically and generationally situated, forming part of their diacritical inventories (Kopytoff, 1983:73). The proliferation of ‘white’ diacritics normalises them in that space and thus affords a sense of belonging to people who associate with these nostalgic diacritics. Centring these diacritics marginalises others, implying their expendability. Considering the markets and the rest of the vegan field through Moore's concept of “four cheaps”, which he suggests organises capitalism (2017), allows me to note the inclusions to “cheapness” whether as labour, food, energy, or raw material (2017b: 19). This relies on the devaluation of both human and non-human life and is manifest at the market in the “cheap” labour from the exploitable black women working behind stalls and in the tofu, lentils, and seitan that those stalls sell. Reducing people of colour to “bare life” through a necropolitical structure (Mbembe, 2003) cheapens the labour they perform systemically. The proteins travel along global value chains that obscure the labour that processes them, the fuel that transports them, and the ecologies that contain them (*ibid*).

While I focus on how infrastructure shapes the hierarchy of power in the market in Chapter Two, it is only one in the “series of stages” necessary to produce a “product or service” (Antras, 2020: 553). Value, like the appeal to nostalgic diacritics, is added to these products as resources move

through the “stages of production” (*ibid*: 560). As I have mentioned in Chapter One, the proteins are veganised and made into versions of boerewors, fish and chips, biryani, and curry. The process of veganisation replaces an animal-derived protein with one free of violence while maintaining the sense of belonging and familiarity vegans had when eating the replaced protein. To form the proteins into a simulacrum of the animal protein, which it is an abstraction of, they need to be plastic or malleable. In this chapter, I address these, what I term, plastic proteins. This term describes proteins with qualities like flavour-loading capacity and texture, making them ideal meat analogues. I use Dumit's (2014) method of implosion to follow these simulacra along the global value chains they travel to reach the field and Johannesburg, where they position their producers and consumers alike.

## Navigating Nostalgia

On a micro-level, the simulacra, such as the boerewors, phish and chips, biryani, and tofu curry, at the market are manifestations of the ways of living and eating present in Johannesburg. Boerewors, phish and chips, biryani, and tofu curry are integral elements in the events I use to understand who I am and the people who comprise the city are. They form part of our ontological narratives (Somers, 1994: 618); a collection of socially situated and relational elements that embeds our identities in both space and time. However, despite the market offering space for these foods, Asian and South Asian foods are marginal compared to those explicitly connected to English and Afrikaans heritage. First, in their positioning along the sides of the food court, and second, in their popularity, although this speaks more to the preferences of the people who compose the markets. Although this marginalisation is indicative of the (lack of) diversity in the space, it also further marginalises the people doing the labour there.

The dominant discourse, established in Chapter One as focused on animal advocacy, shapes the field of veganism in Johannesburg's public narrative. In this regard, vegans' sense of belonging needs to align with the dominant discourse in the field, or they risk losing legitimacy as Mandla does when he uses an ancestral framework to inform his approach to health. The plastic proteins used in the field must align with the dominant discourse. The market uses proteins that do not directly exploit non-human animals, aligning with the dominant discourse. However, dogmatic

adherence to the dominant discourse marginalises other exploitative relations composing the proteins. Thus, jokes with the punchline focused on workers' exploitation--"they're not animals"--are part of what allows for the continued dominance of this discourse. Plastic proteins thus hold the promise of a world otherwise. This is because they allow the vegans consuming them to experience a sense of "what once was", a nostalgic reimagining of life before veganism, while also removing them from the harm inherent in animal-derived foods from 'before'. Although plastic proteins can capture the flavour, smells, texture, and experience of existing non-vegan foods, they are part of the exploitative systems that produce non-vegan food.

Much like the vegan markets and get-togethers, simulacra are composed of a multitude of historically situated ingredients. As I note in Chapter One, the South African Department of Health only legally defined Boerewors in 1990, determining the flavourings, ratios, and types of meat used to make boerewors. Because it was defined so recently, a diverse variety of boerewors recipes had spread throughout the country prior to 1990. The legislation gave little consideration to the flavours of the meats composing Boerewors, as the defining ingredients remained relatively consistent across these variations. Instead, the definition focused on spices and extenders, such as starch or flour, maintaining that the core aspects of the sausage rested on the understanding of sausages as a combination of minced animal protein packaged in a casing. With my focus on plastic proteins, the simulacra require proteins that can incorporate spices in the same fashion as animal-based proteins. As markets and gatherings depend on attracting consumers, they showcase proteins that successfully mimic the taste, texture, and functions of existing foods. That is, although the simulacra are composed of a multiplicity of historically situated ingredients, they also need to possess the flavour-loading capacity to replicate the flavour of the already existing food. The most prominent of these also corresponds to the popularity of vendors at the market, with the Vegan Eatery and Vegan Meats, which rely on seitan, taking prominence over Ve-riyani and PlanT, which rely on lentils and tofu.

Veganised food, simulacra of the animal proteins (Wolny, 2017: 77), obscures both the lines they travel along and the labour that produces them. As I have shown above, veganised versions of food position those who consume them in relation to those who do not, while allowing for the rekindling of commensality, evoking a feeling of belonging. However, the composition of the

markets and the field relies on the labour required to set them up, prepare restaurants for customers, produce the products sold there, and serve customers who consume them. As I demonstrate in Chapters One, Two, and Three, the cheap labour that black women provide is not acknowledged, while vendors' labour draws praise and affection from marketgoers. The black women doing the labour are reduced to 'labourer' through the relations of labour that render them invisible outside of that labour. The field's composition illuminates South Africa's political economy, resting on the maintenance of 'deathworlds' where racially informed labour extraction and structural violence (Mbembe, 2003). Following these lines means starting with their origins in the market and tracing them back to their unaltered forms while viewing them through the conceptual lens of the "four cheaps" that Moore (2017) provides. The focus is thus on the process the proteins undergo as they move from the crop to the markets.

As markets and gatherings depend on attracting consumers, they provide examples of proteins that successfully mimic the flavour-loading capacity, texture, and functions of existing foods. The most prominent of these also corresponds to the popularity of vendors at the market, with the Vegan Eatery and Vegan Meats, which rely on seitan, taking prominence over Ve-riyani and PlanT, which rely on lentils and tofu. The proteins I use in this chapter are Lentils, soy (in the form of TVP), tofu, and seitan. Lentils have the least flavour-loading capacity and cannot replicate meat's texture. As such, vendors incorporate them into flavour-dense dishes like Biryani. Similarly, tofu from the market lacks the capacity to replicate the flavour of meat. However, it can be easily incorporated into dishes like curries, where it replicates the texture of boiled meats. Soy and seitan, however, offer greater flavour-loading capacity and can be used as stand-alone simulacra, rather than being incorporated into a full meal. While their flavour-loading capacity is relatively similar, seitan differs from soy in that it can replicate a meaty texture, making it an ideal plastic protein.

At this point, I have argued that the plastic proteins moving around the market, in the hands of consumers and labourers alike, are contradictory figures. They allow marketgoers to experience belonging, commensality, and morality through their ability to include diverse flavours. However, in doing so, they hide the labour involved in their transformation; which is true for all commodities when seen through Marx's concept of commodity fetishism, where the "relations

among people take the form of relations among things" (Perlman, 1968:3). In the context of veganism, the obfuscation of this journey and consequent transformation, also obfuscates the cost of these experiences which hinge on the experiences of the exploited people, places, and things that produce them. The obfuscation that commodity fetishism affords the plastic proteins compromises the morality that vegans experience when consuming plastic proteins. With this in mind, I now turn to the plastic proteins. Travelling along global value chains, the proteins enter the field of veganism in Johannesburg through markets and gatherings, providing a good starting point to address them.

## Placing Proteins

### Lentils

Lentils, the protein source Ve-riyani used in their biryani, are winter crops produced in climates that are cold in winter but not dropping to -25 degrees Celsius (Cokkizgin & Shtaya, 2013:57), and are historically situated in the Levant and West Asia as a staple food source. The oldest record of lentils as a food source dates back to Greece around 11,000 BCE. From here, lentil use spreads east across the Levant and into Northern India through Iran and Pakistan, as well as south through Egypt into Ethiopia (*ibid*:56). Although lentils held a position of necessity alongside the closely related pea family of crops for about 8000 years, it lost said popularity to peas in the last 500 (Sauer, 1993:69). This popularity, however, is evidently European as is seen in European staples such as the British delicacy fish and chips with a side of mushy peas, or the inclusion of peas in dishes such as shepherd's pie. In contrast, countries in the Levant and South Asia rely on lentils as a plant-based protein source. In Palestine and Iran, Mujadarah Safra, consisting of brown lentils and rice, is frequently eaten. In Pakistan, India, and the Bay of Bengal, rice is served alongside a thick lentil soup called Dahl (Banerjee & Kahn, 2021: j886). In each case, lentils are the primary protein, as reflected in the foods at Ve-riyani.

Today, Canada and India are the largest producers of lentils, with India also being the most significant consumer (Laskar *et al.*, 2019:329). The latter corresponds with the popularity in India of lentil-based dishes, such as the Dahl and rice, and the Biryani from which Ve-riyani takes its name. India's government provides guidelines for cultivating the crop, detailing the

risks faced and the agricultural inputs and practices necessary to overcome them and achieve higher yields (Sharma *et al.*, 2014). Here, they note which pesticides and fungicides should be applied to produce crops with minimal loss and maximal yield, while accounting for pests, fungi, and irrigation (*ibid*). This labour is done, due to the time required to produce crops, in eight-hour shifts per person, until the crop is ready for harvest. The labour necessary to produce lentils lasts until harvest; it includes ploughing soil, treating seeds, applying fertiliser, protecting plants from fungi and pests, and weeding (*ibid*).

Once harvested, the crops are dehulled and packaged. In this sense, soybeans follow a relatively similar process from soil preparation to harvesting as they are also hulled legumes. They also share similar processes when it comes to their ‘waste’, as the husks and stalks of either are used as feed for livestock. A connection between vegans and soy consumption is pervasive, as is an environmentalist stance; thus, with the rise in popularity of soybean agriculture, a common accusation levelled at vegans correlates vegan food with the soybeans farmed in South America. In the wake of soybean proliferation, forests, soil, and rivers are cleared, degraded and toxified by the pesticides necessary for this continued proliferation.

#### Soy/TVP

At the markets, Vegan Eatery uses Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP) to make Phish and Chips. Vegan Eatery moved away from TVP as a health food, instead preparing it to resemble familiar foods like fried chicken pieces, a burger patty or even fried fish, all of which are products that vegans cannot easily make at home. For vegans, this evokes a sense of nostalgia, drawing on memories of a former life when they ate these products and tasted these foods. Take, for instance, the smell of boerewors spreading over the market that I identified in Chapter One. In this sense, boerewors serves as an object laden with the “accumulated life experiences” of both consumer and the vendor (Crane, 2006: 103). That is, we use what we have lived through to inform our understanding and our associations of things, places, and people (Somers, 1994: 618). Moreover, because our lived experiences take place in contexts where diacritical inventories are foregrounded (Kopytoff 1986:73), our memories of them are infused with them and are thus brought up when we encounter the “sensory phenomena” of a particular space (Lefebvre, 1991).

The markets and gatherings, in their provision of “sensory phenomena” (*ibid*), allow for a reinscription of public, and thus ontological, narratives (Somers, 1994:619).

Despite the relative absence of soybeans, TVP is well known and popular in South Africa, where people refer to it as soy mince or soy chunks. Although both soy chunks and mince are available in South Africa, only soy mince is affordable and can mimic meat with minimal effort, leading to its popularity. Due to its versatility and affordability, the soy chunks derivative, soy mince, suits the needs of South Africans who cannot afford or need to extend animal-derived protein to reduce food costs. As such, soy mince is a staple in South African households, where brands like Imana, Top Class, and Knorr typically cater to consumers who need a cheap protein source. However, due to its low fat and high protein content--up to 50% of the final product (*ibid*)--soy mince and chunks have become popular in health shops that market them to athletes and health-conscious consumers. Brands that market towards health-conscious consumers typically sell their products at five times the price of brands that sell to the general consumer. A health brand typically sells 200 grams of non-GMO soy mince for R98.99 while a house brand sells 400 grams of flavoured soya mince for R40.99 (Checkers.co.za, 2024). The former is thus not sold as a protein extender, but as a health food, in a way similar to how Vegan Eatery sells their Phish and Chips at the markets.

## Tofu

For PlanT, an Asian cuisine-based food vendor, tofu was the primary source of protein around which they curated their dishes. They offered, as per their menu, three curries, each with tofu as the primary protein source, with only the vegetables and spices differentiating them. Alongside this, they sold samosas and spring rolls; however, their presence was not the main draw as PlanT was only one of three stalls selling samosas at the market.

Their curries were their most popular item each time I visited the market, with empty stainless-steel canisters that had previously contained the curries lining the table at the front of the stall. Behind them, another line of stainless-steel containers contained only a few grains of the rice that accompanied the curry. Apart from the change in the accompanying vegetables and spices that set PlanT's dishes apart, each dish required them to prepare the tofu differently. Two

of the dishes relied on marinated tofu, whilst the other used pre-prepared deep-fried tofu. The former dishes yielded soft cuboid pieces of tofu, the marinade in which they had been soaked changing their colour to dark orange or brown, depending on the type of curry they formed part of. While the latter yielded a tan, crispy skin that coated the outside of the block, making it a much more absorbent protein source. Due to their ability to absorb flavour effectively, they enabled PlanT to dominate the market's East Asian curry space.

Tofu “almost certainly originated in China; its date of origin, however, is uncertain,” as per the SoyInfo centre based in California, USA (Shurtleff & Aoyagi, 2004b). In China, Tofu was known as “Doufu”, adopting the name once travellers translated the production process into Japanese (*ibid*). The product's most likely route into South Africa is rooted in the Chinese migrants who arrived in the 1890s, attracted by the Kimberley diamond mines (Park, 2006: 204). Despite tofu's health benefits and ability to bridge nutritional gaps for both vegetarians and economic vegetarians, the protein has become popular in South Africa due to its association with Asian cuisine. Its scarcity in the country has led to its exotification, reflected in its price in wholesale grocery stores such as Woolworths or Checkers. Both chains stock tofu at prices far exceeding the product's cost at an Asian grocery store. For reference, Woolworths stocks tofu in weights of 289 to 350 grams, priced from R59.90 to R89.90.

A block of tofu, approximately 130 grams, at a local Asian grocery store in Johannesburg costs between R3 and R7 (Woolworths.co.za, 2024). Woolworths, Checkers and the Asian grocer I refer to use the same production method for their tofu. The Asian grocer, however, relies on locally made fresh tofu, whereas the chain grocers make use of imported tofu. Typically, soybeans are soaked for a minimum of four hours to make tofu. At this point, they are ground up, boiled, and strained. The curd that remains after straining is then pressed to remove any remaining liquid, depending on the desired texture. The quantity of tofu produced determines, to a large extent, the costs of large-scale production, as it requires more equipment and more labour to produce a larger quantity.

## Seitan

At Vegan Meats, Seitan is the ingredient that shapes the entire stall. Also hailing from China, Seitan is a protein derived from wheat gluten and has its earliest mention, as *mianjin*, in China in the early 1100s. In the cookbook that mentions it, the author, who remains unknown, notes “Keep chewing (massaging) wheat flour, and it will yield mianjin (wheat gluten)” (Shurtleff *et al.*, 2014:106). Later, in 1350, the author added more detail on the preparation process: “Wash wheat flour (fu) to get wheat gluten (mianjin)” (*ibid*:125). Alongside the lengthy process it undergoes to be prepared for consumption, Seitan goes through a similarly lengthy process to flavour it. When well-flavoured, it can mimic the taste of any meat product and, as such, attracts significant attention at the market, often having lines of more than 10 metres at its sales point.

The recipe I used to make the Seitan, as I described above, is one derived from millennia of making wheat gluten into a meat replacement for strict vegetarians in China and other parts of East Asia. However, with the popularity of vegetarianism and, later, veganism in the global North, specifically in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Northwestern Europe, this process, particularly the flavouring, has taken on a distinctly European twist. This twist in Vegan Meats’ constellation of mock meats, which range from Boerewors to Bockworst and Chorizo. I did not focus on recreating flavours that I had grown up with, namely Boerewors or chicken, when I attempted to make Seitan. Instead, I aimed to make a high-quality, versatile protein source that was also affordable.

My experience with Seitan-making attests to this, as I tried to make mock meat when I first encountered it at the market. To make Seitan, you need to make a dough from wheat flour and water. The dough enables the binding of proteins in wheat, binding the particles together. The dough is then rested and washed. The washing of the dough is the most crucial part of the Seitan-making process, as it removes the starch, leaving you with only the protein, wheat gluten. Once wheat gluten is isolated, it can be processed into a meat replacement. Spice is critical as it determines the type of meat that the seitan replaces. In the case of boerewors, a specific spice mixture consisting of cloves, coriander, black pepper, nutmeg, ginger, and cinnamon flavours the wheat gluten. To achieve its meaty colour and distinct savoury flavour, the mock meat maker needs to add soy sauce to the water used to bind the dry ingredients when making the dough.

This colours the dough while binding the wheat gluten, allowing the final product to take on a distinctly meatlike colour and flavour.

Due to the relatively low price of flour, for reference, I made use of brown bread wheat flour, which costs R 42.99 for 2.5 kilograms, producing about 140grams per kilogram of flour, more affordable than wholesale tofu but requiring more labour to make into seitan than if I were to make my own tofu. As such, vital wheat gluten, sold as a health food, simplifies the making of seitan, eliminating the need to wash the starch out of the flour and produces isolated gluten. Vital wheat gluten is sold at R110.00 per kilogram, making it an affordable option. However, the labour and knowledge required to prepare their own seitan make it unsustainable for most vegans. Similarly, for Vegan Meats to make a profit from their products, they can rely on wholesale vital wheat gluten. However, they depend on the labour and flavourings to engage the protein's flavour-binding capacity. The labour and knowledge Vegan Meats requires to produce seitan differs from those for lentils, tofu, and TVP sold at Ve-riyani, Vegan Eatery, and PlanT, in that the latter require little labour from the staff at the stalls. In contrast, Vegan Meats relies on labour to produce and prepare the protein.

#### Transition to abstraction

The production of plastic proteins “begins at one end with a social relationship of exploitation” while on the other end the relationship is “imagined as nothing less than love” (Foster, 2005:11). In this case, the “social relationship of exploitation” that this process starts with is one concerned with the cultivation of the respective crops where labour is concerned with the preparation of soil, planting, weeding, and repelling pests, and then the harvesting of the respective crop. However, this means that the means of extracting said labour are also masked, in the same way that the lentil consumption at the market masks the labour of fieldworkers and lineworkers, through the blind consumption of products that require intensive preparation by hand, from the same people who invisibly line the back of the stalls.

#### Protein Poisons

Clear across each protein is that the crop from the protein takes precedence over labourers. This logic, in which the powerful position capital over the people performing labour is, however, a

historically established practice. Farm labour has depended on migrant and seasonal workers to provide labour precisely because they are exploitable (Arcury & Quandt, 1998:830). Moreover, drawing on Arcury and Quandt's paper (*ibid*), the United States government set legal precedents that allowed “children under the age 15 to engage in agricultural labour” (*ibid*:5). While I echo the dependence on migrant labour which I address in Chapter Three, showing, using Guthman (2003:499), that organic agriculture relies on exploitable migrant workers to pay lower wages and maximise profit.

In organic agriculture, where cultivation does not expose labourers to pesticides and fungicides, these practices are recommended for large-scale production of lentils, soybeans, and wheat. Hetherington highlights the detrimental effects that pesticides have on the health of people living near agricultural areas in Paraguay (2020:691). Given that pesticides have been produced since the 1940s, replacements that are less detrimental to their users could have been developed by now (Mushak & Piver, 1992: 271). However, in not addressing the human cost of applying crop protection, in the form of pesticides and fungicides, the people working or living on or around agricultural areas are likely to experience cancer (Khan *et al.*, 2019:1), heart disease (Sekhotha *et al.*, 2016:2), or poisoning, often leading to death (Arcury & Quandt, 1998:834). In the case of soybean production in South Africa, the Transvaal Agricultural Journal (Lewis, 1903:10-11) provides evidence of a correlation between the presence of Chinese migrants and soybean cultivation. Herein, soybean cultivation begins in 1903, with the farmer detailing his cultivation method and his previous experience with the crop (*ibid*). As such, his cultivation of the crop is approximately 20 years after free Chinese migrants arrived in South Africa. This correlation between the arrival of Chinese migrants and soybean production suggests that they brought beans with them, which farmers later appropriated.

This appropriation is merely the extension of what Moore (2017) details as the cheapening of Nature. Cheapening Nature follows the logic of “green arithmetic”, where the “living, multispecies connections” composing worlds reduced to “dead abstractions” understood through a series of consequences rather than the “constitutive relations” of multispecies compositions (Moore, 2017:5). The “dead abstractions” allow us to view Nature as a set of unrelated elements instead of ecologies that are intertwined and compose the same system. However, it does allow

for the fragmentation of crop production, separating the people who labour in its cultivation from the crop (despite their necessity to the process). In fact, this abstraction allows for a rational move to minimise labour costs, and thus the worth of the person doing the labour, in order to serve “economic growth, social development or some other higher good” (Moore, 2017:8). These abstractions are, thus, integral to the “internal relations through which capitalism’s value relations are stabilised and reproduced” (Moore, 2017b:5)

Cheapening Nature means that the actual value of life, which the raw materials afford through their relational use, which labour, abstracted from the bodies performing it, allows to be moulded into objects to use or consume through the coopting of energy. Work is appropriated and “bundled into commodity form” (Moore, 2017a:7). This allows for the “slow violence” Nixon (2011:2) argues gradually occurs “out of sight”, adding to it not being seen as violence, and usually takes a long time to be exacted onto the large area it affects. In this case, the large area I refer to is agricultural land. Although the land is affected, this “attritional violence” (*ibid*) directly impacts farmers, farm workers, and their families, as I show at the beginning of this section.

This system, still present as a component of coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2017c:243), also ensured the erasure of pre-colonial structures through the imposition of the racialised labour hierarchies allowing for “appropriation of unpaid work/energy” (Moore, 2017a:7). Logically this means that the appropriated work/energy stems from racialised and gendered groups, thus people of colour (*ibid*). That is, in coloniality, people of colour are the “neglected things” of the system that appropriates their labour (de la Bellacasa, 2019; Moore, 2017a:7), their knowledge is either undermined, as in the case of soybean cultivation, or erased (Maldonado-Torres, 2017c:252). They do not exist on equal terms with colonisers or settler-colonialists (*ibid*).

As the product of the “political and economic relations” that a colonising nation imposed onto a colonised nation, coloniality is the continuation of the “patterns of power” emerging from the imposed “political and economic relations” of the colonising nation (Maldonado-Torres, 2017c:243). With this came the need to organise intersubjective relations in the colonised nation to cater to the needs of the coloniser, thus imposing a set of hierarchies that justified the

inferiorisation and thus (ab)use of the people of the colonised nation (*ibid*). This “coloniality of being” operates on, first, racialised, second, gendered, and third, classed ideas that remove the validity of being from those racialised, gendered, and classed Others of the powerful (Maldonado-Torres, 2017c:248).

The aforementioned "coloniality" imbues the commodities we consume with a set of racialised, gendered, and classed hierarchical social relations. These “internal relations through which capitalism’s value relations are stabilised and reproduced” are also imbued into the plastic proteins present in the field of veganism in Johannesburg (Moore, 2017b:5). That is, coloniality is maintained through the appropriation of cheapened food (Moore, 2017a:10), in lentil, soybean, and wheat cultivation, cheapened labour (*ibid*), along each stage of production, and cheapened energy (*ibid*), used to transform, transport, and trade them ((Quijano, 2000:533) cited in Maldonado-Torres, 2017c:243-244).

In both Mbembe and Moore’s frameworks, violence is not optional but necessary for the ongoing production of cheap food through cheap labour (2003; 2017). Although Mbembe focuses on the production of cheap labour through the implementation of camps, and thus deathworlds, wherein human life is seen only in terms of the labour it performs, not what is produced (2003:40). Without the ongoing production of labour from the necropolitical landscape, cheap food is not possible (*ibid*; Moore, 2017). The vegan markets and gatherings depend on this cheap food. In the context of Mbembe’s deathworlds (2003:40), which he ascribes to, among others, the apartheid state of South Africa, the vegan market poses a contradiction of care. The deathworlds in question reduce life to labour and labour alone (*ibid*). It is in this sense that markets position morality as contradictory; the women behind stalls are rendered alive only as labourers in the market spaces. Their bodies are mechanised, becoming mechanical implements structured according to the logics of coloniality.

That is, the ingredients travel along “[networks] of labour and production process” that end in a “finished commodity” ((Hopkins & Wallerstein, 1994:16) cited in Gibbon *et al.*, 2008:316). Hence, the meals in the form of boerewors rolls, biryani, fish and chips, and tofu curry are these “finished [commodities]” are composed of and through the labour networks they travel along to

reach the market (*ibid*). Labour, as has been established throughout this thesis, is a concern for me, as labour relations, like inter- and intra-personal relations globally, are accrued upon historically situated logics of governance. That is, labour, derived from a “logic of cheapening...the majority of...humans into Nature...to render their work unpaid, devalued, invisibilised” (Moore, 2017:6), is imbued with relations with the violence of inferiorisation, naturalisation, and the potential for exploitation.

The logic of dehumanisation that the “coloniality of being” imposes here (*ibid*), as I mentioned earlier, is questioned through this relation of care. Dehumanisation logically positions the dehumanised subject as ‘lower-than’, or ‘sub-human’. However, as Glick points out (2013:642), although the language of the non-human animal indicates this dehumanisation, it does not equate the dehumanised group with the non-human animal. “Discourse says, ‘So and so likens such and such a population to rats.’ It does not say, ‘such and such a population is, or has become, a pack of rats,’ no matter how inhumanely or abusively they have been treated” (Glick, 2013:642). The dehumanised group, through the constraining of agency (Farmer, 1996:263), thus occupies a category outside both human and non-human animal, what Agamben calls “*homo sacer*” or the sacred human (2002). Sacred, here, needs to be understood in the ancient Roman context where the word held both holy and taboo implications (Agamben, 2002:51). The sacred human is both the holy human and the taboo human, the latter of which speaks to the categorisation of black and indigenous people outside the categories of human and non-human animals. On one hand, this explains the dehumanisation of, particularly, black bodies, while, on the other, firmly keeping the dogs treated, pampered, and named, in the category of non-human animals. Thus, the employment of *homo sacer* enables vegans to feel moral through colonial and apartheid structures without necessarily seeing this as violent.

In this sense, the production of plastic proteins “begins at one end with a social relationship of exploitation” while on the other end the relationship is “imagined as nothing less than love” (Foster, 2005:11). That is, the “social relationship of exploitation” that this process starts with is one concerned with the cultivation of the respective crops. At the beginning of this section, I detail the violence that working-class people face on farms. Their labour, concerned with the preparation of soil, planting, weeding, and repelling pests, and then the harvesting of the

respective crop, is structured through violence. This “long dying”, as Nixon calls it (2007:15), is maintained through coloniality, through structures and infrastructures built according to the logic of coloniality, as seen in the construction of the Moroka bypass to separate Soweto from Johannesburg. The maintenance of coloniality affects vegans directly through the production of, among others, plastic proteins, which have the flavour-binding capacity to mimic the foods they once ate.

Consider that the labour of maintaining the crops involves the application of fungicides and pesticides, which are hazardous to the labourers doing it. Once harvested, labourers sort and package the lentils, soybeans, and wheat, while their derivatives continue along global value chains until an ultra-maleable protein source is produced and packaged. Consider, for example, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), a company ranked 50th in *Fortune's* list of the 500 leading US-based companies and an integral player in the USA's food, beverage, and tobacco sector (Fortune, 2025). They began using solvents, such as hexane, along with a hydraulic press, to extract oil from soybeans. This process led to an increase in a flour-like by-product from the soybeans, a vegetable protein isolate. When reconstituted under high heat and pressure, the company could form the protein isolate into any shape, allowing it to resemble the forms of animal-derived protein that intolerant or eschewing people were not consuming. Although addressing concerns about the health of primarily working-class people, they relied on large-scale soybean production. As I have established, the cultivation thereof is rooted in the ‘cheapness’ of Nature and energy as TVP (Moore, 2017), which is highly processed, condenses the cleared, degraded, and poisoned areas, the extracted labour from humans and the mechanical processing of the product, all required for its production, into a readily available, plastic commodity. The “vegan”, “cruelty-free”, and “organic” labels mask veganism's entanglement with the extractivism it relies on.

The plasticity of proteins like TVP increases as they travel along production lines composing global value chains. As each protein consumed at markets and gatherings travels through the series of stages that compose the production line, along the global value chain, each stage of production adds value; each pair of hands that touches it imbues it with the value of the materials, labour, and energy required to produce it. Thus, through the inflation of the value of

the processes of production, the ‘crude’ value of each of these aspects is lost, only to be determined through the lenses of those who own the means of production. Moreover, the employment of *homo sacer* as a category outside those recognised under the logic of the “coloniality of being” affords narratives that operate at both the public and ontological level (Agamben, 2002; Maldonado-Torres, 2017c; Somers, 1994:618). That is because the dominant discourse at the markets employed the category to justify the contradiction in their concern. Thus, the concern does not *need* to include the people positioned in said category. With labour dynamics in the market and at gatherings maintaining a hierarchy that positions black women as the providers of cheap labour, the events that take place there compose public narratives that maintain black women as the proper labouring demographic (Somers, 1994:619). Suppose the public narrative deems black women the proper labourers in that context and excludes them from the categories to be cared for, those included in the “coloniality of being” (Maldonado-Torres, 2017c), then it forms a public narrative that black women are beyond concern (Somers, 1994:619).

Here, the necropolitical positioning maintains the black women doing the labour in positions of invisibility that render them expendable (Mbembe, 2003). Only, maybe, acknowledged when she hands the commodity to the customer, the women are rendered not only invisible but, through their sole acknowledgement in terms of their labour, they are rendered ‘living-dead’, only recognised in the social life of the completed commodity that they create but cannot take part in. The preparations and post-consumption clean-up are where they are deemed worthy of life, but not in the enjoyment of the commodities they prepare and remove. The market's infrastructural arrangement structurally maintains this particular social relation. As the public narratives of the market and its customers incorporate the logic informing both of these practices, concern for non-human animals depends on the perpetuation of violence towards the women behind the stalls.

In the markets and at the gatherings where the “coloniality of being” is exercised (Maldonado-Torres, 2017c:24), events occurring around and through it contribute to the public narratives of the people in those spaces (Somers, 1994:619), as well as those connected to them. As these lines spread from Canada, India, and China, and converge in South Africa, these

narratives are not isolated; instead, they shape and contribute to the public narratives of the people connected to them. These public narratives, that reinscribe the hierarchies and logic of coloniality, are thus global. The public narratives of the markets and gatherings, of the field of veganism in Johannesburg, thus tell stories of black women as labourers in the back of stalls, of black men as security guards or homeless, of pampered dogs, of the 'screams' of pigs in slaughterhouses, all of which contribute to our understanding of ourselves in this context.

Viewing plastic proteins from this perspective opens up a contradiction between the morality vegans assert through the purchase and consumption of plastic proteins and the violence the chains they move along to reach the field of veganism. That is, vegans, through an adherence to an animal-advocacy concern—the dominant discourse of the field—, do the labour of advocating for animal-free products by purchasing them. As plastic proteins pass along global value chains, their production exacts violence, meaning that vegans' morality is negotiated. This negotiated morality entails concern for some (non-human animals) while exploiting Others; racialised, gendered, and classed others according to the "coloniality of being" (Maldonado-Torres, 2017c:248). The same hierarchies that mould our social relations under coloniality mould this care, determining the ability to ethically, affectively, and physically commit oneself to a concern (de la Bellacasa, 2017:5). The care vegans practise is thus transformable, malleable, and able to fit the moulds of the powerful.

The plastic proteins, as I established in the previous paragraph, offer moral experiences to people who adhere to the dominant discourse in the field of veganism in Johannesburg. However, they are also vehicles for the violence of coloniality. This double loading of morality and violence into plastic proteins, I have argued, compromises that morality. The vegans in question maintain a sense of morality through a shifting of focus from the exploited humans to the non-human animals that keep their lives.

### Infrastructure, Nostalgia, and Spatiality

Plastic proteins, imbued with the care of vegans adhering to the dominant discourse of the field, obscure some of these relations through commodity fetishism (Harvey, 1990:442). In the

obfuscation of these relations, the plastic proteins perform the work of *inclusion* and of *maintaining concerns*. Their plasticity affords them the ability to mimic existing foods without perpetuating harm to non-human animals, and in this way, along with the promotion of cruelty-free alternatives to mainstream foods, affords vegans the experience of morality. However, their plasticity also allows for the showcasing of the flavours, derived and focused on the diacritical inventories projected to consumers in the field (Kopytoff 1986:73), which does not acknowledge the process that affords their plasticity. The process that renders these proteins plastic draws on rich, historically situated processes that, through the same obfuscation, require intricate knowledge of the proteins. The obfuscation of these historical processes and knowledge marginalises them.

In fact, labour and the people doing labour are addressed only in relation to the field's dominant concern, which I established in Chapter One as animal advocacy. Doing so reasserts hierarchies rooted in the “coloniality of being” (Maldonado-Torres, 2014:651), power and knowledge (Mignolo, 2007:451), and cheapens both the lives and the labour of farmworkers. An example of this is when a participant joked that they were more concerned about animal exploitation than human exploitation. They justified their concern for non-human animals over the people doing the labour of collecting “ethically sourced” foods when stating that “they’re not animals”. I address this disregard for human life when I show how working-class and poor people placed outside the “coloniality of being” using the category of *homo sacer* to justify their exploitation (Agamben, 2002). This evidenced in the apartheid-era bantustans and their use to the apartheid regime as reservoirs of cheap labour, which both Magubane (1973) and Bond (2020) attest to. In this way, human life is set aside to foreground the flavours associated with the diacritical inventories in question; this speaks to the invalidation Mandela experiences in relation to his health practices (*ibid*). This speaks to the necropoliticalisation, that Mbembe highlights in his analysis of apartheid-era South Africa (2003), of marginalisation enables the “coloniality of knowledge” which denotes a notion of “others do not think” (Maldonado-Torres, 2017c:248), further cementing the inferiorisation that the coloniality of being affords public and ontological narratives (Somers, 1994:618-619).

For the people entering this context as consumers, these public narratives position them within the recognised categories of the “coloniality of being” (Maldonado-Torres, 2017c:248). Given these pervasive contexts, consider that contexts where this labour dynamic is present are also prevalent in contexts where cheapened labour is required; they contribute to a large swathe of public narratives (Somers, 1994:619). Note that the public narratives, telling us who we are within “cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual” (*ibid*), also contribute to how “the single individual” understands who they are in relation to others in “time and space” (*ibid*:618). In short, the public narratives prevalent in the field contribute to the ontological narratives of people moving through it (*ibid*). This means that the labour dynamics engaged in at the field tell stories of cheap black labour—and the justifications there for—that tell us who we are in relation to the people doing the labour, the consuming, the producing and the organisation. Moreover, the ontological narratives that stem from this are global; the microcosm of the market employs labour-extraction systems used globally. That is, the logics of coloniality shape the ontological narratives of people interacting with practices of labour extraction.

In this chapter, I argue that “plastic proteins”, central to the field of veganism in Johannesburg, are not ethical alternatives but material embodiments of van Dooren’s Violent Care: a practice that cares for non-human animals while depending on the cheapened labour and lives of racialised humans. I draw on Moore’s “four cheaps”, Mbembe’s necropolitical “deathworlds” and Agamben’s *homo sacer*, tracing the proteins along global value chains to show how their production relies on the systemic cheapening of black people’s labour, a logic grounded in Maldonado-Torres’ “coloniality of being”. In doing this, I demonstrate how the morality of vegan consumption is negotiated and compromised as the nostalgic recreation of boerewors, phish and chips, or biryani is only possible through the obscuring of the violence to humans that makes plastic proteins affordable, available, and tasty.

## Chapter 5: Ritually Making Home

This chapter revolves around two dinner preparations. The first involves my grandmother and me as we prepare her oxtail stew. This delicacy is part of an essential family ritual that cements our roles and establishes a family hierarchy. However, my veganism ruptures this family ritual through a simple question about butter in spinach. In asking this question, I inadvertently disrupt her ontological narrative. My presence as a vegan shatters both my grandmother's gendered role in the family and the reciprocity she instils through the making and serving of this meal. My challenge to her practice becomes more than a dietary preference; it becomes a destabilisation of the relationships that constitute who she is. The second dinner took place at Steve's apartment, a sanctuary where we, as a group of vegans, did not have to bear the burden of being the "killjoy" and could find belonging in a shared identity. However, over the course of the conversation, it became clear that the sanctuary was itself a site of intense narrative negotiation. As I show in Chapter One, the field of veganism in Johannesburg is composed of competing "matters of concern" structured around the dominant discourse of animal advocacy, around which these narrative negotiations revolved. Beneath this, however, lies the tension each of us faces; the impossibility of constructing an ontological narrative that integrates with the causal and material realities of South African life. In this Chapter, I delve into this tension through a close reading of the get-together as a microcosm of the field of veganism in Johannesburg. I argue that the conversations we had were not expressions of our individual beliefs but counter-narratives. These are the stories we tell ourselves to avoid the reality of our incompatibility between our vegan identities and the structures of power, gender, class, race and coloniality that shape our worlds. We use these narratives to maintain the illusion that we belong, to avoid the radical reconfiguration that our vegan identities demand of us.

### Of Oxtail Stew and Belonging

My experience as a killjoy comes from an interaction with my grandmother, who, in her late 80s, relied on food, the making and sharing thereof, to show her affection. She would prepare oxtail stew, a family delicacy, whenever my father and mother came to visit her. My grandmother asked me to set the table for the family, putting out placemats and cutlery an hour before they arrived.

In preparation for my parents' visit, my gran asked me to prepare a pot of spinach for my mother and me, the two vegetarians/vegans. She pointed a crooked finger at the two clear plastic bags with frozen clumps of dark green spinach. I needed to defrost the spinach and add a chopped onion to the mix. Knowing how she cooks, I asked, "*Ouma, is daar botter in hierdie?*" (Gran, is there butter in this?) "*Nee, seun*" (No, my boy), she replied, her lips pursing in irritation as she did so. "*Is daar regtig nie botter hier in nie? Ouma weet ek kannie dit eet nie*" (Is there really no butter in here? You know I can't eat it). She ignored my question. "*Ouma??*", "*NEE, daar is nie botter in nie. Jy weet mos ek het die spinasie gekook met net water en sout!*" (NO, there is not butter in that. You know that I cooked the spinach with only water and salt!), she said, her body turned to face me directly, her grey hair shaking as she rattled a hand at me.

At the time, I had thought it an overreaction, but in hindsight, I realised that preparing food was her sole means of expressing her affection to us collectively. My rejection of the meal and the foods that she offered me can be seen as a refusal of the Maussian gift. My refusal of her meal can be seen, at its furthest extent, as a challenge to my grandmother's authority (McGranahan, 2016:334). However, it can also be read as the redefining of our reciprocal relationship (*ibid*). In this case, I had destabilised her ontological narrative. In Chapter One, I use public narratives to argue that an animal-advocacy-based veganism structures the field of veganism in Johannesburg. This animal-advocacy-based concern is the dominant discourse of the field, and it builds the public narratives of veganism around ideas like the "morally pure" vegan. Ontological Narratives, as Somers (1994:618) argues, are the stories we use to make sense of our lives. These allow us to act, to be, and to think in relation to who we understand ourselves to be. My gran used sharing oxtail stew to understand who she was in the world, who she was to her children and to her grandchildren.

Our family has shared this meal for as long as I can remember. Moreover, it followed a set structure that began with the cooking of the oxtail. First by itself, the smell filled every corner of the house, and later with thick-cut carrots, potatoes and onions. Then came the making of the side dishes, usually a three-bean salad, a potato salad, and, always, a mixed salad, with small cubes of cheese; a veritable landmine of food to pick through for vegans. The preparation and consumption of this meal was what Bossard and Boll (1949:464) called a family ritual. This

series of actions followed a set structure. It required family interaction from whichever family member was with her during this time, and would help in the preparations. At this point, I helped, but often my aunt or one of my cousins would help to cut the vegetables or prepare a dressing for the salads. Once we prepared all of the food, the youngest member of the family, I, would set the table, requiring a particular set of placemats. Once seated, the oldest man at the table would say a prayer before everyone could start eating. My family still maintains this rigid order to some degree, even after her passing.

Through my questioning of her cooking, I had not returned the gift of her cooking, challenging her authority and destabilising her gendered role (McGranahan, 2016:334). Her reaction was not an overreaction. It was a defence of my breaking down who she was and how she could be in the world. Her ontological narrative had afforded her a set of food-related practices that centred around animal and animal-derived products. My vegan practice and veganism more generally have challenged the act of the family dinner (Griggs, 2021). Imbued with a heterosexual politics that mark importance, and reinforce traditional gender roles, the family dinner, and in this case, a rare occasion where a large portion of the family comes together, required that a “female figure cooks the animal flesh for the family” (ibid:27). These family dinners had become points of emplotment that allowed her to turn the series of events wherein she cooked for her grandchildren, her children, and her husband, into “episodes” through which she constructed who she was (Somers, 1994:617). My questioning of her methods disrupted this image of what Griggs (2021:27), echoing Simonsen (2012), calls “an image of heterosexual joy”. An image that she had used to support her ontological narrative throughout her life. As such, when she ignores my question, it is not because she seeks to steer the conversation away from conflict but because she lacks the resources to accommodate a vegan-friendly ontological narrative. Moreover, I do not provide her with one. Despite my presence as a killjoy disrupting this “image of heterosexual joy” (ibid), my presence at the get-together did not.

## Breaking Belonging

All the people present at the get-together, Steve, Aisha, Veera, Barbara, and I, cared for veganism and for vegans. Through sharing experiences we had regarding veganism, most notably

experiences of stigmatisation, we escaped the scrutiny and maintained the intrapersonal relations of the group. This get-together was a public event, and although I had met each of the people at the market, this was the first time we were together for a prolonged period. Non-vegans in our families, friend groups, and among our colleagues had stigmatised us; as such, we could relate to the experience. In taking on a vegan praxis, we became the “killjoy” (Ahmed, 2010; Twine, 2014), becoming deviant as we challenged norms centred around the consumption of flesh. Capital, which I use in the introduction, being a relation of the field, conferring power over both the “instruments of production or reproduction” and the “regularities and the rules” that define the structure and functioning of the field (*ibid*:101), offers insight into how being the “killjoy” subverts one's role in the field (*ibid*). Social capital refers to the social resources that afford agency (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:101). Being a “killjoy” detracts from your social capital in the group you associate with; the term can apply to anyone who kills the joy of that group.

“I like the idea of Karma. So, through every vegan meal I have, I do no harm to an animal. And so, I contribute to better Karma for the world,” said Steve, a middle-aged white man, as he shuffled toward the interior from where we stood next to a small Weber braai on the patio leading onto a small pool, past the long black couches in the living area of the open-plan apartment. This constellation reminded me of the same spaces that I had grown up in. My dad and his friends were around a braai, while my mom and her friends were preparing sides, salads, or rolls in the kitchen. It was a dynamic structured around the gender of the social actors. It took on the same gendered dynamic that my grandmother drew on when she had my dad pray at the dinner table, because he was the oldest man in the house, and thus at the top of the hierarchy. It was the dynamic that Marlene van Niekerk writes of as composing the “Patriarch of the Round Plate”, which adds to gendered dynamics centred around “the Braai” (2011:69). The interior of the apartment fit well with its modernist exterior, and the clean, pothole-free roads of Bryanston<sup>2</sup>. Situated inside a gated estate, the apartment stood tall alongside ones just like it. Well-kept lawns, wheeled dustbins and the sandy-coloured walls of the brutalist flats made for a welcoming space to those invited in and an impenetrable fortress for those on the outside. Steve’s lanky frame and fair hair made him appear almost angelic as he noted that “The notion of Ahimsa, or non-harm, is something that I care about. By not harming, I don’t contribute to bad karma”. I

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<sup>2</sup> An upmarket suburb in Johannesburg

noted that his formulation centred on ahimsa rather than on animal exploitation or veganism. He entered the kitchen area where the rest of the group, three women, had congregated, me close on his heels.

Steve and I joined the rest of the group in the kitchen, breaking with the gender-based separation we were used to. He took up a space to my left, clad in a white V-neck t-shirt and stonewash jeans, barefoot, comfortable. Steve finished what he was saying as we took up positions with the rest of the group around the dark marble kitchen top with barstools on either side. Dark wooden cupboards looked down on us from where they lined the large kitchen's four walls. Beneath them, a gas stove top, a microwave oven, and a stand mixer occupied the encircling kitchen tops. Steve's use of the term Karma confused me. However, the story he offers to explain his use of the term locates him in a "repertoire of emplotted stories" drawn from a "multiplicity" of "limited" "social, public, and cultural narratives" (Somers, 1994:614). Steve's narrative made my mind leap to the "Bits and Bobs" aisle, which I associated with people wearing flowing shirts and loose pants adorned in Hindu and Buddhist symbolism. When I wrote this Chapter, I did not understand the concept of Karma as collective. Instead, I understood it as a personal practice that governs actions through a bifurcation that groups actions into good or bad. In fact, Torwestern and Rosset define Karma (1994:227) as "Deed, action", "works," and the good and bad consequences resulting from them." That is, both the ritualised and ethical actions that lead to either good or bad "karmic results" which enable rebirth into happy or unhappy worlds (Watts, 2014:20). A person does Karma, the consequences bear on the actor and not the actors.

Aisha, a woman in her early twenties, who had taken a seat opposite Steve, responded to his point about being motivated by Karma and Ahimsa: "I just do it for health and animal rights". I thought about Mandla, whom I introduced during the tour of the market, and Lukhanyo, a black man in his twenties, also selling herbal remedies; both practised a health-based veganism and, as I argue in Chapter Three, were structurally marginalised in the field, a challenging position to take up in a field dominated by a concern for animal exploitation. "I don't really do it with a focus on health anymore. More and more it's become about animal rights", Aisha continued, her blond highlights shimmering in her shoulder-length hair. She shifted her weight towards the centre of the barstool so that she sat upright, her hands folded in her lap. "I really don't feel a

spiritual connection with veganism,” she said, bringing her hands closer together to signify a prayer-like pose, “and I don’t really get the whole environmentalism thing, but the animal rights thing is pretty clear to me”.

Having made her point, Aisha rested her hands in her lap and looked over to the group once more, having aligned herself with the field of veganism in Johannesburg’s dominant concern. Although this gave her Social Capital, which I establish in Chapter Three as the value a person attains through belonging to a network of relationships within the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:119), her narrative shift here indicates a negotiation. She can renegotiate her relationships with Steve, Veera, Barbara, and me, which influences how she positions her concern. Because we form part of a public institution, she negotiates between her personal narratives and the institutional scripts veganism affords her (*ibid*). In doing this, she did what my gran could not; she used the narrative resources available to her to shift away from the deviant position in the field to one more suited to the people at the get-together.

My mind leapt to the Vegan Society of the United Kingdom’s definition of veganism, present on the South African Vegan Society’s Homepage (2015), the leading authority on veganism in the global north, shaping how vegans practise it globally. The Vegan Society of the United Kingdom’s prominence is evident in Cherry’s work, which showed that approximately half of her participants subscribed to the Vegan Society’s definition of veganism (2006:156). To quote Marx and Engels ((1965:61) as cited in Mafeje, 1971:254), “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas”. Its situatedness in the global north is indicative of the practices of some vegans in the global south. I noted this as I walked through the vegan markets and sat in get-togethers; the Vegan Society’s definition came to play a defining role in the field. It defined how people practised their veganism, how they combatted scrutiny from the margins of the field, and with whom they aligned themselves in the field.

Noting that the field integrated the Vegan Society of the UK’s definition allows me to consider it a discourse, in Thrift’s understanding thereof as a means of instructing people on how to “live as people” (1997) cited in Bauman, 2000:54). The discourse, focussed on animal advocacy, can be considered a script to be applied in the public narratives of vegans in the field (Somer,

1994:619). The field offers vegans a set of unspoken scripts that shape how they care for the dominant concern, defined by the Vegan Society. The public narratives that support the dominant discourse allow vegans to understand who they are in relation to other vegans and how they see themselves in the world. The markets and get-togethers reinforce their ontological narratives, allowing them to understand these events as episodes in which they act, informing them on how they continue to act.

Barbara, an older, non-practising Jewish woman, asked Aisha whether she had ever attended one of the advocacy events. They were a staple on the margins of the field, often taking the form of vigils outside slaughterhouses in the city's more agricultural areas; however, I had not attended one. "Like where they hold up the screens with the documentaries of what happens in the slaughterhouses?" In doing so, she challenged the extent to which care is exercised in the field, inadvertently challenging the institutional script Aisha brought up. Aisha asked and then answered herself, "No, never. But I really feel bad for never going to one." "Me too!", Barbara replied, "I always feel like I'm not doing enough or that I probably should be doing more. I mean, I do veganism for health, not the animals, but I still feel so guilty for not going" she said, the smile she had cemented onto her face for much of our conversation now gone, as the corners of her mouth turned down. In affiliating herself with a health-concerned veganism, Barbara had lost Social Capital, as she had removed herself from the "durable network" that the group, affiliated with the dominant concern, afforded her and the resources that came with it (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:119).

Steve, Aisha, and I remained silent, adding to the weight of Barbara's guilt. It was a tense silence that spoke to the reevaluation of the group's positions vis-à-vis one another. As it stood, Steve, Aisha, Veera, and I affiliated ourselves with an animal advocacy concern, affording us equal positioning in the higher rungs of the field's hierarchy that I map out in Chapter One. In contrast, Barbara, who identified with a health-based concern, is positioned on the lower rungs. I asked her then, "Do you feel like by not going to these 'protests' you are adding to the harming of animals?" Responding without hesitation, Barbara replied, her chestnut-dyed hair trembled as she did so: "Yes! It's like, by not being there and by not standing in the sun for hours with a TV showing the horrible things that happen in there, that I am contributing!" Any hopes of the smile

she had before now dashed, she sat slumped over on the barstool next to Aisha, her hand now on Barbara's shoulder.

At this point of the conversation, I interjected, "But could just being a vegan in a world that is not vegan be a form of activism?" "How do you mean?" Barbara asked, her eyes now showing a glimmer of hope. "I mean that by challenging the norm, by not participating in animal harm when it is the norm, veganism is a form of activism in itself". In making this point, I was, unknowingly, breaking with the script, shaping the people at the get-together's public narrative through an emphasis on ontological narrative (Somers, 1994). That is, in displacing the perceived necessity of overt political action in the field for presence, I displace the prescribed actions that the institution of the field sees as essential in being vegan and elevate the ontological narrative of the social actor so that who the actor is (a vegan) is more important than what the actor does (veganism) (*ibid*:618). Her reaction to not attending protests speaks to the discourse that I displace. That is, in not attending protests, she fails to adhere to the field's dominant concern and deviates from the primary public narrative on which adherent vegans base their ontological narratives.

Barbara, latching onto the point I made, asked: "But do we think that we are morally superior?" and immediately answered her own question, "I don't think that I am". Aisha then offered a similar position, "Well, I think that we are actively trying to do some good in the world, but I think that we can't really think of ourselves as morally superior. I think everyone tries to do something good", her face contorted into a frown as she thought about the point. "Well", Veera joined in, "I don't really think that I am 'morally superior'", making air quotes with her hands, "but I am doing something at least". She paused and, after a brief moment of thought, corrected herself. "Actually, we are morally superior. It's 2023. If you go around not knowing what happens to animals in slaughterhouses, then you're choosing to. Like, we've all seen the documentaries: Cowspiracy, Dominion, Earthlings, right?"

Barbara was the first to respond: "I can't get through them", she said, screwing her eyes tight as if the pain she had witnessed had become her own. "Me neither," said Aisha, turning her head down. "I've tried to as well," I noted, "but I must do it in little bits. I can't sit through the whole hour-and-a-half". In doing so, Barbara, Aisha, and I expressed our affective experiences when

witnessing what happens to non-human animals in slaughterhouses. Inadvertently, we had deviated from the public narrative related to the dominant concern. Our inability to watch the documentaries demonstrated our lack of adherence to the field's dominant concern and our deviation from the ontological narratives it offered us.

The discourse shapes both the public and ontological narratives of the actors composing the field, with a concern for animal advocacy shaping what is necessary to advocate for animals and for being vegan. Thus, through my proposing a break with the dominant discourse, I, unintentionally, subverted it for individual vegans' identity rather than their actions aimed at advocating for animal rights. In my inadvertent attempt to subvert the dominant concern and failing, I lost some of the Social Capital I had through my affiliation with it. Moreover, I undermined the dominant ontological narrative wherein attending animal advocacy actions was required to be seen as a vegan.

Veera, a woman in her early 40s with close-cropped hair, moved from where she had been standing on the other side of Steve to take up a position behind Barbara, who sat opposite her. "My cousin is an active member of Anonymous for the Voiceless in Cape Town." My heart sank to the floor as I realised that I had undermined her cousin's work by offering a counter-narrative. "She –I have joined her a couple of times – will stand in the sun for the whole day holding up one of those TV screens," she noted. "And I do think that, and I'm sorry for this, Barbara, that we must do something public like that. If the meat companies can advertise and spread their message on our TVs, then we should be doing the same thing," she added, her face unchanged. In taking up a position as fervently as she does, Veera obverts this praxis, refusing the counter-narrative I offer. Instead of focusing on spreading awareness, she positions her praxis as an opposition to meat-focused corporate bodies. Her obversion is indicative of her knowledge of the field, meat-focused corporate bodies forming a prominent oppositional actor on its margins. Thus, despite her transient role in the protests, her actions afford her more institutionalised Social Capital in the field precisely because she anchors her practice in the public narrative of the "morally pure" vegan (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:119).

"So they know!" Veera continued, "They know exactly what they're doing, and they're still doing it. So yes, I do think we are morally superior. At the very least, we are doing something, it

doesn't matter how small, it's still something," a smile turning the corners of her mouth slightly upwards. "What are they doing? They are consciously contributing to the harm and exploitation of animals. And they know what they are doing," she repeated for emphasis. Her tone remained constant throughout her monologue, reaffirming her position and maintaining her confidence. This moment, particularly when Veera emphasised that she does think "we are morally superior", is integral to setting up activism as a vital aspect of vegan practices. In doing this, she emplots it, making it a narrative resource for the other vegans at the get-together to use when constructing public and ontological narratives. Moreover, Barbara's and the rest of the group's non-activism is interpreted through the lens of the public narrative and thus seen as harmful to it. This moment serves as a means of emplotting non-activism as harm, positioning the entire group, except Veera, as illegitimate vegans.

As if to turn away from her rejection of the counter-narrative, the group turned their attention to me, positioning me as researcher and participant in the occasion, when Veera asked me, "How is your research going?" Initially, I considered the question without regard to the context leading up to this. In asking me this, Veera was trying to shift the focus away from the tension of having 'posers' in their midst. In the narrative that she was championing, neither Aisha, nor Barbara, nor Steve, nor I could be seen as 'true' vegans. As a rule, I do not discuss the contents of my fieldnotes with the people who occupy them. As such, I maintained a vague response that applies to people who have attended a vegan market or one of the get-togethers that make up my field sites. "I find that the majority of people at the markets are not very fond of militant vegans." Taking the previous topic of conversation into consideration, I winced as the words left my mouth. Veera, maintaining her air of interest, raised her eyebrows and asked, "Why do you say that?" My response inadvertently added to the tension at the get-together, as I, in hindsight, realise, doubled down on the counter-narrative. "Well, it seems like people find them annoying. Mainly because they are seen as having an air of moral superiority and that they are pushing their views onto other people."

I realised that I was introducing into the conversation the typical counter-narrative deployed against rights-based vegans in the field. This narrative positions vegans who protest as "militant vegans", as "killjoys" within veganism itself. Because the vegans at the market do not include

protests as part of their vegan practice, they position vegans who do as “killjoys” (*ibid*). Through this, the vegans who do not protest use their Social Capital to subvert the practice of protesting and its incorporation into the field's public narrative. However, because of the number of adherents to the dominant concern, attempts at subversion are ineffective, as they are not supported and thus alienate mainstream adherents, resulting in the loss of networks and relationships that compose their Social Capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:119). They do, however, through their attempts at subversion, invoke new sets of care relations for vegans to consider, allowing for the renegotiation of ontological narratives.

## Managing Narratives

When writing up my fieldnotes, I considered this moment a break with the dominant discourse, and so a break within the ‘community’ Veera sees as one of “sheer likeness” (Bauman, 2000:100). I thought that she had noted the break in the conversation and reigned the public narrative back into adherence with the dominant discourse. Because the field is, in fact, not homogeneous and the dominant discourse is forced to deal with breaks, Mandla’s opposition to the dominant discourse from his health-concerned stall in the “Bits and Bobs” aisle, I consider dealing with these breaks a ritual. Ritual, in this sense, pertains to the recurring change of state in a relatively stable society (Turner, 1969:94). Rituals typically follow a three-phase process in which the participant, or a group of participants, is first separated from the rest of the group, either symbolically or physically. Once separated, the participant experiences ambiguity in their role or status in the group. As they pass through the liminal phase, the group reincorporates them with a recognised status (*ibid*). In this case, Barbara goes from being recognised as a legitimate member of the field of veganism in Johannesburg to being only tentatively included in it.

I start with Barbara’s practice because it positions her as a deviant in the group, and the field I interacted with positioned her health-based concern on its margins. Because she deviates from the animal advocacy concern that dominates the field, she, like health concerns, is relegated to the field's discursive and physical margins. As I show in Chapter 3, in opposition to the field’s dominant discourse, the social actors affiliated with a health-based concern are afforded the least Social Capital in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:119). Consequently, Mandla, whom I

introduced as a health-based vegan vendor in the introduction, takes up a position on the edges of the market. In contrast, animal-advocacy concerned vendors enjoy prime positioning in the food court. Although Mandla is not (re)incorporated into the field as Barbara is, the intersections of race and class that meet with him position him as a potential ‘character’ in the public narratives of the field. That is, due to his position in the “Bits and Bobs” aisle, he is not made central to the field's dominant discourse. He is thus less compelled to adhere to the public scripts the field establishes through its public narratives. He does not need to present his products as “100% vegan” or emphasise their cruelty-free status, as the vendors in the food court do. The vendors who do, however, offer resources for vegans to use in constructing what Somers (1994:631) calls a counter-narrative, a narrative that “lays the groundwork” for ontological narratives that oppose a public narrative. In fact, when I associate the aisle with Steve’s notion of Karma, it is because the motifs and symbols in that aisle have the potential to support his Karma-based counter-narrative. Although being positioned in the “Bits and Bobs” aisle has negative economic consequences for Mandla, his obscuring within the aisle offers legitimacy to the vegans who deviate from the dominant discourse. Here, he shows that worlds outside of the dominant discourse are possible.

However, Mandla's emplotment on the margins of the field reinscribes the logic of coloniality onto it (Maldonado-Torres, 2017c:248). The barriers that coloniality imposes confine his narrative potential to the limits of the field. Because he is emplotted on the margins and because this emplotment stems from colonial logics, his narrative potential is only a potential for the margins and within the same logics that maintain his marginality. This restriction, however, applies to all the social actors in the field. As I show in Chapter Two, the infrastructure that the market depends on stems from the logics of coloniality; the same logic contributes to a public narrative within the field that relegates even experts in ‘alternative’ health to the edges, removes their legitimacy, and makes them into parochial characters that seek to subvert the dominant discourse. The people adhering to the field's dominant discourse see those who seek to subvert it as a deviant position within the field, requiring a righting to align with it.

When Barbara occupied an ambiguous position in the group because she deviated from the dominant discourse, and I unknowingly added to this ambiguity, asking if she felt that “by not

going to these ‘protests’ [she was] adding to the harming of animals?” Thus, her response “yes! It’s like, by not being there and by not standing in the sun for hours with a TV showing the horrible things that happen in there, that I am contributing!” is two-fold. First, her acceptance of the field’s dominant discourse, in the “yes!”, and second, to her dislike for the suffering she must undergo to adhere to said narrative, “standing in the sun for hours with a TV showing the horrible things that happen in there”. However, she does not perform the labour, nor accept the role of the “self-sacrificing” or “morally pure” vegan, emplotted as part of the public narrative that the field offers her.

Moreover, I considered Barbara’s guilt an escape from the dogmatism I had experienced in the field. Her guilt, or the guilt vegans express in relation to not performing the labour required in adhering to the dominant discourse, was both a diagnostic for noting deviation from the public narrative and the starting point for rituals that served to bring ‘deviant’ members of the field back into alignment with the dominant discourse. I considered her praxes through the lens of de la Bellacasa’s care (2017:5). Noting that she, like the other members of the group, adhered to the care tripartite—an affective connection, an ethical imperative, and the doing of labour to maintain care (*ibid*)—but with a focus on her bodily health rather than on animal advocacy, I questioned the deviancy of her position. She, like Mandla and Lukhanyo, oriented their praxes toward health; however, both Mandla and Lukhanyo differed from her in their ontological approach to health. Rooting their approach in ancestrally informed understandings of health, they deviated not only from the dominant concern but also from the colonial logics that legitimised it. Their approach to health, along with their concern, led them to adopt deviant positions alongside Barbara. However, because she adhered to the logic that the dominant concern rested on her deviancy, her position was consolidated and reincorporated into the field. While the field reincorporated her, both men remained on its margins, maintaining their positions without affording them legitimacy within it. The field thus tolerated them but did not accept them.

Their tolerance speaks to, as I establish in Chapter Three, the use of cheap labour in the field, while acknowledging the benefits of cheap labour, the detriments are smoothed over. The violence of veganism in Johannesburg is thus not addressed but consolidated. That is, to obscure the violence that vegan care perpetuates, the field focuses on care itself. The violence, like the

"Bits and Bobs" aisle, reveals the inconsistencies of care within the field, showing who has the power to assert themselves and who does not. In revealing the inconsistencies, the violence also offers vegans the resources to construct a counter-narrative that veers away from the violence that the dominant discourse perpetuates. In this Chapter, it becomes clear that vegans who adhere to the dominant concern and its discourse have the power to exercise rituals of unification, ensuring that the field moves only in the direction of the dominant discourse. The field facilitates this concern; the food court is the centre for animal-advocacy concerns at markets, where they receive electrical power and the power to assert themselves in the prime position. At get-togethers, instead of electrical power, animal advocates can unify the field one deviant vegan at a time. The deviant vegans thus take up positions on the margins, rarely attending get-togethers, occupying marginalised areas of the markets. The field, although apparently diverse, is quelled through a dogmatic adherence to the dominant discourse that animates it.

Steve's narrative, which incorporates a Karma-based approach to his vegan practice, is equally deviant within the dominant discourse. However, when Steve positioned it as if "the world" had Karma, and that he could contribute to its salvation through his contribution of "better karma", he took on a distinctly Christian tenet. Steve's use of the concept thus diverts from the Hindu understanding and practice thereof. His understanding incorporates Christian tenets of salvation, in which "the world" needs to accumulate good Karma. He takes this one step further, in that, as in Christianity, human actors are used to bring about the world's good Karma (Clifford and Anatolios, 2005:741). However, his Karma-based counter-narrative is only possible through the narrative resources offered in the "Bits and Bobs" aisle.

When Steve positions himself as one of the contributors to good Karma in the world, he contributes to a counter-narrative that aligns him with a messianic role. In selectively appropriating Karma, he connects himself to Hindu and Buddhist philosophy through the concept of Ahimsa. His use of the term here, however, stays true to the religious understanding of "the virtue of non-injury" (Torwestern and Rosset, 1994: 225), or, literally, non-violence (Ramchiary, 2013). Steve positions ahimsa as the compass for his actions, non-violent actions being good and violent ones being violent. Thus, good Karma is non-violent and bad Karma is violent. Although his use of Karma does not conform to the Hindu and Buddhist definitions, his

use of it, his understanding thereof, is indicative of his positionality, his emplotment (*ibid*:617), as a white, Afrikaans-speaking man in Johannesburg who was raised Christian, in a country and language group that is inherently Christian (Hamans, 2021). More than this, his appropriation of Karma, his extension of it to “the world”, and his specifying that “[he] do no harm to an animal” through this practice associates him with an animal-advocacy “matter of concern” (Latour, 2004:24), which dominates the field of veganism in Johannesburg.

De la Bellacasa’s (2017:5) model of care aligns with Steve's understanding of veganism, as it has clear ethical, affective, and labour components. That is an ethical imperative to stop animal exploitation, an affective connection to the stopping of animal exploitation, and then the labour of being vegan. Following my approach with Barbara’s positioning, I find that Steve’s narrative also overlaps with de la Bellacasa’s understanding of care (2017:5); care is composed of an ethical component, which comes in through the ethical stance to not harm, an affective component, which he addresses in not contributing to “bad karma”, and a labour component, which Steve exercises through his veganism.

However, through Veera’s point in the conversation, she adds the labour of protesting against animal cruelty, an addition drawn from the hegemonic group within veganism in Johannesburg. That is, the vegans who advocate against non-human animal injustices extend what they deem “possible and practicable” to include protesting and active advocacy against these injustices. Barbara’s guilt stems from not doing this labour, not from the lack of labour in her vegan practice, as she excludes all forms of “exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose” (Vegan Society, 2022), but from not doing the added labour that the dominant concern adds to this definition. Steve also suffers from this, as he does not join the protests that Veera does. As such, Veera subjects Steve to the same ritual that she subjects Barbara, Aisha, and me to.

Although these rituals are an everyday occurrence, they do not deal with the violence of vegan care. In the previous chapters, I set up vegan care as compromised because of its emplotment in colonial and apartheid structures. The ritual in the conversation, through the reaffirmation of the dominant discourse, sets up a “coloniality of being” again (Maldonado-Torres, 2014:651). As the

dominant discourse specifies a care for animal advocacy, the vegan field practices care focused on the ending of animal exploitation. Steve, however, notes that “The notion of Ahimsa, or non-harm, is something that I care about. By not harming, I don’t contribute to bad karma”. In doing this, he constructs a counter-narrative that incorporates the symbolism present in the “Bits and Bobs” aisle. Although he effectively deploys this counter-narrative for himself, the narrative needs to align with a public narrative, such as the “morally pure” or “self-sacrificing” vegan.

However, despite not being recognised as a legitimate narrative in the field, as it does not incorporate protest attendance in its practice, it is compromised because it depends on cheap labour to further the consumptive aspect of animal-advocacy, and does not address the infrastructural violences that marginalise both the people providing cheap labour and indigenous or alternative knowledge. Steve's counter-narrative echoes the hierarchy set up in the “coloniality of being” that Maldonado-Torres (*ibid*) argues operates through and enables modernity. Said hierarchy, based on the Christian “great chain of being,” is first and foremost a racialised hierarchy that distributes power to groups of people based on their race (Moore, 2017:3), with northwestern Europeans positioned at the top of this hierarchy. Thus, in maintaining an animal-advocacy concern as the dominant discourse of the field of veganism in Johannesburg, the violence of vegan care is also maintained.

The ritual I detail above does not address what van Dooren (2015) calls Violent Care, in which care for one necessarily entails violence against another, imbued in the praxes of vegans adhering to the dominant discourse. Instead, the ritual works on three levels. On the first level, dealing with “matters of concern” (Latour, 2004:24), the ritual serves a homogenising purpose, flattening any deviation from the dominant “matter of concern” in the field (*ibid*). On the second level, regarding the structures through which the field operates, the ritual maintains a singular focus on animal advocacy, marginalising 'deviant' actors. Through marginalising the actors, the ritual obscures the structural and infrastructural violence they must endure to enable the field’s functioning. The third level concerns the emplotment of the people composing the field in the obscured structures that the logics of coloniality inform.

The ritual, having homogenised the “matters of concern” and marginalised the people who experience violence (Latour, 2004:24), jeopardises the field’s care; the public narratives in the field focus on the telling of animal advocacy stories. In this case, the institution of the field appropriates stories of self-sacrifice, “[we] stand in the sun for the whole day holding up one of those TV screens”, which tell vegans how to be vegan throughout their interactions in the field. Because these public narratives structure how and with whom vegans interact (*ibid*:618), they also position vegans within the field of veganism in Johannesburg, in turn connecting them to a network of other vegans. Their positions in the field emplot them in social networks that give meaning to appropriated stories, not only as a means of validating vegans but also as a way of informing vegans’ understanding of themselves. It provides them with a guiding narrative to follow. In short, public narratives of self-sacrificing vegans tell vegans how to be vegan and how to interact with people in the field. Through consistent interaction with these narratives, with vegans, and with the field, vegans’ ontological narratives change to incorporate them as understandings of themselves.

These rituals tell vegans how to act. It establishes public narratives that tell vegans how to be in the field; this then extends to their ontological narrative, as vegans form part of an interactive composition concentrated around their concerns. However, because “the capacity to act depends to a great extent on having an evaluative framework shaped by what [Taylor (1991)] calls ‘hypergoods’”, which are a set of “principles and values” (Somers, 1994:617). In the field, public narratives, like the self-sacrificing vegan, shape these “principles and values” to accommodate the dominant discourse, which then becomes the narrative theme through which events are processed (*ibid*). The narrative theme thus informs the public narrative, which, in turn, informs the ontological narrative of vegans in the field.

The rituals thus function at an ontological level, rendering the people, the focus of the ritual, adherents to an animal-advocacy concern. In shifting their evaluative criteria to align with the dominant discourse (Somers, 1994:617), care is also changed, not necessarily in how vegans exercise it but in whom they aim it. Prior to the ritual, legitimising a relative heterogeneity of concerns, animal advocacy vegans compose the field alongside health-concerned vegans, as long as it does not subvert the dominant discourse’s concern. Should a subversion arise, as in

Barbara's justification for not attending protests as a health-concerned vegan, vegans affiliated with the dominant discourse can implement the ritual to righten the course of, not merely the individual, but the collective composing the episode in which it occurs. In this way, the ritual acts as a funnel of care within the process of maintaining the dominant discourse.

In maintaining the dominant discourse, the ritual focuses care on animal advocacy. Through a turning toward animal advocacy, there is a consequent turning away from care for a health-based or environmental "matter of concern" (Latour, 2004:24). This means a shift toward care for non-human animal bodies and away from care for human and non-human animal bodies. Here is a flipping of speciesist ideals, where humans are afforded supremacy within the hierarchies set up during the colonial period (Maldonado-Torres, 2014:651); here, non-human animals, particularly animals bred as livestock, are given supremacy over some humans. Thus, maintaining the dominant discourse, centring animal advocacy, marginalises the other "matters of concern" that compose the field (Latour, 2004:24). The consequence is that the focus of care within the marginalised concerns also marginalises their care. Thus, in shifting care away from human bodies, the environment, and the processes that harm them, these harms are allowed to continue.

The maintenance and reliance on an ontological narrative based on the dominant discourse entails a maintenance of the "long-standing patterns of power" "that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007:243). Most notably, the field rests on the "patterns of power" affording the intersubjective relations that occur through and in terms of labour (*ibid*). That is, the field depends on cheap labour for the production of commodities. This labour needs to be cheap, as settlers established a hierarchy of being during the colonial period, and the same hierarchical logic continues in colonality, which is at play in the provision of cheap labour. The hierarchy, "vertical in character", positioned people according to the "degree of humanity" that the 'lightness' of their skin afforded them (*ibid*:244). Thus, primarily black people composed the labourers doing said cheap labour in the field of veganism. This contradiction characterises the field, hence my use of van Dooren's (2015) term Violent Care to address how care for one group means less care for another. Initially, I considered the rituals, one of which I detail above, a means of dealing with this contradiction,

but as I show here, they reinforce the violent care of the field rather than reflect on it. In fact, I consider these rituals internal negotiations that herd people who deviate from the dominant discourse back towards it.

Guilt is integral to this ritual process as it performs a diagnostic role for the vegans imposing the ritual. They note the expression of guilt and evaluate it as Veera and Steve did when I interjected after Barbara noted that “by not being there and by not standing in the sun for hours with a TV showing the horrible things that happen in there”. They then exemplify the actions of animal advocates like themselves as the standard for practising veganism, defining elements of a public narrative that goes on to shape the ontological narratives of the vegans present. Guilt thus does the work of highlighting the incongruencies of the group. An evaluation of these incongruencies leads to further categorisation into the deviant group that the dominant group needs to talk the incongruent person back from. Then the application of the ritual brings the group back into alignment, homogenising it and ensuring that care remains focused on animal advocacy. Guilt is thus integral to the containment of the field within the structures and infrastructures of coloniality. However, the field offers only resources for creating ontological narratives that cater to the sense of belonging of white English- and Afrikaans-speaking people.

The field of veganism in Johannesburg does not address the contradictions that characterise its care praxes, as it maintains primarily white nostalgias and allows the recreation of settler ontological narratives. Instead, it eliminates dissent from the dominant discourse, providing spaces away from scrutiny, stigma, and being the killjoy (Ahmed, 2010). Although providing this space enables the curation of public narratives related to veganism, because the spaces recreate white settler nostalgias, they force counter-narratives to align with the dominant discourse. In doing so, erasing the possibility of moving away from the violence that the structures the field depends on imbues vegan care in Johannesburg with. Instead of looking to the margins for ways to walk away from the violence of extractive labour, stemming from racial and class-based exclusion, the field smooths over these violences to allow for the smooth functioning of the field and the structures it rests on.

The counter-narratives, grounded in settler nostalgias, that reiterate colonial narratives which position people according to the “coloniality of being” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Because people use narratives to make sense of their lives (Somers, 1994:620), the reiteration of narratives of coloniality reinscribes said hierarchy onto their identities. This emplotment, the positioning of people in events that exemplify this hierarchy, particularly black working-class people as labourers in the field, extends this narrative to the field. This emplotment sets up a parallel public narrative in the field. Where one tells vegans how to be vegan in the field, the other assigns the role of labourer to black people in the field. Both do the work of positioning; the first sets the public script for being vegan, while the other sets the public script for being black in the field. Intersecting with black vegans, the scripts compete and, although allowing for “selective appropriation” of events (Somers, 1994:614), the field's reliance on colonial structures and the consequent emplotment of vegans, black people, and black vegans within these, reduces the diversity of events. The field thus reiterates the violence of coloniality through both public narratives and reduces the ability for alternative narratives to rise through a dogmatic adherence to an animal-advocacy concern.

More than this, the ontological narratives available to vegans in the field are inherently restricted to the resources the field provides. In this case, the field provides vegans plastic proteins that convey nostalgic flavours, textures and smells. Similarly, the spaces they walk through, in the form of markets and restaurants hosting get-togethers, are predicated on nostalgic labour dynamics. It is in the plastic proteins, borne to the field through the exploitative structural violence and reinforced through infrastructural violence, as I show in Chapter Four, that vegans find their emplotment. Like my grandmother, dealing with the tension of having her ontological narrative scrutinised, so too vegans are faced with the need to create a counter-narrative to replace the ontological narrative that they shatter with their newfound vegan practice. However, where my grandmother had no resources for her to make sense of the events I put her through, vegans are handed spaces allowing them to construct counter-narratives and new ontological narratives. The difficulty with these resources is that they are, like the pub's infrastructure that the field depends on, as I show in Chapter Two, accrued upon hierarchies set through coloniality's relations. Thus, the ontological narratives vegans can construct as a means of

repairing, or countering, the questioning of their original ontological narratives are points from which to construct settler narratives.

In this chapter, I argue that the field of veganism in Johannesburg is sustained by cyclical counter-narratives that manage the incompatibility between vegans' ontological narratives and the racial and gendered structures of coloniality that underpin it. I demonstrate this through an analysis of two ruptured dinners; one centring on my grandmother and the other occurring at a vegan get-together. My analysis of the two illustrates how practices of care, guilt, and moral superiority are used as tools to discipline those who deviate from the field's dominant discourse and, using Somer's theory of narrative identity, how it provides vegans with a set of resources to construct counter-narratives to the ontological narratives they rupture when becoming vegan. My grandmother stands as an example of the lack of these resources, while the embracing of van Dooren's *Violent Care* shows vegans' inability to create ontological narratives that are free from the violent confines that the field imposes.

# Conclusion

I structure this thesis to show that the markets centre white, Afrikaner and English nostalgia as the anchor for vegan belonging. The market poses foods like boerewors and phish and chips as the centre point of the “main attraction”; the food court, while positioning alternative food histories and ways of being vegan on the market’s edges. I then move to how the infrastructure the market depends on reproduces colonial and apartheid spatial logics that curate the patronage that this nostalgia appeals to, and depends on the invisible labour of black women. In this way, I show how Global South and Decolonial scholarship changes the Northern frameworks that I employ to understand the field. Vegans deviating from the dominant animal rights-based veganism, grounded in the UK Vegan Society’s (2020) definition of veganism, and thus not participating in the proliferation of “plastic proteins”, are positioned on the edges of the market’s infrastructural and the marketgoers’ epistemic means. Although I depend on my participation and observation of the field, using my own experiences as a means of bringing depth to it, I also follow the material aspects like the commodity chains that supply the “plastic proteins” through which project nostalgic flavours, such as boerewors, onto the market. I show how, through commodity fetishism and the cheapening of racialised labour, the exploitation that facilitates the flow of “plastic proteins” into the field. Finally, I demonstrate how the positioning of alternative vegan practices at the market’s edges removes narrative resources for vegans to construct counter-narratives, enabling them to find a sense of belonging away from their former omnivorous identities. In this way, vegans are trapped in cycles of narrative construction that draw on the nostalgias of settler life.

In Chapter One, I argue that the vegan markets are structured on—and reproduce—the race and class-based hierarchies. I focus on boerewors to analyse how nostalgic, Afrikaner-nationalist, diacritics create a sense of belonging for a white, middle-class customer base, while depending on the invisible labour black women provide. In doing this, I show how vegans practise their veganism in an apparently diverse marketplace, while obscuring the historical structures of exclusion and extraction. In doing so, I show how the field enables me to understand its micropolitics. At this point, I found that the markets kept foregrounding aspects of my identity

tied up in omnivorous foodways. I had mapped the field of veganism in Johannesburg, but could not include my Afrikaner home in terms of the commensality and belonging I experienced through family meals, which were centred here. Although Bourdieu's concept of field (Little, 2011) was useful for mapping the micropolitics of the field, I turned to Latour (2010:478), whose "matters of concern" allowed me to include the extended connections to my family and the networks that formed around my identity, enabling me to retain the belonging I felt. With this sense of belonging and the nostalgia from which I drew it, in mind, I delved deeper into the elements that rooted them in the markets.

I then extend this in Chapter Two, where I argue that the Free-love Vegan Market's moral underpinnings depend on infrastructures that reproduce coloniality, materially and politically sustaining it. I trace the electrical cables from the pub hosting the market to the stalls in the food court. Here, I show how the infrastructure distributes power to vendors aligned with the market's dominant animal rights approach to veganism. Vendors who align with the animal rights approach take up positions in the food court, the market's "main attraction". In contrast, vendors like Mandla, who practice a health-based veganism, are relegated to the periphery. After my analysis, I suggest that the market's organisation is not neutral but curates a space centring white nostalgia while marginalising alternative practices. In doing so, I uncover veganism's entanglement with infrastructures of exploitation and erasure. At this point, I turned to Latour's (2010:478) "matters of concern" to extend the politics from the field to those structuring my familial connections and the networks that brought these nostalgic politics into the field.

In Chapter Three, I argue that the "Bits and Bobs" aisle is a politically and spatially marginalised area that reflects the hierarchy I uncover in Chapters One and Two. I use Larkin's poetics of infrastructure to show how vendors like Mandla—practising a health-based veganism—are relegated to the margins of the field. In contrast, the nostalgically fueled food vendors take up the food court at the market's centre. I show how this spatial ordering draws on what Maldonado-Torres (2007:451) calls the "coloniality of being" to devalue practices rooted in non-Western knowledge. This process of devaluation allows the alternative practices, crowded into the "Bits and Bobs" aisle, to remain in the field but always at the margins. I drew on Latour's (2010) "matters of concern" to see how the networks and connections centred around

these practices were themselves devalued through marginalisation. In doing so, I show how the infrastructure I highlight in Chapter Two contributes to the marginalisation and thus the devaluation of alternative practices. Questioning why the objects centring the nostalgia offered me a sense of familiarity, I followed the proteins that carried these nostalgic flavours to their origins.

In Chapter Four, I argue that “plastic proteins” are central to the field of veganism in Johannesburg. However, what I thought were ethical alternatives were, in fact, material embodiments of van Dooren’s *Violent Care* (2015). They allowed vegans to care for non-human animals while relying on the cheap labour that people of colour provide. Moore’s (2017) “four cheaps”, Mbembe’s (2003) “deathworlds”, and Agamben’s (1998) *homo sacer* allowed me to understand how the global value chains “plastic proteins” travelled along, are grounded in the logic of Maldonado-Torres’ (2007:451) “coloniality of being”. In this chapter, I show how vegan moral consumption is a negotiated and compromised process that obscures the violence it deals to the humans who make plastic proteins. I was confronted by the fact that vegans, despite our claim to moral consumption, were participating in the same exclusionary logics, exploitative relations, and the infrastructures that enabled them. With the field confining me to the violence inherent therein, I questioned my ability to find a sense of belonging and an identity that allowed me to cope with these contradictory elements.

In Chapter Five, I argue that vegans in the field of veganism in Johannesburg constantly cycle through moments in which they deploy counter-narratives to manage the incompatibility between their moral stance and the structures and infrastructures they depend on. I show this when I analyse two ruptured dinners; one where I rupture the family ritual my grandmother engages me in, and the other centring on the rupturing of commensality at a vegan get-together. My analysis shows how those who deviate from the field’s dominant discourse are brought back into alignment and, using Somers’s theory of narrative identity, how it draws on the narrative resources the markets offer to construct counter-narratives to the structures and infrastructures that disrupt vegans’ moral stance. My grandmother has a set of resources that are set outside the field and, thus, lacks the ability to construct a counter-narrative that incorporates my veganism. However, as I show throughout this thesis, the narrative resources available to vegans are

themselves confined to the structures and infrastructures that depend on extractivism and exploitation. The uncertainty characterising the get-together is a consequence of the field's dependency on colonial and apartheid structures and infrastructures. The field of veganism cannot digest the complexity of its underpinnings, leading it to offer unmoored narrative resources that leave the people in it in a constant cycle of attempts to reconcile their identities with these underpinnings.

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