"I felt like the words became a part of me":

South African feminist live poetry and the affective encounter

By

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A thesis submitted for partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Linguistics, in the Department of Linguistics, University of the Western Cape

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November 2022

Abstract

Live poetry exists as a powerful channel through which to protest against oppressive mechanisms prevalent in society. The platform – a safe space for the voices that are often silenced in other discursive spaces – has grown in popularity as a powerful avenue for feminists to share personal narratives, provoke discussions on gender-based violence (GBV), discursively resist against dominating patriarchal power, and empower women through the sense of community that is created during, and following, a live poetry event. By sharing deeply personal narratives of lived-experiences, a poet has the power to connect with an audience in profound ways. Therefore, live poetry, due to the compelling discursive mechanisms and embodiment used, has the ability to bring about powerful instances of affect, where audience members feel connected with the poets' narratives. Over time, these affective encounters could result in deeper empathic abilities for understanding the stories of others and could lead to changes in attitudes, with positive implications for the fight for women empowerment.

However, the potential impact of live poetry on audience members – in South Africa and across the globe – is significantly under-researched. This study thus aims to help address this gap by presenting an affective analysis of South African feminist live poetry, investigating affective reactions amongst focus-group participants after attending a live poetry event. Importantly, I present a proposed framework for conducting an affective analysis of a data set, enabling an assessment of the different elements that are present before, during, and after an affective encounter. This organised and robust approach is necessary to better understand affective moments and their potential to encourage change.

The proposed framework is utilised to conduct an affective analysis of a focus-group discussion that was held following a live poetry event in Cape Town, South Africa. The five participants were guided through a semi-structured discussion about the impact of the poetry event, with the research aim being to identify reflections of affective moments in their responses. Affect theory is used as the main theoretical lens through which to assess the data, with feminist critical discourse analysis used as a tool to support the affective analysis. Following this, a discussion is had regarding the potential that exists for the space created by live poetry to support activist efforts, with the theory that these strong affective encounters can lead to attitudinal changes, which could result in the

discursive and behavioural changes needed to support broader societal transformation. Here, the potential exists for live poetry to be used as a platform through which to contribute to the feminist fight for women's rights and safety.

Keywords

Declaration

I declare that this thesis, ***"I felt like the words became a part of me":* South African feminist live poetry and the affective encounter**, is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated by and acknowledged with complete references.

Name: **Jenah McKenzie**   Date: **11 November 2022**

Signature:

Acknowledgments

Coming to the end of this research journey has sparked inevitable moments of self-reflection; moments in conversation with myself, with my dreams, with my passions. A lot of heart has gone into this project. Those who are close to me will know that writing has been the one steady thing that has followed me all my life. Those who are close to me will also know that the year this MA journey started, I experienced an amalgamation of life-altering event after life-altering event. But writing this thesis, diving deep into new ideas and new worlds of cognition, offered me a refuge. It was the writing and the curiosity to continue learning that held me. So, firstly, I am grateful for this experience. Being able to combine my passion for writing, poetry, continuous learning, and (now) affect, has been an incredibly rewarding opportunity.

Of course, I would like to thank my supervisors, Prof Zannie Bock and Mooniq Shaikjee, for their encouragement, for workshopping ideas, for their valuable feedback, and for being so accommodating as I navigated working full-time whilst conducting this research and compiling this thesis. Thank you also to Prof Bock and Prof Christopher Stroud for their generous donation from the Mellon Foundation grant at the University of the Western Cape as part of the funding programme, *Unsettling Paradigms: The Decolonial Turn in the Humanities Curriculum at Universities in South Africa*, that enabled me to organise and host my own poetry event – an experience that younger Jenah would be very proud of.

To my support system, without whom this paper likely would not have come to fruition, you are the sweetest and most supportive friends, partner, and family I could have ever hoped for. Thank you always.

Finally, thank you to the incredible poets and participants who shared in this journey with me. Because of your courage and vulnerability in sharing parts of your worlds with us, I will never again take for granted the power of words and connection. I believe I will feel "*like the words became a part of me*" for the rest of my life.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

"I can just feel this room full of this feminine energy and it was powerful."[1]

1.1 Introductory remarks

When googling the phrase 'vulnerability opposite', the word 'resilience' is offered as an antonym. I argue that this could not be further from the truth; it is through the bravery of being vulnerable that one can build resilience. The power, resilience, and impact of live poetry is only possible through the sharing of vulnerability, lived-experiences, and intimacy that the space welcomes. By sharing deeply personal narratives, a poet has the power to connect with an audience in profound ways. Here, the potential exists for live poetry to be used as a platform through which to contribute to the feminist fight for women's rights and safety. To address the potential that exists in live poetry spaces as channels for feminist activism, in this thesis I present an affective analysis of a sample of South African feminist live poetry.

Live poetry, more popularly termed 'spoken word poetry', provides a space for poets to share their lived-experiences, to speak out against social injustices, and act as "agents for self-empowerment and self-determination" (de Bruijn & Oudenhuijsen, 2021:745). In this thesis, the term 'live poetry' is preferred over similar phrases: spoken word poetry, slam poetry, and performance poetry. To better define these alternative terms, the meaning of 'spoken word poetry' is in the name itself: it refers to poetry that is spoken out loud instead of, or as well as, written. A branch of spoken word poetry is slam poetry, where the spoken word is used as a medium in competitions. In these competitions, poets share their work to a live audience and are judged according to features such as delivery, authenticity, and creativity (The Official 2007 Poetry Slam Rulebook, quoted by Somers-Willett, 2008 Appendix:149).

The term 'performance poetry' is similarly straightforward in meaning, as it refers to poetry that is 'performed' for or exhibited to other people, with the word 'performance' connoting a type of theatrical act presented on a stage. Whilst 'slam poetry' has a more noticeable difference in definition due to the added element of competition, 'performance poetry' and 'spoken word

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[1] Each chapter in this thesis begins with a quote from the focus-group discussion data, highlighting the significance and power of affect, poetry, and vulnerability.

poetry' are often used interchangeably. However, for reasons that will be explained in the literature review in Chapter 2, this thesis aligns with the views posited by Raphael d'Abdon (2018) that suggests neither of these terms are suitable, nor necessary, when discussing poetry that is shared live. Therefore, I use 'live poetry' in this thesis as it is a term that simply encapsulates the poetry that is being discussed in this research.

To briefly contextualise this study, South Africa is the country with the highest rates of gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide in the world, with recent population-based studies showing that more than one in three women in the country have experienced physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse from men (Interim Steering Committee, 2020:25). There are numerous organisations and researchers that aim to strategise interventions, unearth the root causes of GBV, and improve policies.

Academically and linguistically, I aim to address the persistent presence of GBV and other feminist issues in South Africa (specifically, the discourses surrounding them) through the lens of Affect theory and with the support of a feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA). By analysing how feminist topics are perceived by audience members attending a live poetry event, I also investigate the potential that exists for live poetry to support positive shifts in societal mindsets and priorities regarding women's rights and safety in South Africa. This research will thus contribute to the fight for women empowerment[2] and the fight against GBV, as a form of analytical activism, whereby discourses (in this context, live poems) are analysed in order to explore the extent to which linguistic strategies shape or are shaped by societal structures (Lazar, 2007:145). In doing so, I will add to the work of numerous feminist discourse analysts (see Lazar, 2005 & 2007; Kitzinger, 2000; Linabary, Corple, & Cooky, 2020; Ohito & Nyachae, 2019; Nartey, 2020) who seek to expose the complexities of gendered power relations, which are both discursively (re)produced and challenged in numerous societal contexts (Lazar, 2007:142).

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[2] It is worth noting that there are discourses in sociolinguistics surrounding the use of the term, 'empowerment', in research. Such discourses debate the use of the word, as it is thought of by some critics as a neoliberal concept that "does nothing to dismantle systems of power" and – as it is often elaborated on with the use of metaphors such as 'giving a voice' – it suggests that marginalised groups "lack the capacity to speak, let alone act, on their own behalf without expert assistance" (Bucholtz, Casillas & Lee, 2016:26). Whilst such discussions are important, they do not align with the manner in which the term is used in this thesis; it is used to explain the concept of affect in poetry driving women to feel 'empowered' on their own accord rather than the research itself claiming to 'empower' women (as is the critique of the neoliberal top-down interventions in sociolinguistics).

Whilst it may be difficult to study the exact impact that live poetry has on changing attitudes and broader ideologies, it is possible to understand the power of such discourses through the theories of **affect**. Affect is an unstructured, preconscious response, experienced as a "moment" (Massumi, 2002) that is sensed by, and resonates within, an individual. In a communicative event (such as a live poetry event), the immediate audience interactions with the poetry and post-event conversations can shed light on how live poetry brings about affective responses that, in turn, spur emotions and shift cognitions (Flockemann, 2021:81).

The lens of Affect theory thus acts as an important – and under-researched – avenue through which to assess feminist live poetry's impact on audience members. By conducting an affective analysis of a discussion between selected audience members after an engagement with live poetry, this thesis presents an argument for the strong presence of affective encounters within live poetry. Further, it identifies and suggests the attitudinal, discursive, and behavioural changes that the affective encounter encourages, and theorises how these changes could lead to broader societal transformation to support feminist activist efforts.

This chapter serves as an overview for the research presented in this thesis, and it briefly contextualises the study, presents an argument for the need for this research, defines the research aim and questions, and outlines the chapters to come.

1.2 Gender-based violence and feminism in South Africa

This study is interested in identifying the ways in which live poetry can serve as a safe space to share stories about GBV, to empower others, and to speak out against the injustices of GBV and sexism in South Africa. It is therefore important to situate this research in relation to the larger environment it exists in and has resulted from. GBV can be defined as "violence in which being gendered as a 'man' or 'woman' is significant to the presence and shape of the violence—who is hurt, by whom, how, and importantly why" (Buiten & Naidoo, 2020:63).

According to a sociologically informed framework posited by Denise Buiten and Kammila Naidoo (2020), the persistence of GBV is dependent on factors at a micro-, meso-, and macro-level of the 'gender system' (2020:64-65). The micro-level refers to the ways in which people are socialised to identify themselves and others as belonging to a specific gender with specific characteristics. In

this context, "[v]iolence is gendered when cultural beliefs about gender construct identities in a way that normalises, encourages or justifies violence" (2020:64).

At the meso-level, these socialised ideas impact interactions, where "individuals act in context" and "perform in ways that anticipate the cultural expectations of their audience and require action of others in accordance with dominant gender norms" (Buiten & Naidoo, 2020:65). This concept of "acting in context" relates to theories of identity performance, and it emphasises the importance of the audience taking part in the interaction. This perhaps is a supporting reason for why spaces created by live poetry generate such powerful protest discourses, because the audience – made up of supportive and often equally-emotive, marginalised individuals – encourages marginalised poets to share their lived-experiences and honest sentiments around power with regards to topics such as GBV.

Finally, at the macro-level, GBV is exacerbated through long-held social structures set in place within systems, policies, processes, and institutions. This refers to larger gendered and inequitable divisions with regards to economic inequality, political systems, biases in law enforcement, and so on (Buiten & Naidoo, 2020:65).

Whilst there is a mass of literature and research regarding GBV in South Africa, for the purpose of this study, the main focus of this section is regarding feminist activism and anti-GBV protests in recent years. The more recent feminist activism movement has, notably, been led by young female activists making use of both in-person and digital protest to reach wider audiences and "redefine the boundaries of feminist activism" (Maluleke & Moyer, 2020:872) in the country. These protests, as described by Gavaza Maluleke and Eileen Moyer (2020), often involve the sharing of personal stories and encounters with sexual violence, thereby echoing the famous feminist cry, 'the personal is political'. In doing so, they question "the implicit acceptance of the gendered status quo among politically powerful women […] while also questioning the continued institutionalization of silence around gendered violence in educational, legal, and political domains" (2020:872).

These protests often are presented in the form of 'hashtag politics' that intend to "(a) demonstrate injustice, (b) re-frame discourse, and/or (c) promote policy change" (Kuo, 2018:496). In addition, these hashtags are used to build communities and organise collective action in a relatively easy

and swift manner (Kuo, 2018:496). Prominent examples of hashtag politics in action in South African anti-GBV protests include #RememberKhwezi,[3] #RUReferenceList,[4] and #EndRapeCulture, with the most recent example being #AmINext (Maluleke & Moyer, 2020:871-872; Gouws, 2018:3).

The #AmINext movement was catalysed after Uyinene Mrwetyana, a university student in Cape Town, was raped and murdered in a post office (Buiten & Naidoo, 2020:61-62). The mass mediatisation that was started when Uyinene[5] died developed into a movement fuelled by collective outrage over the state of GBV in South Africa, resulting in nation-wide protests both online and on the streets.

Uyinene is just one of thousands of women that fall victim to GBV in South Africa every year. A commonly heard statistic is that every three hours, a woman is murdered in South Africa, and that only accounts for those cases that are reported (Hendricks, 2019; Madasamy, 2020). This means that although some women's names are commonly known in this context – such as Uyinene Mrwetyana, Hannah Cornelius,[6] and Jesse Hess[7] – it would be impossible to name, let alone know, the names of all the victims of GBV. In response to this impossibility, however, an Instagram page called @KeepTheEnergy[8] continues to share the names of victims every day in an effort to 'keep the energy' following the nation-wide protests and to continue the fight against GBV. This page exemplifies another form of feminist digital activism, and it echoes the words of Awino Okech

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[3] This was instigated in 2016 when four young, female activists engaged in a silent anti-rape protest, holding up signs during an address by Jacob Zuma (the President of South Africa at the time) on live television, with one woman's sign reading "Remember Khwezi". The protest occurred after Fezekile Ntsukela Kuzwayo (known as Khwezi) laid rape charges against Zuma in 2005, which he denied and was later acquitted of, resulting in Khwezi having to flee the country after her life was threatened by Zuma supporters. Many believe Zuma's position of power was exploited to avoid the charges (South African History Online, n.d.a).

[4] This hashtag relates to a protest that started in 2016 with an anonymous post on a Facebook page made for Rhodes University students by other students, *RU Queer Confessions and Crushes*. The post consisted of a list of eleven men's names with no context other than the title "Reference List". The post soon went viral, and it was understood that the names were related to male students at the university who were supposedly guilty of sexual assault (Seddon, 2016).

[5] Whilst recognising that the nature of academic writing is to refer to individuals by their last names for formality purposes, I am is choosing to refer to Uyinene by her first name, as this is the name that has become so widely shared and, along with the #AmINext hashtag, drove the nation-wide anti-GBV movement.

[6] Hannah Cornelius was a student in Stellenbosch who was hijacked, abducted, raped, and murdered in 2017 (Loggenberg-Roberts, 2018).

[7] Jesse Hess was sexually assaulted and murdered by a relative in 2019 in her home in Parow, Cape Town (Evans, 2022).

[8] For further engagement, @KeepTheEnergy can be viewed here: https://www.instagram.com/keeptheenergy/.

(2021:1017), who says: "Rather than retreat to statistics, I choose to remember… In naming, we see these women".

Figure 1.1: Anti-GBV protest outside Cape Town parliament. (Photographed by Neill Kropman, sourced by Morshedi, 2019)

The concept of live poetry is that it is a space for poetry sharing that combines poetry, competition (in the case of slam poetry), community, and audience interaction (Smith & Kraynak, 2009:5). This focus on the stories of marginalised identities, diversity, and "pluralism among its poets" (Somers-Willett, 2009:6), means that live poetry has established itself as a platform for the sharing of personal narratives and supporting or even inciting social change (Hoffman, 2001:49).[9]

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[9] Another example of a creative and discursive space in the South African arts scene that is worth mentioning is the Mothertongue Project, co-founded in 2000 by Sara Matchett and Rehane Abrahams. The collective consists of women who are theatre performers, artists, educators, and writers who "explore keys to the empowerment of women and practical processes of healing and transformation through creative methodologies" (Matchett, 2005:1). In doing so, the space was created "to challenge the silencing and marginalisation of women's voices" and to redress the gender imbalances in South Africa theatre (Matchett, 2005:1).

Therefore, this makes live poetry the perfect discursive space for individuals to share feminist topics and to utilise the space as a means for sharing personal stories and protesting against GBV in South Africa.

1.3 The importance of this research

Whilst there is literature that has studied South African poetry's history relating to traditional oral poetry, feminist poetry in South Africa, and South African poetry in general, there seems to be little to no research conducted on South African feminist *live* poetry. This is, however, not all that surprising due to South African poetry in general being significantly under-researched compared to other poetry communities, despite the multitude of fascinating research avenues this space offers. This research will therefore assist in filling this gap in the existing body of literature.

Additionally, Affect theory seems to be considerably under-researched in South African contexts, apart from some significant contributions from the likes of Miki Flockemann (2019; 2020; 2021) and Mark Libin (2020). Further, although Affect theory has been used as a framework for analysing poetry (see Milne, 2018; Siomopoulos, 1977), there does not appear to be available literature using Affect theory to analyse South African poetry, let alone South African feminist live poetry. Thus, this thesis hopefully will encourage the under-researched context to be given the academic attention it has not yet been afforded.

One of the many reasons why this content should be taking up space within academia, is due to the fact that live poetry is "tied up in powerful social movements that reframed – and validated – cultural identities of minorities" (Hoffman, 2001:49). The space that is created during a live poetry sharing enables marginalised identities to share their voices and thus offers a powerful avenue for South African women – particularly Women of Colour[10] in relation to the country's history and current presence of oppression – to topicalise issues of identity, racism, sexism, GBV, and more. Further, it is important to address the opportunities that exist within the space to support feminist activist movements by creating solidarity and educating, empowering, and welcoming others. The

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[10] The terms 'Women of Colour', 'People of Colour' and 'Poets of Colour' will be used in this thesis to refer to individuals who are not White, with the intention to remove the idea of Whiteness being the norm around which we base identities. This is preferred over terms such as 'non-White', which carries negative connotations of the intense history of the South African apartheid laws that designated spaces and controlled rights using this term.

use of an affective analysis to assess audience reactions to South African feminist live poetry offers some insight into these opportunities for transformation.

From a theoretical point of view, it was important for this research to establish a more organised approach to conducting a review of Affect in a data set, which will be elaborated on in Chapter 3. Briefly, this organised approach was identified as a necessity due to the main focus of this research being the affective encounter and its potential for driving societal changes. Therefore, it was important to develop a clear understanding of the different elements enabling an affective encounter to occur, the various aspects of the affective encounter itself, and the meaning-making processes that transpire following this affective encounter. In addition, it was necessary to be able to theorise what potential attitudinal, discursive, and behavioural shifts can happen as a result of this process of the affective encounter. In order to manage the data in this way, I have proposed a general conceptual framework for conducting an affective analysis with the aim of enabling this process to be more strategic and organised. This lens, which will be further defined in Chapter 3, is thus an important contribution to the existing literature on Affect theory and for Affect analysts to utilise in future research.

1.4 Research aim and questions

As has been presented throughout this introductory chapter, the aim of this research is to assess the impact of the affective encounter (established during the sharing of South African feminist live poetry) on audience members. To break up this aim into more specific elements for analysis, the following research questions are presented:

1. What are the elements needed to enable an affective encounter to take place?
2. How can these elements be organised to enable a more robust affective analysis of a data set?
3. In what ways does live poetry provoke affective reactions for selected audience members, and how are these moments reflected on and described?
4. What follows an affective encounter, and how could this support activism and promote needed societal change?

Through answering these research questions, I am hopeful that this study will contribute to existing literature surrounding live poetry, feminism, and Affect theory.

1.5 Chapter outline

This thesis consists of six chapters including this introduction. The remainder of the thesis consists of the following:

Chapter 2: The literature review provides a detailed overview of the existing literature that is relevant to this study. This includes research pertaining to spoken poetry and its origins, identity performance and poetry as activism, feminist live poetry, the live poetry audience, South African live poetry, and the debate of live poetry's place in academia.

Chapter 3: The theoretical framework outlines the two most important theories that this research has drawn on for its planning, execution, and analysis: feminist critical discourse analysis and Affect theory. In this chapter, these theories are explained, and specific elements of each theory that are relevant to this particular study are highlighted. Importantly, this chapter outlines a proposed framework for conducting an affective analysis of a data set.

Chapter 4: The methodology chapter presents a step-by-step explanation for what decisions were made regarding the actions needed to undertake this research. This includes an explanation of the type of research that was conducted, the process for data collection, the method for data analysis, ethical considerations, and some of the methodological limitations experienced.

Chapter 5: The data analysis chapter makes up the bulk of this thesis and presents an investigation of the data that were acquired during the data collection process. The layout of this chapter follows the proposed framework of an affective analysis that is introduced in Chapter 3.

Chapter 6: The discussion and conclusion chapter presents a reflection on the research findings, and it answers the research questions. Importantly, it theorises the potential that these findings have for supporting the feminist activist movement and advocating for the necessary changes regarding women's rights and safety in South Africa. In addition, there is a review of some of the limitations and inconclusive findings in this research, as well as suggestions for future research.

The importance of the research is also highlighted. In conclusion, this chapter summarises the contents of this thesis and further emphasises the contributions of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

"…words can just be so heavy, […] it's such a privilege to be able to experience that."

2.1 Introductory remarks

This study is interested in understanding the ways in which live poetry is used as a method for sharing lived-experiences, protesting against dominating societal ideologies (specifically with regards to the activism of the feminist movement), and eliciting change within the mindsets of the poetry audience. Whilst there is no available literature reviewing the main interest of this study – South African live poetry from a feminist perspective and its affective impact on audiences – there is a substantial body of literature reviewing the various elements building up this main interest.[11] This chapter therefore situates this study within the context of the existing bodies of literature separated by themes, rather than focusing on specific publications.

I begin this review by reflecting on the multimodal element of live poetry, its ties to traditional oral poetry, and the development into contemporary live poetry. Further, I review identity performance as an element present in live poetry as well as protest discourse and poetry as activism. Following this, an outline of feminist live poetry is offered with a discussion on the presence and importance of intersectionality in live poetry as well as the power to share stories that are often silenced in other societal spaces. The role of the live poetry audience is also discussed, where its contribution to successful meaning-making in live poetry is highlighted. Whilst there is a discussion on South African live poetry, the existing literature is extremely limited. Thus, along with this overview of the existing bodies of work and a review of some South African live poetry communities, research on the benefits of multimodal poetry in a pedagogical context in South Africa is provided. Further, the potential problematic use of the term '*performance* poetry' is raised, with an overview of the term's usage in the context of racial

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[11] During the final stages of writing this thesis, I became aware of a special issue (coordinated by Dr Caterina Calafat and Dr Margalida Pons at the University of Bergen, Norway) being published in the *Culture, Language and Representation* journal that aims to assess the applicability of Affect studies on contemporary poetry analysis and the implications of affect and emotion on social and political contexts. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, this issue is still forthcoming and thus could not be utilised for this literature review. It is, however, promising for the development of Affect theory and its alignment with poetry.

injustice in South Africa. Finally, I outline some of the critique surrounding live poetry and its presence in academia, as well as the rebuttal to such ideas.

2.2 The origins of live poetry and poetry as multimodal

Whilst written poetry has garnered extensive academic research that serves to analyse its history, development, style, and impact, the existing literature investigating the style and impact of spoken poetry is greatly lacking and has only recently started emerging in academic research. However, the environment created by such poetry – one that is inclusive and continuously expanding – creates a fertile space for important conversations regarding inequalities and political resistance, especially with regards to women's rights (see Ohito & Nyachae, 2019; Tenn-Yuk, 2014; Hoffman, 2001).

2.2.1 Oral traditions as the roots of live poetry

It would be remiss to ignore the antecedent traditions of oral poetry – especially given that this research is situated in the South African context – as the roots from which contemporary live poetry developed. In the wider global context, oral poetry can be traced centuries back. However, a literary movement in the 1930s can be identified as a strong influence for contemporary live poetry. The Négritude Movement was formed and developed by a group of Caribbean and African students as an act to "reclaim the value of [B]lackness and African culture" (Tate, n.d.). The movement – largely influenced by the Harlem Renaissance,[12] which laid the groundwork for Black expression – held space for Black poets to express and assert their identities and narratives, discussing important social topics such as oppression, racism, culture, colonisation, and the African diaspora (Basile, n.d.; Micklin, 2008). The noticeable shift from traditional African oral poetry to this more contemporary artform of poetry sharing likely stemmed from the desire by Black poets in the Négritude Movement to reflect on and embrace the historical culture and traditions of oral poetry, and combine this acknowledgement with a new approach to art in response to contemporary life (Tate, n.d.).

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[12] In the 1920s, the Harlem Renaissance spurred a connection with the oral and literature "traditions of African Americans through poetry, prose, music, dance, and theatre" (Fisher, 2003:363).

During World War II, the movement – which initially started in Paris – spread across the globe with the dispersal of these poets and artists, resulting in Négritude becoming a global art movement (Tate, n.d.). This oral tradition was later revived by poets in the United States, who continued to use live poetry to explore similar themes regarding oppression and marginalised identities (Basile, n.d.).

In the South African context, orature can be traced back centuries, with Duncan Brown (1998) offering an extensive overview of this history that ranges "from the songs and stories of the Bushmen (sic) and Khoi to the praise poems (Zulu/Xhosa: 'izibongo'; Sotho: 'lithoko') of African chiefdoms" (Brown, 1998:3).

There is existing literature that identifies praise poems and *iimbongi*[13] as major catalysts spurring the development of live poetry as we know it today (see Seddon, 2008; Odendaal, 2017; Sacks, 2020; Gunner, 1989; George, 2017), with d'Abdon noting that *izibongo* "represents one of the most ancient and significant forms of oral expression in the history of Southern African cultures" (2014a:314). Further, Deborah Seddon suggests that:

> Orature is one of the most socially dynamic and politically potent forms of verbal artistry. It has played an important role throughout the history of South Africa and continues not only to survive but to adapt and thrive within new technological and social contexts. (Seddon, 2008:146)

Thus, in the context of the development of live poetry in South Africa, influences can be identified within the wider global context (the Négritude Movement and the introduction of the poetry slam in Chicago, which will be discussed in the next section) as well as within the history of orature in South African cultures as a means to express identity and to engage with one's culture and community.

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[13] *Iimbongi*: Mafeje defines these individuals as "praise poet[s] who frequented the chief's great place and travelled with him in traditional Nguni society" (Mafeje, 1963: 91) to act as mediators or special advisors between the community and their chief. A more contemporary understanding of *iimbongi* is as "a person involved in the oral production of poetry using traditional styles and techniques in any given context where they are recognised as mediator, praiser, critic and educator" (Kaschula, 2002:47).

2.2.2 The transition into slam

With the wider lens of traditional oral poetry (such as *izibongo*) and the Négritude Movement in mind, the roots of the poetry slam can be traced back to an initiative started due to an increase in concern in the 1980s and '90s regarding poetry's longevity (Somers-Willett, 2009:1-3). This initiative is widely known to have been started by Marc Smith, "a white Chicago construction worker turned poet" (Somers-Willett, 2009:3) who sought out to find a new poetry audience with the hope to re-ignite engagement with poetry (Makhijani, 2005:9; Williamson, 2015:2; Schoppelrei, 2018:87). Smith drew heavily on the influences of traditional oral poetry and instigated the movement that saw live poetry being presented in competition spaces, with slam poetry having its first debut in a venue in Chicago: the Get Me High Lounge (Somers-Willett, 2009:97).

2.2.3 Multimodal poetry

This 'new' genre of poetry and self-expression drew the attraction of popular culture due to its captivating multimodality and the "level of audience engagement possible when poetry was presented as a physical/full sensory experience" (Howard, quoted by Somers-Willett, 2009:4). This "full sensory experience" discussed by Susan Somers-Willett is deemed as such due to the multimodal and 'performative' elements of the spoken word that differ from traditional written forms of poetry, such as physical appearance, setting, audience feedback, vocal dynamics, facial expressions, and hand gestures (2009:16). These added multimodal and nonverbal elements are an important part of this study because, as will be expanded on in later chapters, they help to create the necessary environment for affective encounters to occur.

Valeria Chepp (2016) further highlights live poetry as a means for storytelling, where poems have a narrative structure and where "[t]he performative element means that the story*telling* is as important as the story itself, drawing attention to the *practice* or *doing* of spoken word, as well as to the *context* in which spoken word stories are told" (Chepp, 2016:45, italics in original). Chepp's point about the "doing" of live poetry is also reflected in some of the techniques used such as chanting, singing, and beatboxing, which have "drawn on the artistic conventions of theatre, live music and other performance-based arts" (Gregory, 2008:67-68).

The space created at live poetry events welcomes stories from those with marginalised identities, and poets are encouraged to use their identities to share powerful autobiographical narratives of their lived-experiences, encouraging a "creative, speculative and curious engagement from the audience on experiences of individuals and groups" (Stewart, 2017:36). These storytelling techniques enable audience members to engage with issues of representation and identity in society where, as Jennifer Stewart suggests, this "affirmative engagement is fundamental for introducing the possibility of alternatives for feminism and decolonialism" (2017:36). This idea of using live poetry as a channel for feminism and activism is a concept that will be unpacked in the discussion presented in Chapter 6.

2.3 Lived-experiences: Identity performance and poetry as activism

Live poetry grew in popularity as a space that encourages individuals to be vulnerable in sharing stories of their lived-experiences. This section explores this idea of personal storytelling through a discussion of identity performance. Further, the concept of poetry as a form of protest discourse and its potential for supporting activist efforts is considered.

2.3.1 Identity performance in live poetry

As suggested in the previous section, many poets use the space to speak up about otherwise-silenced issues in society and to bring voice to marginalised identities. In fact, marginalised individuals are often praised and celebrated for the sharing of their lived-experiences and for challenging dominating societal structures (van der Starre, 2015:61-62). This sharing of 'authenticity' is most often deemed as the key to a successful slam poem in competitions, where these personal accounts – or identity narratives – often score higher due to their relatability, vulnerability, and genuineness (Somers-Willett, 2005:57). Due to the personal accounts presented by poets in these spaces, the live poetry scene is a strong example of identity performance in action.

Whilst many theories of identity performance have emerged over the past few decades, this study aligns itself with the framework posited by Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall (2005), which synthesises a range of identity performance research to arrive at a general socio-cultural linguistic approach. They offer a "deliberately broad and open-ended" perspective on identity, defining it as "the social positioning of self and other" (2005:586).

Their interdisciplinary framework is built around the idea that "identity does not emerge at a single analytic level… but operates at multiple levels simultaneously" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005:586). In other words, how identity is performed is dependent on, and emerges from, numerous factors involved in an interaction that demand different approaches. The factors detailed by Bucholtz and Hall include the temporary roles assumed by participants in the interactions, demographic categories at a macro-level, specific cultural backgrounds, ideological structures rooted in cultural values and beliefs, overt and implicit indexicality, and other identities involved in the specific interaction (2005:591-592; 594; 598). The reason why this study is choosing to align with Bucholtz and Hall's general socio-cultural linguistic approach to identity performance is because it takes into account the multi-faceted influences on, and complexities of, identities – something that, I believe, reflects starkly in live poetry.

2.3.2 Poetry as activism

The sharing of identities and personal narratives from marginalised voices naturally position these discursive encounters as activism in the form of protest discourse,[14] with most live poems topicalising dominating societal issues that impact on their lives or the lives of other marginalised people, including issues such as racism, gender inequality, transphobia, homophobia, xenophobia, and so on (Somers-Willett, 2009:69-70). Protest discourse, or counter-discourse, involves directly or indirectly resisting hegemonic societal beliefs through discursive criticism and rejection, thereby removing control from the so-called "power elites" (van Dijk, 1993:250) in mediating ideological (re)production (van Dijk, 1995:13). In this way, the platform of live poetry, which lends itself to the sharing of authenticity and vulnerability, becomes a powerful tool to challenge inequalities whilst (re)framing and validating marginalised identities (Hoffman, 2001:49), and acts as a mechanism with which to grow and mobilise a network of allies to support the redressing of societal issues (Chepp, 2016:44; Somers-Willett, 2014:2).

Not only does the environment of live poetry enable direct resistance against oppressive ideologies through the poems themselves, but it also lays the foundations for building and strengthening communities. These communities act as shared spaces, guided by empathy and understanding

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[14] In this research, activism is understood as any action taken in an effort to fight for the rights of marginsalised and oppressed groups. It is used as a broader umbrella term, under which protest discourse exists as a form of activism.

regarding the members' lived-experiences with oppressive societal structures. The mere existence of these groups, regardless of the discourses shared, naturally results in a form of activism. Elizabeth Schoppelrei (2018), who presents a paper analysing how live poetry can act as a counter-hegemonic tool to illuminate oppressive structures and showcase marginalised identities, expresses that the liberating space created by live poetry results in a "change of consciousness" whereby:

> …this encouragement that poets provoke in the audience members to consider how they can impact the world around them, brings to the surface the main aspect of slam poetry: its relationship to activism. (Schoppelrei, 2018:81)

Formed around shared feelings of pain, the communities offer a sense of belonging and encouragement for the continued fight "for transformative justice through spoken-word poetry as resistance against structural oppression" (Walkington, 2020:664). The discussion in Chapter 6 will further analyse this idea of live poetry as protest discourse.

2.4 Feminist poetry

In line with the overview of feminist and anti-GBV protest in South Africa, which was presented in Chapter 1, there is a need to reflect on the different mediums in which these protests and associated discourses take place. As discussed in this literature review, live poetry makes use of storytelling and identity performance to share lived-experiences, open up dialogues about issues of oppression and human rights violations, and empower audiences from a variety of different marginalised communities. This makes the feminist live poetry scene a significant avenue for driving change through protest discourse. Whilst unfortunately the feminist live poetry scene has not been researched extensively in South Africa, there are a number of researchers who have investigated the feminist techniques used in live poetry – and the impact of these techniques on audiences – across the globe. This section will thus review some of the research conducted in this sphere and speculate on how the concepts could be reflected in South African live poetry.

2.4.1 Feminist live poetry and intersectionality

Jenna Tenn-Yuk (2014) presents a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of activism in the slam poetry scene in Ottawa, Canada. She reflects on the increasing presence of female poets in these spaces

and their success of using the slam stage to (re)define their identities whilst speaking out against dominating and oppressive sexism, misogyny, and racism (2014:83). Further, her use of a CDA to analyse these discourses enabled an in-depth examination of identity construction and specific storytelling techniques used to share personal narratives (2014:117). Importantly, Tenn-Yuk reflects on the impact of multimodality and visual features – such as facial expressions, gazes, and gestures (2014:90) – in eliciting a strong audience engagement, especially with those who relate to the poets' experiences. Here, she references Escoto who expresses that, "…women participating in slam and spoken word poetry, for other women, it gives them a way of relating" (quoted by Tenn-Yuk, 2014:88).

Additionally, Tenn-Yuk and other reviewed research emphasise the importance of intersectionality when it comes to performing, engaging with, and interpreting feminist live poetry. With regards to specific poets, each arrives in the space with an array of "various intersecting identities" (Schoppelrei, 2018:75) that make up the complexities of individual poets. Further – and perhaps more importantly, especially if we are to relate intersectionality to the complexity of the South African feminist context – there is a need for discourses around feminist live poetry in general to focus not only on one issue (i.e. sexism and oppression of women), but to understand that fighting for gender equality means fighting against all forms of discrimination that often overlap and intersect with sexism (i.e. issues of racism, poverty, queerphobia, etc.) (Walkington, 2020:654). To cite Fannie Lou Hamer, "Nobody's free until everybody's free" (quoted by Brooks & Houck, 2010:134). With this understanding, feminist live poetry that is intersectional can create powerful feelings of solidarity.

Research on intersectional feminist live poetry includes topics such as racism and Black feminism[15] (see George, 2017; Walkington, 2020; Collins, 2004; Ohito & Nyachae, 2019), sexuality and Queer communities[16] (see Krpan, 2008), eating disorders and fat-positive activism[17] (see Schoppelrei, 2018), and gender and trans-rights[18] (see Strobel, 2021), amongst others. It is

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[15] See Crystal Valentine and Aaliyah Jihad sharing their poem, *To Be Black and Woman and Alive* here or https://youtu.be/5mBnM2EUp0Q.

[16] See Zenaida Peterson sharing their poem, *Pride/Proud* here or https://youtu.be/2rZsE6aCmaU.

[17] See Rachel Wiley sharing their poem, *Fat Girls Who Considered Starvation When Bulimia Wasn't Enough* here or https://youtu.be/jw_NRdAdlio.

[18] See Max Binder and Mo Crist sharing their poem, *Real Boy/Real Girl* here or https://youtu.be/AK3qJ65WIwc.

within the space of live poetry, where poets with complex and overlapping identities collaborate in creating communities, not only for the audience members who relate to the specific social issues addressed in the discourses (such as racism), but for *all people* who want to – and need to – fight for the rights of *all people* who are impacted by widespread patriarchal oppression.

To quote Audre Lorde, who – as a Black feminist, mother, lesbian, woman, daughter to immigrants, activist, and cancer survivor – is herself an outstanding example of an intersectional feminist poet, no matter the differences between our female contexts, women must stand in unity:

> The women who sustained me through that period were Black and white, old and young, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual, and we all shared a war against the tyrannies of silence. (Lorde, 1984:41)

Lorde highlights the trap of "the separations that have been imposed upon us and which so often we accept" (1984:43), emphasising the importance of avoiding the confined conception that as individual women we should not talk about other women's experiences because we are not knowledgeable enough. There are "endless ways in which we rob ourselves of ourselves and each other" (Lorde, 1984:44), which only slows down and damages the advances of the feminist movement.

2.4.2 Transforming silence in feminist poetry

In line with this knowledge of the importance of intersectionality, Lorde reflects on "the transformation of silence into language and action" (1984:40) with the idea that, as women, we should share in the collective experience of being silenced by patriarchal oppression and utilise whatever feelings of rage or sadness that this fact brings up by channelling that into discourses which, in turn, drive forward restorative action in the feminist movement (1984:40-44). Due to the previous (and ongoing) silencing of women across cultures and communities, the utilisation of *language to reclaim language* becomes a powerful tool to challenge oppressive patriarchal structures. This is a concept that aligns with Maisha Fisher's expression that live poetry "provides people who have been traditionally silenced or ignored an opportunity to present their lives and experiences" (2003:364).

Tiffany Kyser (2010) reflects on the act of using the female body and live poetry to rebel against oppressive patriarchal pressures:

> Because the female body has been so packaged as to how it should look, what it should wear, how it should move, and what it should say and in what manner it should say it, delivering these feminist messages via a freely moving and dressed female body offers a vehement stand against patriarchy and a dynamic example of social action. These poets use their bodies as a subversive act. By standing on stage and speaking out on their oppressions as women in a patriarchal society, they rebel against the oppressive forces, which would prefer silence. (Kyser, 2010:20)

Poetry can thus be a powerful and significant tool to enact social resistance, where a space is provided that gives voice to topics that would otherwise be dismissed or silenced (Davidson, 2010:5). Mirjam de Bruijn and Loes Oudenhuijsen present a paper on the opportunities offered by slam poetry to contribute to the emerging social movement in francophone Africa, where female slam poets utilise the space to act as "pioneers in the search for a voice in public debates" (2021:742) and to "create consciousness through their texts and performances" (2021:742). The paper offers a review on the work of two female slam poets – Mariusca Moukengue from Congo-Brazzaville and Djemi Djiraibe from Chad – who topicalise feminist issues such as the female identity, sexual harassment and GBV, mental illness, and hope in the face of adversity, amongst others (2021:750-753). In the act of storytelling through slam poetry, and being liberated to speak about often-silenced topics, these poets expand the consciousness of the many issues facing women, thus exhibiting the potential power to drive transformation in the minds of individuals and society at large. This potential for transformation instigated by protest discourse will be reviewed in Chapter 6.

2.5 The live poetry audience: Engagement, collaboration, and responsibility

An important aspect of live poetry that drives the success of the meaning-making experience is the engagement between poet and audience. Stewart (2017) reflects on this relationship and the importance of affective moments at live poetry events where (a) the audience feels a connection with the poet and resonates with their sharing of lived-experiences, and (b) there are fundamental spectator–spectator relationships created through a shared sense of meaning-making and

communication, both verbal and non-verbal. Here, the audience is transformed "from passive witnesses to active critical allies, brought together and sharing one experience" (Stewart: 2017, 47-48).

The activeness of the audience in live poetry is exemplified through call-and-response vocalisations where poets directly address the audience, inviting them to "call back a response to a key word or words which the poet utters" (Gregory, 2008:67). Other contributions from the live poetry audience include clapping, head nods to express agreement, words or sounds of affirmation, snapping their fingers, and so on (Kajee, 2011:247; Tenn-Yuk, 2014:6). This interactivity amongst audience members and poets assists in laying the foundation for strong **affective encounters** to occur – a concept that will be unpacked in detail in Chapter 3 in the discussion of Affect theory.

With regards to slam poetry, this audience engagement can even make the difference for competition scores and outcomes, as the engagement contributes to the overall success of the 'performance' element of slam. To quote Somers-Willett:

> …although slam poetry, like much poetry in general, still puts a premium on the importance of the author […] the genre puts a similar premium on the service of its audience. In a spectacular role reversal of a traditional poetry reading, which usually asks its audience to be silently and passively receptive, poetry slams put the audience in the seat of critical power, asking them to immediately and overtly evaluate performed poetry through applause, shouting, and scoring. (Somers-Willet, 2009:24)

In this way, audience collaboration is not only encouraged, but required; it is the *responsibility* of audience members to participate in the communicative event to enhance the power of the meaning-making taking place and to return the energy that is offered by the poets. This idea of energy exchange will also be addressed in Chapter 3 as an important element of the affective encounter.

2.6 South African live poetry

As briefly mentioned, the existing body of literature that investigates the South African live poetry scene is limited. This section thus outlines some of the few studies that have looked into South African live poetry including Susanna Sacks' (2020) discussion comparing the experience of

watching a live poetry event in Cape Town to watching its recording online, d'Abdon and Natalia Molebatsi's (2011) work that analyses an all-female poetry production (*Body of Words*) that was presented in Johannesburg, and Deidre Byrne's (2021) reflections of live poetry as praxis and her overview of the theme of water used in poetry by South African women.

Following this, due to the limited literature available on South African live poetry, a brief overview of existing literature that assesses the impact of live poetry in South African classrooms is offered. Whilst not directly assessing the elements of an actual live poetry event, this literature does provide support for the impact of live poetry – specifically, its multimodal and collaborative elements – on students, highlighting the potential for the use of live poetry in pedagogy as a means to improve inclusion and to transform student engagement with poetry and the English language.

Additionally, this section briefly mentions some of the key poetry groups and figures in the South African live poetry scene, highlighting the strong and growing poetry community in the country. Finally, the term 'performance' in 'performance poetry' is assessed regarding its potentially problematic use when referring to South African poetry, where d'Abdon (2018) argues against the term's relevance and ethics in this context.

2.6.1 Existing reviews of live poetry in South Africa

Sacks (2020) presents a nuanced discussion of live poetry in South Africa, specifically in the city of Cape Town. She reflects on watching a live poetry event involving two South African poets – Antjie Krog and Pieter Odendaal – and compares the experience of a live poetry sharing to viewing recordings of the poetry sharing online, where the "mediatization of performance poetry" (2020:6) has significantly impacted certain aspects of 'performance' including audience engagement, the sharing of authentic stories, and the importance of place in contextualising a poem (2020:5-6). In her analysis, Sacks also touches on aspects of spoken poetry that are more unique to the South African context, including the use of code-switching and multilingualism as poetic devices, localised word choices (for example, with reference to Table Mountain), and thematic topics of decolonisation (2020:8).

D'Abdon and Molebatsi's 2011 paper discusses the all-female poetry show, *Body of Words*, presented at The Market Lab in Johannesburg in May 2010. Their paper reflects on the "extra-

literary efforts" (2011:57) undertaken by the seven women who co-directed the production and shared their poetry topicalising self-love, the body, and feminist activism in an attempt to "keep the poetry movement growing and to keep the dynamic voices and ideals of women in the public eye" (2011:58) through the theatrical poetry production. According to d'Abdon and Molebatsi, it is through productions like these that contribute to the increasing popularity of poetry amongst the youth of South Africa as an "exceedingly strong cultural movement" (2011:60). This relates to a notion that this thesis is looking to investigate in terms of the potential of anti-GBV and feminist live poetry and its impact on audience members, particularly young women living in South Africa.

Byrne (2021) further emphasis the points raised by d'Abdon (presented in his 2018 paper) that criticises the distinction between 'published poets' and 'performance poets'. In line with the discussion of the problematic use of the term 'performance poetry' that will be outlined in Section 2.6.4, Byrne brings to light the fact that the South African poets who are able to publish poetry (i.e. written poetry) are primarily White poets who have easier access to financial resources due to the country's history of racial and class inequalities. Further, Byrne underscores that whilst these published (White) poets often receive awards and their work is prescribed for study, live poetry (which is a space held predominantly by Poets of Colour) does not receive the same "attention of the country's literary elite" (2021:3). Byrne argues, however, that the combination and overlap of spoken and published poetry that is emerging in poetic praxis[19] enables a wider range of semiotic strategies to be used to enable a "depth of meaning that is often not accessible via the page" (2021:4). Byrne illustrates this through an analysis of the recurrent theme of water that emerges in multimodal live poetry by South African women, including Alison Claire Hoskins, Toni Stuart, Koleka Putuma, Wilma Stockenström, and Gabeba Baderoon.

2.6.2 Multimodal poetry as pedagogy in South African classrooms

Denise Newfield and d'Abdon (2015) present their theory that the pedagogical poetry curriculum in South Africa should be reconceptualised, claiming that the way that poetry is currently being implemented in school curricula is "considered too difficult, elitist, or remote from the concerns of everyday life" (2015:511), particularly for students learning English as an additional language.

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[19] Poetic praxis, which is rooted in self-reflection of lived-experiences, refers to the use of poetry to enable individuals and communities to act as change agents to rectify power imbalances by contesting, in expressive and creative ways, important societal issues and offering alternative manners of thinking (Niles, 2010:66; Petteway, 2021:22).

Further, they emphasise the importance of multimodality and acknowledging "the full range of meaning-making resources in human life" (2015:514), where no one mode of meaning-making is valued above the rest. They argue that this way of understanding poetry, and thus of teaching and learning poetry, could serve to empower students – especially those who have been historically disadvantaged – to learn the English language, revive an interest in poetry in school curricula, and enable students to better express themselves.

Similarly, Leila Kajee (2011) conducted a study in a classroom in Johannesburg to review the impact of bringing multimodality into the classroom for students learning English as an additional language. Students were given instructions to engage in a multimodal class presentation, with freedom to choose which multimodal approach to adopt. One of the students presented a poem, using multimodality (through verbal language, gesture, and body language) to express what it meant to him to identify as English (2011:246). Additionally, as is common in live poetry, the audience (the classmates) began to involve themselves in the interaction: One student began drumming on his desk to create a backing rhythm, and others collaborated by expressing enthusiastic "yeah"s and nodding along to the rhythm (2011:247). Kajee emphasises what the opportunities and implications are for pedagogy in South Africa, particularly for the teaching and learning of the English language:

> While the focus of the English teacher in the classroom is literacy and language, this does not only involve the development of a discrete set of skills. A multimodal pedagogy does not aim to distract from these skills, but broadens their definition and conception. As teachers of English we need to acknowledge that different communities value skills other than writing alone, and that our students bring with them a repertoire of social histories which shape them. A multimodal approach gives freer rein to students by providing them with the space to engage and interact through their creativity and agency. (Kajee, 2011:250)

Kajee (2011), as well as Newfield and d'Abdon (2015), highlight numerous points of significance in their studies on the importance of live poetry in South African school curriculums. The diversity of discourse options made available when sharing live poetry – both as the poet and as the audience – means that students are engaged, excited, and actively participating in learning poetry, and the

English language becomes more accessible and less daunting to learn. Further, from a wider perspective, the South African school system is just one context of many that could benefit from the use of live poetry to incite enthusiasm and collaboration.

2.6.3 South African poetry communities and leading figures

South African live poetry can be further situated within the context of specific poetry groups and organisations. One such organisation is that of InZync, a poetry project turned community that offers poetry sessions for various poetic genres (including spoken word, page poets, hip-hop, and praise poems) in Kayamandi, Stellenbosch (Odendaal, 2017:1-2). All languages and cultures are encouraged to participate in this space either as poets or as audience members, collaborating in the "creation of meaningful intergroup/intercultural contact" (Odendaal, 2017:2). Other South African poetry groups include Hear My Voice,[20] The Red Wheelbarrow Poetry,[21] and Current State of Poetry (or CSP),[22] amongst others.

Pieter Odendaal (2017) posits an interesting perspective on InZync, which can be related to any live poetry session, in that the space that is created is temporary, meaning that there is "an undeniable singularity, an unrepeatability, to each show, because each session happens only once and the specific collection of people at the event will never be the same again" (Odendaal, 2017:57). This aligns with Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) socio-cultural linguistic approach to identity performance, in that it highlights the fluidity of identity and engagement within interactions because the outcomes of such interactions are complex, influenced by numerous changing factors, and are adopted only temporarily until new influencing factors are taken into account.

In addition to these poetry communities, it would be remiss of this study to delve into South African poetry without at least mentioning some prominent names in the country's poetry scene, most of whom utilise the space to highlight, discuss, and protest against past and present oppressive forces – social, political, and cultural – in the country. Such poets include the likes of Diana Ferrus

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[20] Hear My Voice is a non-profit based in Tshwane who organise workshops, live poetry events, and open-mic nights. (Their page can be accessed here: https://hearmyvoice.co.za/.)

[21] The Red Wheelbarrow hosts weekly Zoom meetings where poetry is shared by poets across South Africa. (Their page can be accessed here: https://redwheelbarrowpoet.wixsite.com/website.)

[22] CSP shares information about the poetry scene in South Africa, as well as hosts live poetry events and slams. (Their page can be accessed here: https://www.facebook.com/CurrentStateofPoetry/.)

(see Ferrus, 2011), Malika Ndlovu (see Ndlovu, 2009), Toni Stuart (see Toni Giselle Stuart, n.d.), Koleka Putuma (see Putuma, 2017), Pieter Odendaal (see Odendaal, 2018), Lebogang Mashile (see Mashile, 2008), Khadija Heeger (see Heeger, 2022), Xabiso Vili (see Vili, 2018), Makhosazana Xaba (see Xaba, 2008), Zizipho Bam (see Bam, 2022), Lisa Julie (see Julie, 2019), Amy Brown Hendrickse (see Cultural Survival, 2021), Keorapetse Kgositsile (see Kgositsile, Yaa de Villiers & Phalafala, 2023), Siphokazi Jonas (see Cape Town Literary Festival cc., n.d.a), Phillippa Yaa de Villiers (see Yaa de Villiers, 2010), and Maneo Mohale (see Mohale, 2019), amongst many others.

2.6.4 Problematising the term 'performance'

As was alluded to briefly in the introduction chapter of this thesis, one issue that is important to address is the use of the term 'performance' in 'performance poetry', both with regards to its implications on how we understand poetry as well as in the context of South Africa's history of racism. Whilst 'performance poetry' is often used synonymously with 'spoken word poetry' and 'slam poetry' – or as the umbrella term to encompass them both – d'Abdon brings to light an argument that questions the position, relevance, and even the ethics of the term. In his 2018 paper, d'Abdon argues that "the term 'performance poetry/poet' is seldom problematized, and this approach leads (in the South African context) to a reiteration of colonial discourses which are essentialist, divisive, hierarchical and racially-oriented" (2018:58).

Firstly, d'Abdon stresses that the term 'performance' is demeaning (2018:53). He criticises and questions the need to distinguish between poets; what makes one person a 'poet' and another a 'performance poet'? As d'Abdon notes:

> In the field of the performing arts, it is only when coupled with the term poetry that the act of performance is singled out to define its practitioners […] one has 'performance poets', but there is no such thing as performance musicians, performance singers, performance ballerinas or performance actors. (d'Abdon, 2018:51)

This, d'Abdon contends, creates a divide between poets who recite their poems (commonly dubbed as 'performance poets') and poets who read their poems (commonly referred to as 'page poets' or

just as 'poets') (2018:57). Depending on the context these poets find themselves in, being labelled as one or the other creates a hierarchy where one label (usually 'page poets') is given a "superior status" (2018:53) over the other (usually 'performance poets'). In terms of audience engagement, 'performance poets' are given more status due to their supposedly greater ability to captivate a space – through devices such as voice projection, managing the poem's pace, using facial expressions and body language to add to the meaning-making process, using eye contact with the public, and so on (d'Abdon, 2018:53). D'Abdon argues, however, that poets who read their work to an audience also have to, and do, learn these techniques in order to convey emotional experiences effectively with their audience (2018:53). The difference between these two manufactured categories of poets thus only lies in the fact that one poet recites their poems whilst the other reads them.

Further, in a different (and more common) context, 'performance poetry' is viewed as subordinate to 'page poetry' (d'Abdon, 2018:52). This is evident through the comparison of the availability of literature regarding page poetry versus spoken poetry, norms around what types of poetry are taught in schools, and the general debate over live poetry's place in academia – a concept that will be discussed later on in this literature review. In fact, Lebogang Mashile, a well-known Black South African poet, expresses that she "hates" the term 'performance poet', because "[u]nderneath them is the assumption that poetry that is performed is not quite poetry" (Mashile, quoted by d'Abdon, 2018:51).

D'Abdon views this idea of 'page poetry' being superior to 'performance poetry' as stemming from, or at least perpetuated by, the deeply ingrained history of racism, White supremacy, and colonisation in South Africa. He expresses that the term 'performance' takes on a more-weighted meaning, exacerbating "pernicious ignorance and epistemic violence in the South African context" (2018:50), whereby the deeply engrained racist vocabulary that is still used in the country is 'justified' due to it continued use. The racist connotation in this term may stem from the notion that the development of 'performance poetry' was influenced by (and influences) hip-hop culture, within which the community consists mostly of People of Colour rebelling against a racist society. This puts into place a narrative of (a) Black poets 'performing' for a White audience and (b) poetry

by Black writers only being deemed worthy if it is 'performed' (d'Abdon, 2018:51). D'Abdon again quotes Mashile here, where the poet says:

> The people who call me performance poet won't call me an award-winning author… You say performance poet, I hear 'Dance Nigger Dance', because what am I in your eyes besides someone who should be on stage all the time, entertaining you… for free? Certainly not a writer, right? (Mashile, quoted by d'Abdon, 2018:51)

This expression by Mashile highlights the impact that such a term can have on her, due to the history of People of Colour being degraded and mistreated in the country. Based on these points, d'Abdon thus argues for an end to the term 'performance poet' and an adoption of using just the word 'poet' to refer to all poets (2018:58).

Another view on the term, however, is that it is a helpful "umbrella-term to indicate any kind of poetry that is performed" (Odendaal, 2017:9). Odendaal posits that this term is actually more inclusive for the South African poetry space because 'slam poetry' and 'spoken word poetry' originated from the USA and represent the cultural practices and history that exist there, whereas live poetry in South Africa includes more than just slam and spoken word; it also includes culture-specific poetry sharing such as *izibongo*, or 'praise poetry' (Odendaal, 2017:9). In this view, 'performance poetry' is argued to be the broadest and most inclusive term available to encompass these various types of poetry shared with an audience in South Africa.

With both of these viewpoints in mind, it is obvious that the relevance and ethics of the term need to be addressed more in academia, especially considering that "the other baggage and connotations that it comes with… often alienates [poets] from spaces like the academy" (Putuma, quoted by d'Abdon, 2018:56). However, given the different positions and sensitivities to using the terms 'performance poetry' and 'page poetry', this study views the terms in the following ways: The term 'page poetry' refers to poetry that exists on a page and only on a page (i.e. it is not shared with an audience), and the term 'performance poetry' includes any poetry that is shared with an audience: recited, read, or improvised. For this study, a distinction is important because it is this live sharing of poetry that, I believe, creates affective responses in audience members – an idea postulated by Affect theorists, that will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

That being said, d'Abdon's points about the history of racism in South Africa and the negative and oppressive connotations of the term 'performance' – as well as the perspectives from prominent, Black, South African poets of how they experience the term (2018:55-58) – cannot be overlooked. It feels evident that a new or under-used term should be used as an alternative – something that both avoids historically-oppressive connotations and distinguishes between poetry that is shared with an audience and poetry that is not. With these parameters in mind, the term 'live poetry' will be used predominantly in this thesis.

2.7 The debate on live poetry's place in academia

Whilst the merit of live poetry is difficult to overlook for some, there is a significant portion of academia that still questions its relevance and contributions when compared to written poetry. This section thus begins with a brief analysis of some of the critiques against live poetry's place in academia, followed by a rebuttal.

2.7.1 Cultural capital and the elitist view of poetry

To begin, it is necessary to consider the notion of 'cultural capital'. Defined as the "cultural currency, embodied in language and conventions, which is associated with high status groups in society", it depicts the idea that "certain genres and art forms are perceived as being more 'legitimate' than others" (Gregory, 2008:66). In other words, certain groups in society are given more power and status, whereby their ideals of what art, literature, and culture should be are held in higher esteem, making it difficult for 'unconventional' art forms to secure a place in academia.

With regards to poetry, there exist certain conventions about both the production and consumption of poetry. For example, a formal poetry reading is idealised as being structured and focused on the written word, with poets reading their work directly off a page, and the audience remaining 'well-mannered' and quiet during the reading, only offering a polite applause at the end (Gregory, 2008:66). At these readings, the poem on paper is identified as the most 'authentic' version, with the act of reading regarded as secondary to the written work itself. These ideals align with what is predominantly taught in schools and universities, whereby written poetry is identified as the norm and as 'more academic' than spoken poetry, creating "networks of established conventions allow[ing] poets to follow well-worn paths using readily accessible and affordable materials and

producing poetry which is easily distributed to audiences who, in turn, know how to consume and evaluate these works" (Gregory, 2008:67).

2.7.2 The importance of legitimising live poetry in academia

Although the long-standing elitist view of written poetry as more 'worthy' of academic attention is problematic, it has enabled the creation of a space (that is non mainstream or traditionally 'academic') for individuals who are often 'othered' to speak freely and share important yet often-ignored stories topicalising social, cultural, and political issues. These spaces are empowering for many individuals who feel that academia is unattainable and restrictive, thus enabling them to move away from the rigidity of formal poetry readings and beyond the so-called 'elite', thereby allowing their poetry to become far more accessible to a wider variety of people. The space, which is predominantly held by marginalised groups, exists as an act of rebellion against elitist academic norms, with live poetry events "deliberately [taking] verse outside of the academy, taking evaluative power away from academic critics and giving it to popular audiences" (Somers-Willett, 2009:6). Further, with critics directing their attention solely to written poetry, "they underestimate the fact that urban poetry is constantly evolving, capturing new public spaces, elaborating new styles, and is a multifaceted literary, cultural and social phenomenon" (d'Abdon, 2014b:87).

Moreover, viewing the space created by live poetry as worthy of academic attention enables the possibility for "collective and affirmative approaches to critical practices" (Stewart, 2017:48), whereby elements such as the role of the spectator, collaboration in meaning-making, and affect enable a "process of imagining critique as that which lives beyond an academic and abstract realm of critical theory" (Stewart, 2017:48) and where "feminism and decolonialism can be reimagined in an alternative and interventionary frame of popular engagement" (Stewart, 2017:49). In this way, not only can the poetry itself act as protest discourse against specific oppressive structures, but the academic analysis of such content acts as its own kind of protest discourse – termed 'analytical activism' (Lazar, 2007:145) – where the researcher rebels against the elitist norms of academia in pursuit of a more representative and inclusive practice.

Additionally, having the space within academia to critically analyse poetry within a South African context enables a deeper understanding of the complexities of South African identities. As d'Abdon suggests, despite the critics' "plausible resistance to change", they:

> …should consider – for the own intellectual interest - the idea that spoken word poetry represents a crucial element of contemporary South African literature and popular culture, one that cannot be ignored or easily dismissed. They should facilitate a methodological shift, and assimilate the notion that the boundaries of what can be defined as "contemporary poetry" in South Africa are relentlessly expanding, and that poetry in this country is not a matter of few "educated" (white) men any longer. (d'Abdon, 2014b:87)

Thus, whilst it is important to recognise the space as removed from the constraints of academia, I argue that it is necessary to integrate it into academic research from a socio-linguistic point of view. This necessity exists due to (a) the need to better understand the discursive avenues that marginalised individuals take as a means to share their honest, lived-experiences stemming from oppressive ideologies; (b) to challenge the norms of academia being a space for only those historically considered 'elite'; and (c) to disseminate the important discussions brought up in live poetry spaces to as many realms as possible to support the activism taking place. By bringing live poetry into academia, we can encourage further conversations regarding oppressive ideologies and collaborate with the aim of driving solidarity and supporting societal transformation.

2.8 Summary and concluding remarks

Though there was difficulty in gathering literature that directly aligned with the main focus of this thesis – an affective analysis of South African feminist live poetry – this chapter outlined existing literature that analyses aspects of this objective, which were important to break down. Firstly, a brief history of live poetry was offered, reflecting on its traditional oral poetry roots and the importance of this recognition in a South African context, whereby praise poetry (*izibongo*) historically and presently exists as an important cultural practice. With these roots in mind, the transition of poetry into the contemporary poetry slam and the importance of multimodal poetry was discussed, with emphasis on the importance of embodiment as a form of self-expression that supports the poets' needs to share their narratives as well as engages the audience in the meaning-

making process. The impact of this embodiment and audience engagement in enabling affective encounters to occur during live poetry is a concept that is dealt with extensively in this thesis.

Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) general socio-cultural linguistic framework of identity performance was reviewed, with a focus on the framework's acknowledgement of the complexities and multifaceted elements making up identities, which impact how identity is performed across various contexts. The complexity of identity performance is evident in live poetry due to the typical sharing of lived-experiences and authenticity, where poets often use the platform to protest against oppressive power mechanisms. As was outlined in this chapter, the space for marginalised voices to share such narratives and validate their identities inevitably categorises live poetry as a form of protest discourse. The community that is established amongst poets and audience members due to the strong collaboration in the meaning-making process results in a shared sense of belonging and encouragement for individuals to share their stories and to protest against societal issues, such as sexism, misogyny, and GBV.

Following this, a discussion on the importance of intersectionality and solidarity within feminist poetry was provided, reviewing literature that highlights the need for women to use their collective experiences of being silenced and channel their reactions of this into protest discourse which, in turn, strengthens the feminist community. These ideas regarding the creation of community and shared meaning-making were highlighted in the breakdown of the importance of the live poetry audience. Participation in the form of call-and-response, for example, transforms the audience into active spectators, and the live poetry scene encourages and expects this participation in these communicative events. As will be detailed in the chapter that follows, this audience engagement and collaboration contributes significantly to creating the kind of environment required for affective encounters to occur.

Additionally, literature on South African live poetry was briefly reviewed, with Sacks (2020) offering a reflection of experiencing live poetry in Cape Town versus watching a recording of the live poetry, d'Abdon and Molebatsi (2011) analysing an all-female poetry production in Johannesburg, and Byrne (2021) assessing the recurrent theme of water in poetry by South African women. Additionally, this chapter drew heavily from d'Abdon's (2018) work that highlights the importance of acknowledging the country's history of racial and class inequalities when speaking

about poets, problematising and criticising the term 'performance poetry'. In support of d'Abdon's ideas, the term 'live poetry' was presented as an alternative, which will be utilised in this thesis. Finally, the importance of including live poetry research in academia was emphasised due to the need to assess and better understand the discourses and narratives shared in these spaces by marginalised voices, and to challenge the elitist views of written poetry being 'superior' to spoken poetry.

The existing literature that was discussed in this chapter is significantly helpful for contextualising this thesis and guiding its methodological approach. However, there does appear to be a significant lack of research looking into the exact content of this thesis: affective encounters in South African feminist live poetry. Therefore, this gap in the literature is something that is redressed in this thesis. Additionally, in line with the discussions around the importance of bringing live poetry research into academia, this thesis will act as a form of analytical activism in its attempt to support the activist efforts of the feminist movement.

The chapter that follows breaks down another important aspect of this research: the affective encounter. Due to adopting the lens of Affect theory to collect, analyse, and discuss the data, affect is reviewed as the main theoretical framework for this research. Additionally, the chapter briefly assesses the importance of feminist critical discourse analysis and identifies it as a tool to support the affective analysis that takes place in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

"I close my eyes because I can already feel a lump in my heart, and I really want to feel."

3.1 Introductory remarks

As a theoretical point of departure, this study draws extensively from Affect theory and utilises Michelle Lazar's (2005; 2007; 2014) approach to feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) as a tool through which to identify and reflect on instances of protest discourse in South African feminist live poetry. In the data analysis, the elements leading up to, during, and following the affective encounter are assessed as a means to identify collaborative acts of shared meaning-making, with the wider view that these acts have the potential to shift cognitions and actions to support socio-political change. These elements, which are identified in this chapter, make up a framework for conducting an affective analysis. This thesis proposes this framework as a means to enable a more refined review of affect, and it is utilised in Chapter 5 when conducting the data analysis. Therefore, in this chapter, a theoretical review is conducted to explain FCDA and Affect theory – as lenses through which the data are explored – and the proposed framework for conducting an affective analysis is presented.

3.2 A feminist critical discourse analysis

This section outlines what an FCDA is, how it is distinct from a general critical discourse analysis (CDA), and why this distinction is needed. It also points out the embodiment and multimodal elements of discourse that are naturally included when using an FCDA to assess discourse. Finally, it summarises how FCDA can be used as a discursive analytical tool.

3.2.1 Critical discourse analysis

CDA is a socio-linguistic approach used to investigate instances of how power is exerted through discourse. It is undertaken on the premise that "language both *shapes* and is *shaped by* society" (Machin & Mayr, 2012:4) and thus its focus lies on uncovering patterns of injustices and understanding how societal relationships are affected by language (Mancini, 2011:647). Whilst CDA theorists tend to focus on how people in power use language as a strategy to maintain power structures (Machin & Mayr, 2012:5), the same principles can be used to analyse how those in

marginalised positions make use of language to attempt to shift dominating ideologies. There are many variations of CDA that researchers use but, for the sake of this study, what is important is an overview of the basic process of conducting a specifically *feminist* CDA.

3.2.2 The need for a specifically feminist CDA

Whilst CDA in and of itself is known for its "overtly political stance and is concerned with all forms of social inequality and injustice" (Lazar, 2005:2) – and thus its use could easily be, and often is, extended to analyse gendered discourses – in this thesis, I align with the opinions presented by Lazar (2005) that express that there is in fact a need to establish an explicitly *feminist* CDA.

Firstly, although CDA is admittedly fairly progressive, it is a school of thought "whose founders and dominant figures are nevertheless all straight white men" (Cameron, quoted by Lazar, 2005:3) who fail to cite feminists or give them credit. Whilst it is of course possible, and encouraged, for men to be concerned about feminist issues, most feminist research conducted within the CDA field "*is* undertaken by a diversity of women in a wide range of geographical locations, not all of whom are white and heterosexual" (Lazar, 2005:3) and, in the cases where feminist works are given credit, the argument can be raised that for a feminist CDA, we should be "envisage[ing] more than [just] citations from feminist scholars" (Lazar, 2005:3). Rather, a more nuanced and feminist-specific locus of enunciation[23] should be adopted, whereby the complexities and subtleties of gender oppression are examined directly and distinctly.

A further argument for a specifically *feminist* CDA is that it promotes a collectivity amongst the feminist scholars who produce work in this field. As the utilisation of CDA has grown rapidly in the last decade, it is important to promote group visibility for feminists who work within CDA to ensure they have a voice within the mainstream CDA field of academia (Lazar, 2005:4).

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[23] Locus of enunciation: This is a term used in decolonial theory that refers to "the space from which we speak" (Menezes de Souza, 2019:10). Taking into account the locus of enunciation means taking into account the *body* that exists in the communicative space, and understanding that each individual body has a unique history and positionality in space and time: "To speak from a space means you are speaking from a body located in space and time […] a body has a memory, a body has experience, a body has been exposed to history" (Menezes de Souza, 2019:10-11).

3.2.3 Why feminist academics need CDA

In terms of why feminist academics should adopt a CDA framework for their research, Lazar highlights that whilst other discourse analytics methods are useful for enabling a broader, more descriptive analysis of feminist discourses, an FCDA "has the advantage of operating, at the outset, within a politically invested programme of discourse analysis" (2005:4). It offers an array of tools and strategies for close analyses of context-specific discourses and has a well-developed school of thought on the interconnections and specifics of discursive strategies that are utilised in "various forms of social oppression that can feed back into feminist strategies for social change" (Lazar, 2005:4-5).

3.2.4 Multimodality and FCDA

Due to the increasingly expanding scope that CDA theorists can concern themselves with, there are some analysts who choose to focus only on verbal communication. However, Lazar (2005) posits that the need to analyse multimodal forms of communication is vital within FCDA. No specific meaning-making modality is considered more valuable than another, and this enables a more "holistic feminist critique of discursive constructions of gender" (Lazar, 2005:5).

In the context of live poetry, multimodality is vital for the audience to experience the full breadth of a live poetry experience. These aspects of embodiment presented by poets enable the audience to become "privy to the physical and performative markers of identity that consciously or unconsciously inform their understanding of the poem through certain cultural lenses" (Somers-Willett, 2009:18). In other words, live poetry enables audience members to gain an awareness of the poets' identities and loci of enunciation.

Whilst much of multimodal CDA research focuses on visual means of communication – such as advertisements, videos, graphics, etc. – it can also be used to emphasise the importance of non-verbal communication used by a speaker. These non-verbal elements include facial expressions, gestures, use of space, intonation, silence, and body language (Newfield & d'Abdon, 2015:515), which are evident in most discourses and especially in live poetry. Thus, the natural inclusion of multimodality and embodiment within FCDA is of importance for this study.

3.2.5 FCDA as an analytical tool

The body of existing research that makes use of FCDA assists as a reference from which to identify specific elements for discursive analysis. Mark Nartey (2020), for example, uses FCDA to analyse blogposts of Ghanian feminist women. Nartey analyses the discursive strategies used by these women, such as choices in words and utterances, argument structures, and interactions. These elements make up the activist strategies used to resist against gendered oppression and inequality in Ghana. These women achieve this through a critique of patriarchal norms and oppression, resisting against gender stereotypes, calling out sexist attitudes, supporting other women who are resisting (and thus empowering others to do the same), as well as (re)defining gender identities, narratives, and agencies (Nartey, 2020:14).

Other work reviewed for this thesis that uses FCDA includes Esther Ohito and Tiffany Nyachae's (2019) analysis of Black feminist poetry;[24] Hadia Khan's (2019) review of the objectification of South Asian women and the legitimising of 'otherness' in the novel, *The Holy Woman*; Mairi Harkness and Helen Cheyne's (2019) analysis of the world's best-selling midwifery textbook as a reflection on the discursive changes from first publication in 1953 until 2014; Altman Peng, Chunyan Wu, and Meng Chen's (2022) analysis of the sexualisation and degradation of sportswomen by Chinese male fans on the sports fan platform, *Hupu*; and Corry Azzopardi's (2022) analysis of attributions of blame for child sexual abuse within a network of child welfare texts, whereby non-offending mothers are often blamed as the reason for the abuse due to complicity or negligence. These studies identify elements such as lexical choices, repetitions or over lexicalisation,[25] and metaphor as discursive strategies – all of which are taken into consideration when conducting the data analysis for this thesis.

3.3 Affect theory

Before continuing, it is important to note that although this paper aligns itself with the argument presented by d'Abdon (2018) in Section 2.6.4 regarding the use of the unnecessary and potentially

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[24] The researchers analyse the data by writing their own poetry as a means to conduct critical qualitative research. This method enabled them to undertake a deconstructive and reconstructive approach to review their initial data analyses.

[25] Over lexicalisation: The substantial repetition of specific word choices or their synonyms within a discourse (Harkness & Cheyne, 2019:3)

harmful word 'performance' within the realm of poetry, the term 'performance' will be used in this section when discussing affect in a more general sense as it accurately connotates a type of communicative event that enables an affective encounter to take place. With this in mind, one of the key aspects of live poetry involves the element of performance and the performance space.

Much of live poetry and expressing one's identity on stage, especially with regards to slam poetry competitions, is fuelled by the interaction between the poet and the audience, where these interactions "present unique opportunities to witness [the] exchange between poet and audience in action" (Somers-Willett, 2009:8). These rich and dynamic exchanges enable poets to share their narratives and invite the possibility for ideological and social change beyond the performance space.

Whilst the feminist desire to ignite societal change may appear an ambitious goal to achieve from one poet or one live poetry event, there is potential for attitudinal change within individual audience members to occur from such poetry that could then, through discursive (re)production, begin the broader process of societal reform – a concept that I aim to explore in my research. This, I argue, can be achieved due to the strong affective reactions that occur during the communicative event, which support the success of activist efforts. This section unpacks the important elements of Affect theory, and presents a proposed approach to conducting an affective analysis.

3.3.1 The affective encounter

Affect theorists (see Massumi, 2002; Flockemann, 2019; 2020; 2021; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Campbell, 2012) argue that, during a performance, there is a moment known as the **affective encounter** that is first registered on a pre-conscious, visceral level as a reaction to the performance. This encounter stems from a "community across difference" (Flockemann, 2021:68), where audience members feel a sense of empathic relation to the performer and the performer's narrative, even if they do not share the same markers of identity. This is especially important in the context of this study in terms of intersectional feminism and the need for women to relate to and understand one another, no matter the differences in context and identity. In this engagement:

> You're not just listening for technique, or "original imagery", or raw emotion, but
> for some transmission/recognition of resonant difference […] a gestalt that effects

a "felt change of consciousness" on the part of the listener. (Damon, quoted by Somers-Willett, 2009:7)

This idea of a "felt change of consciousness" (termed the 'affective encounter') speaks to a moment of "in-between-ness" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010:2) in the engagement between performer and audience member. In this moment, the audience member senses a deep resonance with the performer, and experiences what Andrew Murphie (2018:v) terms the "immanence of the communicative event", or an awareness of "making a moment" (Flockemann, 2021:73), before this awareness or sensed experience can be recognised cognitively as an emotion. In this sense, affect exists outside of meaning (Flockemann, 2019:13).

This moment of the affective encounter taking place occurs due to the 'transfer' or 'transmission' of affect, whereby an interaction with people or environments (external) creates a physiological or psychological impact within an individual (internal) as energy passes from one body into another (Brennan, 2004:1-3). Whilst the term 'transmission' in this regard is widely used amongst affect theorists, I argue that the term is not as denotative as it could and should be; the movement from one body to another is not a fixed, linear process, but rather a continuous process of bodies both affecting and being affected by other bodies (Flockemann, 2021:73). In this thesis, I will thus be using the term 'exchange of affect', which implies more of a back-and-forth or cyclical interrelation and supports the notion that audience members and performers "jointly participate in 'creating space for critical reflection'" (Flockemann, 2021:73) and that the affective encounter "is a social and communal, rather than only individual, experience" (Flockemann, 2020:288). This idea has similarities to Julian Henriques' proposal of regarding the movement of affect as "vibrations" or as "energetic patterning of frequencies", rather than analysing affect with a linear cause-and-effect model (2010:58).

This continuous interrelation exists as a collaborative meaning-making, space-creating experience that is as intensely social as it is psychological and physical. In the moment of the exchange of affect, it is common – if not definitive – for individuals to instinctively react in physical, embodied ways as a consequence of undergoing a "sensory assault" (Gormley, quoted by Flockemann, 2020:290). This sensory assault is caused by 'interaffectivity', which Thomas Fuchs and Sabine Koch describe as a process whereby "our body is affected by the other's expression, and we

experience the kinetics and intensity of [their] emotions through our own bodily kinaesthesia and sensation" (2014:5). Interaffectivity is thus closely linked to the idea of the exchange of affect. These embodied responses whereby affect "manifests as intensity" (Flockemann, 2019:19) occur as pre-cognitive, instinctual reactions to the communicative event and are thus "temporarily outside meaning" (Gormley, quoted by Flockemann, 2020:290).

3.3.2 Affect versus emotion

The distinction between affect and emotion is important as these two terms, although related, hold very different meanings in the context of Affect theory. As mentioned in the previous section, affect takes place as a pre-cognitive reaction to the sensory assault experienced in a communicative event; it exists outside of meaning and cannot be named as it is "experienced as a 'moment' or a 'flash'" that cannot be captured (Flockemann, 2021:70). Following the affective encounter, strong reactions can result in a meaning-making process whereby the individual is able to identify and label an emotion, thus 'capturing' affect and cognitively recognising it. Therefore, "…affect is that which is sensed (or resonates) as intensity, and at its most intense it is expressed as emotion" (Flockemann, 2021:70).

3.3.3 Impact of affect

One of the most important facets of Affect theory is that it can be used as an analytical method to identify attitudinal shifts. These shifts are caused by the sense of 'community across difference' that is created by the communicative event, which drives understanding and empathy. This "empathic engagement" (Flockemann, 2019:20) with different narratives and identities often occurs as a result of a "shattering of worldviews" (Boler, 2014:27) and entails "recognizing that the trauma of the person whose story you are witnessing is not yours" (Flockemann, 2019:12). These empathic engagements can initiate processes of self-reflection, whereby audience members begin to reassess their positionality in relation to others and adjust their self-perceptions (Flockemann, 2019:20).

The potential thus exists for an altering of cognitive processes in terms of not only understanding the oppressive struggles for marginalised identities, but *empathising* with them and wanting to

drive social changes to help mitigate or eliminate these struggles. Accordingly, the affective encounter enabled in a live poetry space has the potential to act as a tool for activism.

3.3.4 An organised affective analysis

As the main focus of this study is on the affective encounter and its existence in, and relationship to, live poetry, it is necessary to conduct an affective analysis of the data gathered for this thesis from the focus-group discussion. As will be explained in the methodology chapter to follow, after an initial familiarisation with the data, specific elements of affect were identified as themes or topics under which an affective analysis could take place. In order to understand how affect can serve as a tool through which to support social transformation, it was important in this research to understand (a) what happens **before** an affective encounter (i.e. what elements are needed for an affective encounter to take place), (b) what happens **during** an affective encounter, and (c) what happens **after** an affective encounter. The structure of the data analysis thus follows the structure of a proposed framework for the affective encounter. Therefore, it felt important to present this proposed framework at this stage of the thesis to allow for a comprehensive understanding of the methodology explanation to follow. Further, in the data analysis, the framework is assessed for its effectiveness when conducting an affective analysis.

Whilst there are of course many Affect theorists who have identified different elements leading up to, during, and after the affective encounter, I have not yet encountered a study that clearly follows this specific framework for conducting an affective analysis when analysing data. In the pursuit of a more strategic, robust approach to conducting an affective analysis (which is necessary to better understand affective moments and their potential to drive change), I thus propose the following framework:

1. **The communicative event**

2. **Created space:** Physical, mental, and social environments
   - *Physical:* Location, décor, lighting, presence of other people, etc.
   - *Mental:* Individual headspace upon entering the location, prior experiences, trigger points, identity, etc.

- *Social:* Engagement and interaction with other people, relationships, communication, interplay between different identities, etc.

3. **The affective encounter**[26]
   - The exchange of affect between bodies
   - The immanence of the communicative event

4. **Embodied reactions to sensory assault**
   - Goosebumps, hairs raising on arms, shivers, crying, etc.

5. **Meaning-making**
   - Linguistic labelling of emotion
   - Self-reflection
   - Empathy, understanding, and community across difference

6. **Attitude shift**

7. **Behavioural and discursive changes**

8. **Transformation**

The above elements track the path of affect, and the framework includes: the elements needed to cause the affective encounter (the **communicative event** and **created space**), the brief moment of **the affective encounter** itself, and the immediate **embodied reactions**[27] during and following the affective encounter. Beyond these elements (which so far describe the actual affective encounter and how it takes place), the *impacts* of the affective encounter can be analysed in accordance with how audience members **make meaning** from experiencing affect, and how this results in potential **changes in attitudes**.

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[26] As affect takes place pre-cognitively and before a linguistic label can be identified, analysing a corpus of data to identify these moments can be difficult. However, what have been noted and coded as representative of the affective encounter are moments of participants either lacking the words to describe what they were thinking or feeling (i.e. having difficulty in naming an emotion), or describing an embodied reaction – either of the participants towards the poetry or an embodiment on the part of the poet that was resonated with by the participant. Both of these aspects are immediate reactions to the experience of a sensory assault.

[27] In this context when using the term 'embodied reaction', it refers to a physical, instinctual, and precognitive response to the sensory assault created by the exchange of affect.

Following the attitudinal changes, there is potential for **changes** to occur in the types of **discourses** that an individual engages in and constructs, and in their **behaviours** in response to the shift in consciousness caused by the affective encounter. These changes in attitude, discourse, and behaviour then have the potential to elicit further affective encounters to occur *in other people*, which then results in the framework of the affective encounter explained above to begin again. It is through this continuous exchange of affect and its potential ripple effect, beyond the space it was initially experienced in, where the possibility exists for wider **transformation** to occur.

To better grasp the concept of this framework, and the need for it, refer to Figures 3.1 and 3.2.
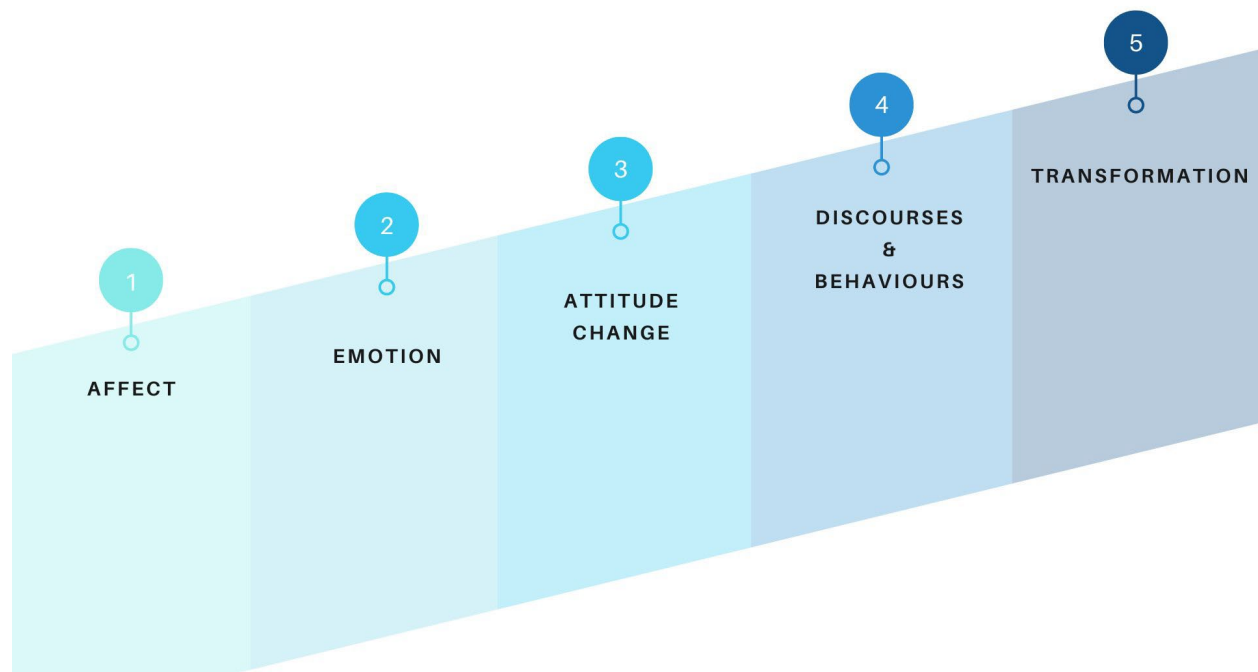
Figure 3.1: From affect to transformation. (Created by: Jenah McKenzie)

Figure 3.1 above outlines the theorised potential journey from the affective encounter towards enabling social transformation. To reiterate:

- The intense experience of affect leads to a meaning-making process and linguistic labelling of emotion.

- This then leads to attitudinal changes due to the empathic engagement experienced.

- Attitudinal changes drive changes in discourses and behaviours in order to align with the new mindset.

- Through these discursive and behavioural changes, steps are taken towards societal transformation and thus the success of the activist efforts.

Whilst depicted here as a seemingly linear, upwards trajectory, affect exists as a continuous exchange of energy between bodies. Beyond the performance space, other interactions hold the potential for this same exchange of affect, where the changed attitudes from the initial performance are realised in discourse and behaviour. Additionally, there are various elements that must be in place initially in order for affect to take place successfully, before any attitudinal changes and transformation can be elicited. It is the combination of these other elements that causes affect and that results in the framework outlined above. Figure 3.2 below maintains the initial pattern from the affective encounter through to transformation, but unpacks the different elements in more detail and suggests what aspects[28] should exist within a space in order for the initial affective encounter to be successful.

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[28] It is worth noting that, in line with Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) general socio-cultural linguistic framework for identity performance, identities are complex and thus the specific communicative event and created space will vary and will impact people differently. Affect is a phenomenon that must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and it cannot be confined to any specific structure or rigid process.
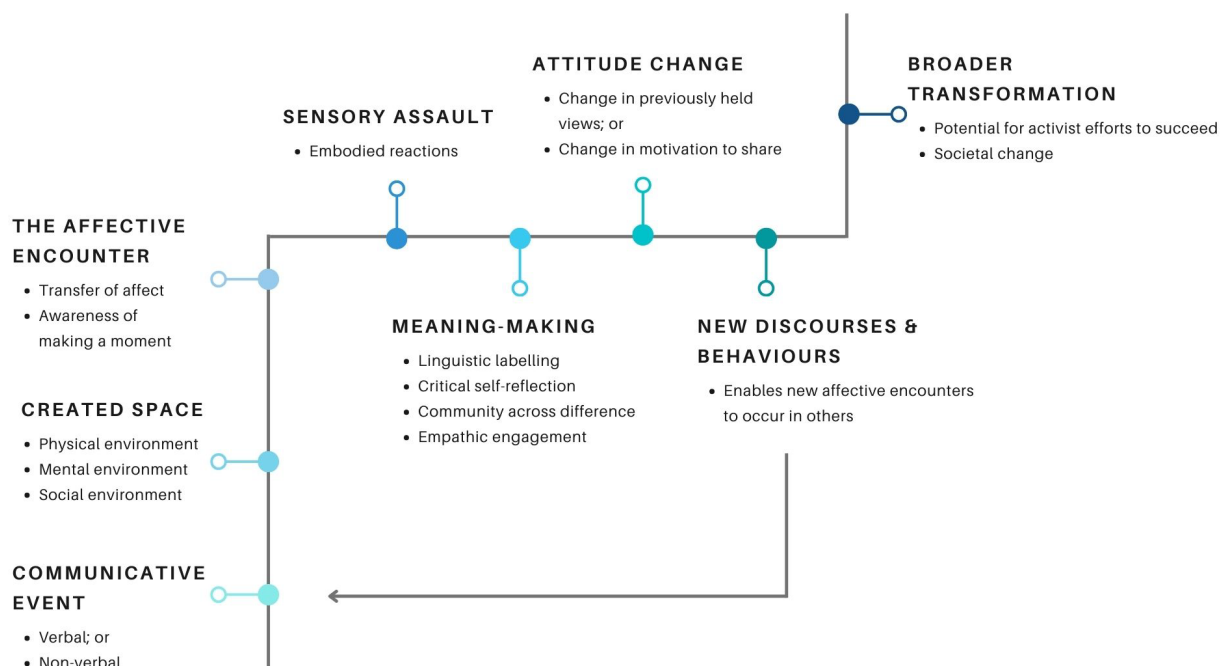
Figure 3.2: Necessary elements for the affective encounter to lead to transformation. (Created by: Jenah McKenzie)

Importantly, the above figure indicates how – through interaction with others and in the right setting – changed discourses and behaviour can result in a new cycle of the affective encounter, this time taking place in others who were not present for the initial affective encounter. By using this structure that analyses the progression of the affective encounter, Affect theory can be used as a tool for understanding how – by taking these steps to stimulate an affective encounter – discursive activism can succeed.

With this theory in mind, the affective analysis in Chapter 5 is conducted using each element in the framework as a theme under which to assess the data (using FCDA as a guide). It is important to note that whilst the individual concepts in the proposed analysis must be reviewed in detail in their own regard, they must not be dealt with solely in isolation nor do they have to occur in this exact sequence. It is precisely the overlap, interaction, and combination of these concepts that this research theorises as driving individuals towards experiencing an affective encounter, following which is the potential for attitudinal shifts, behavioural and discursive changes, and ideological transformation.

3.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter presented a detailed overview of Affect theory, as the prominent theoretical point of departure that this thesis draws on. Additionally, FCDA was presented as a tool or lens that the affective analysis, conducted in Chapter 5, will utilise. It should be noted that this research is aware of the potential disparity between CDA and Affect theory, with CDA tending to take on a more rigorous and structured approach to analysing discourse, and Affect theory adopting more of a general analysis to identify affective encounters and theorise about the impact of these encounters. However, whilst it has been established that affect takes place pre-cognitively and thus pre-linguistically, *it is through discourse* that one attempts to explain the affective encounter, and thus a discursive analysis must inevitably be conducted to uncover these explanations. Further, due to this research intending to uncover the potential for affect to support activism, it is important to go into the data analysis with a politically invested perspective rather than merely a descriptive one that is offered by more general discourse analyses. This thesis thus uses Affect theory as a lens through which to analyse activism within feminist live poetry, supported by the critical, feminist-focused method of discourse analysis offered by FCDA.

Importantly in this chapter, the proposed framework for conducting an affective analysis was presented. After coming to the realisation that in order to understand what happens before, during, and after an affective encounter, there was a need to establish a more refined approach for conducting an affective analysis. This led to the creation of the eight-point framework, which guides the analysis process in Chapter 5. In the data analysis chapter, the utilisation of this framework is showcased and the focus-group discussion data are analysed in detail to identify instances of the affective encounter taking place, as well as the moments leading up to and following the affective encounter.

Chapter 4: Methodology

"...it started and then just took us on this journey, and it was so magical."

4.1 Introductory remarks and research questions

This chapter outlines the process of how this research was conducted, beginning with an overview of the research type and strategy. All aspects of the methodology were carefully selected to align with the main aim of this research and to effectively answer the research questions. As a reminder of the main aim of this research, it seeks to analyse feminist, South African live poetry through the lens of Affect theory, identifying moments of affect and postulating the space's potential for supporting activism and societal change. The research questions being posited are thus as follows:

1. What are the elements needed to enable an affective encounter to take place?
2. How can these elements be organised to enable a more robust affective analysis of a data set?
3. In what ways does live poetry provoke affective reactions for selected audience members, and how are these moments reflected on and described?
4. What follows an affective encounter, and how could this support activism and promote needed societal change?

In this chapter, I offer a detailed explanation for the method of data collection adopted, which involves an eclectic framework including organising and hosting a live poetry event, taking ethnographic notes, videoing the poetry event for later reflection, engaging in participant observation, guiding a focus-group discussion, and taking audio recordings of the focus-group conversations for later analysis. The data analysis method is then described, including an explanation for how I coded the data set and became familiar with it, an outline of the thematic analysis process, an explanation of how feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) is used, and a recap of the proposed approach and framework for conducting an affective analysis of a live event. Finally, a review of the ethical considerations and methodological limitations is provided.

4.2 Research design: Type and strategy

This research situates itself within a socio-linguistic frame from which to analyse the presence and impact of affect in live poetry, and it was undertaken with a qualitative approach. Initially, this study leant more towards using mainly FCDA, with its main focus on analysing the poetry itself. However, following the data collection and preliminary analysis, it was obvious that the data were brimming with strong elements of affect, and thus the project's focus shifted from a critical analysis of the poetry to a review of the poetry's impact on audience members, with FCDA being used only as a tool to aid in the overarching affective analysis. Therefore, this research positions itself as inductive and exploratory in nature, as it has used the data as the main point from which to develop the direction of the study and to create the proposed framework.

Moreover, this research takes on the design philosophy of interpretivism, whereby the subjectivity, complexity, and collaborative nature of reality – and thus of the data – is taken into account (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:41-42). Through the lens of interpretivism, "research is inherently shaped by the researcher, who brings their own subjective view of observed phenomena based on their personal experience", knowing that "[g]enerated knowledge is not an absolute truth, but relative to the time, context, and culture that it emerged from" (Rogers, 2020). The notion of subjectivity in this research is important, as a central concern of feminist critical discourse analysts is "with critiquing discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order" (Lazar, 2005:5). Therefore, with the need to create a mobilising theory to raise critical awareness of oppressive norms and drive resistance, FCDA is positioned as a:

> …critical praxis-orientated research [that] cannot and does not pretend to adopt a neutral stance […] To critics who discount overtly political research as lacking in 'objectivity' and 'scientificity' […] the feminist position has been to raise as problematic the notion of scientific neutrality itself, because it fails to recognize that all knowledge is socially and historically constructed and valuationally based. (Lazar, 2005:6)

In this way, adopting a subjective stance and using my positionality as a feminist to become immersed in the research, this research supports Gunther Kress's notion that "linguistics itself

[should be] more accountable, more responsible, and more responsive to questions of social equity" (1990:88).

4.3 Data collection method

This section unpacks the processes that I followed to acquire the data for this research. It includes a summary of the live poetry event, the logistics that went into organising it, and the poets who were involved. Additionally, I outline how the focus group was established, and the manner in which the focus-group discussion was guided to ensure efficient data collection.

4.3.1 The live poetry event

The initial plan for this data collection process was to take a focus group to see a live poetry event, observe their responses, and then have a discussion with them about the event afterwards. Whilst it was my intention to attend a live event organised by someone else, I quickly realised that in order to elicit genuine responses to specifically feminist poems (i.e. without distractions and stimulation from poems of other topics), the event would need to be curated for this purpose. Therefore, I opted to organise and host the poetry event, with this objective as the driving force.

The process for setting up this event involved selecting a venue, networking to source poets who were interested in participating, and securing funding to pay the venue fee and the poets. Following the selection of poets and a venue, I engaged in social media advertising to promote the event and to establish an audience beyond just the focus-group participants.
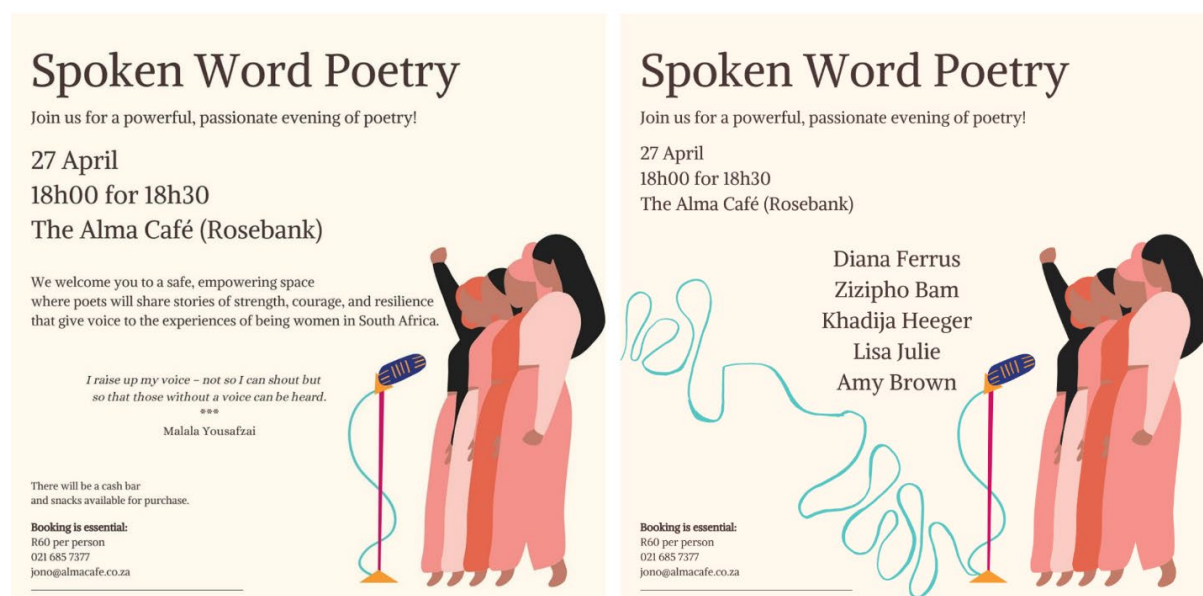
Figure 4.1: Examples of posters created to advertise for the event. (Created by: Jenah McKenzie)

For the event itself, I arranged for a videographer to film each poet for later reflection as well as a speaker to introduce the poets throughout the evening so that I could position myself as more of an audience member than a host, enabling a focus on making observations and taking notes. With permission to share their names in this paper, the poets who agreed to participate in the event include Diana Ferrus, Zizipho Bam, Khadija Heeger, Lisa Julie, and Amy Brown Hendrickse. Ferrus is a fixture within the South African poetry scene, who is well-known for her poem *I've Come to Take You Home*,[29] which was of major socio-political-historical significance as it is widely believed to be a key reason for the return of Sarah Baartman's[30] remains to South Africa in 2002. Bam is an award-winning poet whose work focuses on love, loss, healing from mental illness, and reflection on physical and childhood trauma. She recently self-published her first anthology, *Sunflowers for my lovers* (Bam, 2022).

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[29] *I've Come to Take You Home*, written in 1998, can be engaged with here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pCmu4uyj5c.

[30] Sarah Baartman, who was originally from the Eastern Cape in South Africa, was taken to England by an English ship doctor in 1810, five years after being sold into slavery to Dutch Colonisers. In England, and later in Paris, she was displayed as a fascination and a sexual oddity due to her skin colour and large buttocks. After dying in 1815, her body was dissected, preserved, and displayed in a Paris museum for nearly 200 years (South African History Online, n.d.b). She is thought to be the "epitome of colonial exploitation and racism, of the ridicule and commodification of [B]lack people" (Parkinson, 2016).

Heeger is a published poet, cultural activist, and actress from the Cape Flats whose poems are predominantly focused on identity and are often shared in Kaaps.[31] She recently published her second anthology, *Thicker than Sorrow* (2022), and was involved in a production alongside Bam as part of the Cape Town Open Book Festival in September 2022. The production, *Bodies Under Siege*, reflected on the "struggles faced by women and the LGBTQI+ community" and "the ability of these groups to overcome adversity, and celebrates their ever-evolving and pivotal role in society" (Cape Town Literary Festival cc., n.d.b). Julie is a writer and scholar with publications in a few anthologies, such as *Cutting Carrots the Wrong Way* (Moolman, 2017), and she organises poetry events and community gatherings with The Red Wheelbarrow Poetry Society as well as Poetry at The Commons. The final featured poet, Hendrickse, is a Queer storyteller and musician who adopts strong elements of rhythm and hip-hop in their poetry. Their "creative expression has become synonymous with protest" and they have an endeavour to "write the kind of world [they] want to create in" (Cultural Survival, 2021).

These poets (and others) were contacted via email with a brief explanation of the topic of and need for this research, and they were asked to share poetry regarding gender-based violence (GBV), feminism, and the experience of being a woman in South Africa. These five poets responded to the email and were eager to be a part of the event.

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[31] Kaaps is a variety of the Afrikaans language. It is "spoken predominantly by working-class [C]oloured communities around Cape Town" (van Niekerk, Jansen & Bock, 2022:84). Kaaps is often stigmatised and thought of as inferior to 'standard' Afrikaans, i.e. the version of Afrikaans that was spoken by the descendants of the White, Dutch colonisers and was standardised during the apartheid era (van Niekerk, Jansen & Bock, 2022:84). Heeger sharing her poetry in Kaaps is thus an act of resistance in its own right, regardless of the poetry's content, as the language choice deviates from what is considered 'acceptable' in traditional ideals of poetry.

Figure 4.2: The poets (From left to right: Lisa Julie, Zizipho Bam, Amy Brown Hendrickse, Khadija Heeger, Diana Ferrus). (Photo credits: Adam Asmal)

4.3.2 Sampling strategy and participants

To establish a focus group, a call for participants was shared on various social media platforms with the request for anyone living in South Africa between the ages of 20 and 30 who identified as a woman to be involved in this study. The age range was selected based on wanting the participants to exist within the same generation as each other, to enhance their relatability (and, in turn, their comfort levels in the discussion) to one another as well as to myself as the researcher. Additionally, as expressed in the introduction chapter, the increase in protests against GBV in recent years in South Africa were spurred by the acts of women mostly in this age bracket as a reaction against the death of Uyinene, who was murdered at 19 years of age. Thus, in this conversation about the potential for activism in live poetry, it felt appropriate and important to have a dialogue with women who likely know about, and were affected by, the story of Uyinene and with what it means to be a young woman in South Africa.

From this call for participants, five women made up the focus group. As will be elaborated on in Section 4.5.3, these specific participants were selected as they responded to the call for participants, i.e. other than the prerequisite to be in the defined age group and to identify as a

woman, they were not selected based on criterion such as race, culture, languages spoken, etc. The ethical considerations for taking these participants to the event, as well as for the discussions that took place afterwards, are unpacked in detail in Section 4.4. As a general background to position the participants, one participant was studying software development at the time of the data collection, and the others were working professionals – an editor, a remedial therapist, a schoolteacher and dance-studio owner, and a lecturer in copywriting and creative development. Four out of five participants noted that they mostly speak English, with limited to moderate proficiency in other languages including Afrikaans and Kaaps. Another participant identified themself as multilingual, speaking English, Yoruba, and Nigerian Creole.

4.3.3 Data collection strategies

In terms of the timeframe, there were two points of data collection: one being at the poetry event itself, and the other during the focus-group discussion the day after the event. Whilst this research is not exactly ethnographic in and of itself, ethnographic tools of observation and note-taking were adopted. During the poetry event, researcher notes were compiled where I identified the different elements making up the environment including the décor and lighting, audience interactions with each other, individual audience members' overt responses to the poetry, the poets' expressions and manner of sharing poetry, and my personal embodied reactions to the poetry. These notes were handwritten and were established through a detailed yet holistic approach to participant observation.

The focus-group discussion was held the day after the event at my home, where I was able to minimise external distractions as well as provide comfortable seating, blankets, food, tea, and a calm environment to enable a more relaxed discussion. The participants and I were seated around a coffee table with an audio-recording device placed in the centre to record the discussion, which was held for approximately an hour and a half.[32] Ethnographic-style notes were also taken in conjunction with a semi-structured focus-group discussion whereby general questions were

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[32] The transcript for this discussion is not available as an appendix because, during the process of obtaining ethical clearance, it was stipulated that only I, as the researcher, would have access to the transcript. This decision was made to help with protecting the identities of the participants due to the sensitive nature of the conversations.

posited to stimulate conversation. The following list includes some of the questions[33] that were asked:

- Were there any specific moments, or maybe poets, that stood out for you or that resonated with you?
- How did you feel when poems were shared completely or partially in Afrikaans; could you still connect with the poets even though you could not understand the words?
- Did you feel a change in the way that you understood the poet depending on how they delivered their poems?

The participants were encouraged to speak freely, pose their own questions to the group, and initiate new topics of conversation. Additionally, careful attention was directed at making sure each participant felt able to share their thoughts, to ensure all voices were heard.

4.4 Data analysis method

This section outlines the approaches taken to effectively manage and analyse the data. The data – consisting of the observational notes taken and the transcript from the focus-group discussion – were analysed using an FCDA and a thematic analysis as guides, and Affect theory was drawn on heavily to conduct an affective analysis. The framework for conducting an affective analysis was unpacked in detail in Chapter 3, but it is recapped in this section.

4.4.1 Preliminary data management

To manage the data at the initial stages of analysis, the recording of the focus-group discussion was transcribed into a typed document. In listening to the recording, typing out the transcript, and re-reading the transcript, I began to familiarise myself with the data. Additional connection with the data was made through watching and re-watching the videos of the poets at the event and re-reading the ethnographic and observational notes taken during the event and focus-group discussion.

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[33] For a full list of the discussion prompts that were loosely prepared for this discussion, please see Appendix A.

Following this, I labelled the turns in the transcript to create points of reference for the data analysis and thesis-writing process. The turns in the data analysis chapter that follows are thus indicated by the use of 'T' combined with the specific number of the turn in the discussion (e.g. T1, T2, T3, and so on). This allowed me to begin identifying features of interest from which to generate initial codes throughout the data set. Initial codes included identifying potential moments of a description of an affective encounter, highlighting interesting lines, and pinpointing moments where the participants quoted the poetry from the event. The codes were created using MS Word's comment feature and using different text colours and highlighters.

4.4.2 FCDA and thematic analysis

As detailed in Chapter 3, an FCDA can be used to critically examine discourses with a feminist lens and it means that, at the outset, the data analysis is situated within a politically invested context. Before being able to closely examine the discourse, a thematic analysis was conducted to better manage the data.

A thematic analysis

As part of the process of conducting a CDA, collected data are often grouped into themes by way of a thematic analysis, following which the CDA is undertaken. A thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006:79). The method is fairly flexible and there are various approaches that one can take; this study utilised the six-phase approach outlined by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006). The six phases consist of the following:

1. Become familiar with the data by transcribing, reading, and re-reading the data.
2. Generate initial codes, identifying features of interest throughout the data set.
3. Search for themes and organise codes (and the associated data) into potential themes.
4. Review themes to assess their relation to the initial codes and data set as a whole, and create a "thematic 'map' of the analysis".
5. During the process of ongoing analysis, refine the main features of each theme and name the theme.

6. Produce a coherent report, which should contain extracts and analysis of the data, clear examples, a reflection on the relation of the data and analysis to the research questions and literature.

(Braun & Clarke, 2006:87)

Along with this, Braun and Clarke emphasise that a thematic analysis should not be a simple, linear progression through the six phases, but rather it should be conducted as a "recursive process" (2006:86), moving back and forth throughout the phases and data as needed. With this in mind, there was a substantial amount of back and forth in the thematic analysis stage in attempting to find themes that aligned with Affect theory. Initially, I decided that the data would be analysed in a chronological manner, from the beginning of the poetry event to the end, with the idea being to track the moments of affect as the event unfolded. However, due to the non-linear, continuous process of affect – I refer here to points raised in Section 3.3.1 – I encountered difficulty in attempting to organise the data in a linear, chronological manner.

Thus, a different approach was taken, whereby different elements relating to the affective encounter were identified and the data were grouped accordingly. These elements were identified based on engagement with various studies on affect theory (some of which were outlined in Chapter 3) as well as researcher speculation on important elements based on commonalities found within the data. Thus, the thematic analysis aspect of this data analysis consisted of both finding data that aligned with pre-determined themes (those identified as important from other literature), as well as identifying and developing additional themes (based on the data gathered). The exact themes selected are based on the proposed framework of elements for conducting an affective analysis (as explained in Chapter 3): the communicative event, created space, the affective encounter, embodied reactions to sensory assault, meaning-making, attitude shift, behavioural and discursive changes, and transformation.

A feminist critical discourse analysis

Following the identification of themes and organising the data accordingly, the data were closely analysed to pinpoint parts of the discourse that supported the identification of affect. It is important to note here that whilst the data analysis draws on elements of FCDA as a toolkit for an affective analysis, the data analysis does not search for specifically feminist choices made in the discourse,

although many do come up. Rather, the data analysis was conducted with the focus on affect within the audience members, with a secondary importance placed on the underlying notion of feminism and activism within the poetry.

Specific elements that were identified in the FCDA process include lexical choices (with a particular focus on adjectives), repetition and over lexicalisation, and figures of speech (metaphors and similes). These elements were then used as a guide to identify strong moments of affect that spoke to a connection with the poet and the feminist narratives shared.

4.4.3 Affective analysis

In Chapter 3, my approach to conducting an affective analysis was proposed. This approach, or framework, was developed out of the need to establish a more organised method of analysis in order to assess the elements of affect before, during, and after the affective encounter. Affect, as a precognitive and preconscious moment, is unstructured. Therefore, the proposed affective analysis must be utilised with this in mind; the process should be recursive, iterative, and fluid. The importance and 'order' of analysing each element of the affective encounter will vary depending on the context, research aim, type of data, and opinion of the researcher(s). Therefore, the manner in which the affective analysis framework is used in this thesis will likely vary in future research. With this in mind, the affective analysis conducted in Chapter 5 is organised in the following order:

1. The communicative event
2. Created space: Physical, mental, and social environments
3. The affective encounter
4. Embodied reactions to sensory assault
5. Meaning-making
6. Attitude shift
7. Behavioural and discursive changes
8. Transformation

To reiterate the theorised potential journey from the affective encounter towards enabling social transformation:

- There are various elements that contribute to creating the space of the communicative event.
- If successful, these elements lead to the occurrence of an affective encounter as a reaction to experiencing a sensory assault.
- Following this experience, the individual is able to cognitively recognise affect through a meaning-making process, and strong moments of affect are labelled as emotion.
- These emotions have the potential to result in attitudinal changes, resulting in either altering one's previously held views or shifting the motivation to share pre-existing views. In both cases, there is an experience of empathic engagement.
- The attitudinal changes can lead to discursive and behavioural changes, with the intent to support societal transformation and thus to support the success of activist efforts. It is at this point that the potential exists for new moments of affect to occur in others in similar or different contexts.
- Finally, through these changes, steps can be taken to support social change and broader transformation.

Using the above approach for conducting an affective analysis, the different elements of the affective encounter can be analysed in detail, and Affect theory can be used as a lens through which to understand how discursive activism can succeed in its objectives for transformation.

4.5 Methodological limitations

As no research can be conducted without limitations, it is important to identify these in order to alert other scholars, with the hope that these limitations might be mitigated in future studies. This section thus briefly outlines some of setbacks and concerns (some potentially avoidable and others not) that resulted in a need to adjust the research methodology in order for the issues to be alleviated.

4.5.1 Positionality

One apparent issue that cannot be avoided is researcher positionality. Positionality has many influences on research – especially in sociological, qualitative research – including how research is designed, executed, and interpreted. It is thus necessary to acknowledge the potential impacts that researcher positionality may have and to engage in a continuous process of self-assessment and reflexivity in order to remain conscious of researcher influence throughout the investigative process (Holmes, 2020:2).

Whilst I do live in South Africa and identify as a Queer woman (thus relating to some of the need for intersectional feminism), I am also White,[34] which brings with it unavoidable ignorance and an inability to fully relate to the poets and some of the participants. To manage this, I engaged in a process of reflexivity to be aware of this influence both on how I interpreted the data as well as how I engaged with the poets and participants. Care was taken to allow space for People of Colour to share their thoughts, concerns, and questions about the research and within the focus group. I also acknowledge that as much as I may attempt to offer space for these voices, I will never be able to fully understand the experiences and identities of these individuals.

4.5.2 Logistical considerations

As expressed in the beginning of Section 4.3.1, one of the first methodological problems encountered was the need to focus the experience of the poetry event to poems specifically concerning feminist issues. To mitigate this, I undertook the task of organising and hosting a poetry event with these parameters in mind. In this process, there were a few logistical concerns that needed to be accounted for, including contacting and securing poets to participate, finding the right venue (with care taken to select a venue that allowed for an intimate poetry event), paying the venue fee and the participating poets, and advertising the event to support its success. These

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[34] There are many elements of positionality and differences that can be drawn between myself and the participants (including religion, political views, historical experiences, culture, etc.). However, race felt the most important to mention as it is a major aspect of intersectional feminism and of the experiences of many South African women.

considerations were managed effectively and, with the help of some research funding,[35] I was able to secure a venue, poets, and an audience that met the needs of a live poetry event.

4.5.3 Sampling issues

As briefly mentioned in Section 4.3.2, it was relatively difficult to secure participants for this study, which meant that I needed to work with the individuals who offered to assist and thus I did not have a variety of people from which to select the focus-group participants. This unfortunately meant that three out of five of the focus group were White, and two were People of Colour. Further, only one participant openly identified as Queer. To navigate this minimal diversity, the same approach was taken to manage the focus group as was taken to manage the researcher positionality issues, and the focus-group discussion activities were closely monitored to ensure that the participants with marginalised identities were given the space and time to share their thoughts.

Another sampling issue faced was regarding the fact that initially there were six focus-group participants. All six participants attended the event, but the following day – the day of the focus-group discussion – one participant pulled out of the study for personal reasons. Due to this happening on the day of the discussion, and *after* the important poetry event, it was impossible to replace the participant. Nevertheless, the focus-group discussion was robust and insightful, and offered more than enough data from which to analyse.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Due to the content of this thesis and the discourses likely to be shared during the poetry event and focus-group discussion (i.e. regarding GBV, rape culture, and other issues faced by women in South Africa), it was possible that some of the topics discussed would be triggering for the participants. Therefore, close attention was paid to the ethical considerations for this study, and multiple steps were taken to manage this.

Firstly, poets and focus-group participants were ensured that participation was completely voluntary and that they would receive no pressure at all to begin, continue, or finish any discussions

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[35] With massive thanks to Professors Zannie Bock and Christopher Stroud at the University of the Western Cape for their generous contribution from the Mellon Foundation grant as part of the funding programme, *Unsettling Paradigms: The Decolonial Turn in the Humanities Curriculum at Universities in South Africa.*

that they were not comfortable with. All participants were given information sheets[36] (see Appendix B) regarding the content and purpose of this research, for full transparency on exactly what kinds of discussions would be had. Participants were also given resources to helplines and organisations should they need support following the discussions.

Additionally, the participants are not named in this thesis, and any identifying information in the written transcript was redacted (e.g. places of work, location, etc.). Further, the interview space was set up with intent and care, to create a safe space where participants were made to feel welcome (with food, beverages, blankets, etc.) and where there were no interruptions. Finally, no questions were raised regarding the participants' specific experiences with GBV, and all participants were asked to sign a non-disclosure form so that the other participants' identities and stories could remain private (see Appendix C).

4.7 Concluding remarks

This chapter outlined the methodological approach that was taken to conduct this research. With an inductive approach to managing the data, this qualitative research was exploratory in nature and the process of data analysis was guided by the data set itself. The data collection process involved organising and hosting a live poetry event, where five female-identifying poets shared their work with a small audience that included the five focus-group participants. These participants were guided through a semi-structured focus-group discussion the day after the poetry evening, to gain an understanding of their experiences of the event and to assess the existence and impact of the affective encounters that took place. During both stages of data collection, ethnographic-style observational notes were taken.

The data were initially analysed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase method of conducting a thematic analysis (which includes becoming acquainted with the data through listening to and transcribing the recordings, labelling the turns, and developing initial codes to better manage the data). The data were also managed from the perspective of an FCDA, where I was mindful to adopt a broader feminist-oriented lens throughout the data analysis. Finally, the framework for

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[36] Although the poets were not interviewed for this research, they were also given information sheets outlining the content and intent of this research (see Appendix D).

conducting an affective analysis (introduced in Chapter 3) was recapped, as it is this framework that is utilised in Chapter 5 as a lens to enable a more organised data analysis.

Chapter 5: Data analysis

"I felt my eye go back in my head. I was just in my body."

5.1 Introductory remarks

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the focus-group discussion, which took place a day after the poetry event. Combining elements of feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) and an affective analysis, this chapter proceeds as a step-by-step analysis of the development and impact of affective encounters. In doing so, this study outlines a proposed approach for methodically assessing the manner in which affect takes place. The approach follows the theorised framework of the elements making up an affective encounter and its impact, as stipulated in Chapter 3:

1. The communicative event
2. Created space: Physical, mental, and social environments
3. The affective encounter
4. Embodied reactions to sensory assault
5. Meaning-making
6. Attitude shift
7. Behavioural and discursive changes
8. Transformation

The structure of this data analysis showcases how this framework can be used to conduct an affective analysis. The data presented consists of excerpts from the transcript of the focus-group discussion, with each turn (T) labelled in numerical order (i.e. T1, T2, T3, etc.) in the transcript. In cases where different sections of the same turn are analysed separately, the turns are distinctly labelled to indicate this with the use of additional letters (i.e. T27a, T27b, T27c, etc.).

5.2 The communicative event

The poetry event took place on the 27th of April 2022, Freedom Day in South Africa.[37] The selection of the date was important both in a practical sense in that it was a public holiday, meaning more people would hopefully be able to attend, and because of the historical significance of Freedom Day. The sold-out event was held at a long-standing café in Rosebank in Cape Town, known for its laid-back, authentic atmosphere and live music events. The venue was small, fitting only eight or nine tables and seating approximately 45 audience members – a noticeably packed evening.

The audience members consisted of individuals with various races, genders, sexualities, nationalities, and cultural backgrounds, with some having attended poetry events before and others having a completely new experience. From their entrance into the venue until the end of the night, the audience was jovial, lively, and engaged, creating a welcoming and collaborative energy and environment for both the poets and individual audience members.

The participating poets were allotted 10–15 minutes each in which to share their work, and did so in the following order: Zizipho Bam, Lisa Julie, Diana Ferrus, Khadija Heeger, and Amy Brown Hendrickse. The poets were contacted with a short brief about the event and were asked to share poetry to a somewhat open-ended theme: gender-based violence (GBV), feminism, and the experience of being a woman in South Africa. The evening resulted in a range of perspectives of what feminism is, and what it meant to each individual poet, covering topics such as GBV, safety as a woman in South Africa, motherhood, resilience and power in solidarity, silence and being silenced, nature as a feminine energy, love, and rebellion – all of which were noticed and empathised with by the five focus-group participants.

The focus-group participants were seated at a single table together, to the right and in front of the stage. Throughout the evening, while focusing on the poetry, I was also concentrating on observing the audience members' reactions – especially those of the focus group – by taking ethnographic

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[37] Freedom Day is an annual public holiday in South Africa that commemorates the anniversary of the first non-racial democratic elections at the end of apartheid in 1994, after hundreds of years of segregation, White supremacy, and colonialism (South African History Online, n.d.c).

field notes of their overt responses as well as my perceptions of their feelings as the event progressed. After the event had ended, I took a moment to reflect on the evening:

> *Last night was pretty phenomenal. Huge success in terms of an event, but also as a researcher – so much to unpack. Interesting as a few lines stood out for me, which I obviously wrote down but now cannot remember. As a linguist, many would focus on the words, but tonight I noticed the <u>feelings</u>.[38] So much <u>emotion</u> and <u>passion</u> – so many stories of hurt and pride and grief and humour and <u>relatability</u> and <u>empathy</u>. <u>Raw moments of relatability – whether real or imagined</u> – shared through head nods and clicks and "mmm"s and uncomfortable smiles and awe-struck silences. Surely not all these stories (vast and so subjective) were relatable to every person in that room? Surely the <u>atmosphere</u> and <u>passion</u> created this <u>connection</u>?*

To analyse the above in an auto-ethnographic manner, I draw attention to the reflection on the "*feelings*", "*emotion*", and "*passion*" experienced, as well as to the awareness of the variety of emotions perceived to have been felt, which – as the subsections that follow will address – were accurate perceptions in terms of the focus-group participants' experiences. Most notable in this reflection is the recognition of an engagement between audience members and poets, creating an "*atmosphere*" of "*connection*", with the theorising that it is this created connection that may have led to experiencing "*raw moments of relatability – whether real or imagined*". This idea links to the Affect theory concepts of empathic engagement and community across difference, which will be unpacked in this chapter.

Along with these initial researcher reflections on the overall event, the focus-group participants shared their perceptions of the evening in detail. These reflections are used as a basis for discussing the created space at the event, the affective encounter, and the meaning-making process following the exchange of affect.

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[38] When presenting the data throughout this chapter, certain lexical choices are underlined to emphasise their importance as contributions to this affective analysis.

5.3 The created space

In alignment with the researcher reflections in the preceding section, this section outlines the focus-group participants' perspectives of the evening in terms of created space. As outlined in Chapter 3, in this paper, when speaking of 'created space', it refers to a combination – and overlap – of the physical environment, the mental environment, and the social environment. It is important to consider all of these perspectives that combine to form the created space because the space, if established effectively, can act as a significant building block for generating an affective environment.

5.3.1 Physical environment

In terms of the physical environment, participants drew attention to the appearance of the venue itself:

> *...then I walked into the place and it was everything I'd imagined. I was like, yes!*
> *Back again! This is exactly what it feels like to attend poetry. It was <u>dingy</u>, but in a*
> *good way. The <u>lights were dim</u>, and people were chattering here and there.* (T92a)

The dim lights, dinginess, "*rustic-y vibe*" (T88a), and "*eclectic little bits and bobs everywhere*" (T87a) created a specific type of atmosphere, which participants noted with lexical choices such as "*warm*" (T85a; T87b), "*welcoming*" (T85b; T87c), and authentic: "*the actual space and the actual place* […] *it's just got this <u>authentic feel</u> to it* […] *I just loved that <u>it felt so real</u>*" (T88b). The authentic and intimate atmosphere that was created made for a safe and honest environment to discuss feminist issues in South Africa.
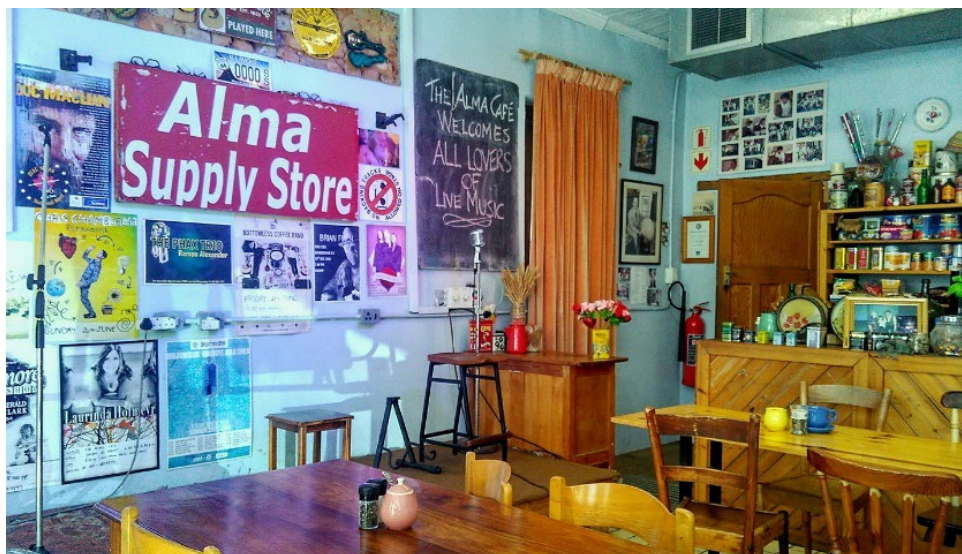
Figure 5.1: The poetry event venue in Rosebank, CT. (Source: The Alma Café, 2017)

The intimate nature of the space and the mass of people gathered was also noted by one the participants, who mentioned that they struggled with social anxiety, especially with regards to Covid-19. However, the authenticity of the space that was co-created meant that they still felt welcomed and eager to be involved in the event:

> *...going into a space that was very full, post-Covid[39] – I say that in inverted commas – was very intimidating for me. And I was quite afraid of the fact that there were so many people in that room. But at the same time, I also <u>felt incredibly welcomed</u> and I was actually very grateful that I was at the end of the table and very close to the stage because I almost felt like <u>I had my own space that I could be and exist in</u>, and I didn't have to worry about being in other people's spaces.* (T85c)

This speaks not only to the larger space created within the venue, but also to the smaller space created by and for the individual, where their "*own space*" was established as a refuge. Their proximity to the stage, and thus to the poets, also meant that they were able to immerse themself more in the performance.

Additionally, most participants mentioned that the "*vibes*" (T11a; T87d; T88c) and "*energy*" (T11b; T27a; T106a; T114a) of the space added to this authenticity and "*contributed to the way*

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[39] For context, at the time of the event, the National State of Disaster in South Africa had just been lifted.

the poetry was actually interpreted and understood by the audience" (T87e), with one participant exclaiming that they "*felt like the type of poetry* [they] *were listening to needed to be in a place like that – not at, like, a commercial, superficial place*" (T99a). This shows a recognition of the type of space that needs to be created at a live poetry event – an authentic and honest space – especially one topicalising feminist issues and where vulnerable narratives are shared. This awareness and understanding of the type of physical space required points out the link between the physical environment and the mental environment, where the individual's interpretation of the physical space is impacted by their own internal headspace and perspectives within the mental environment.

5.3.2 Mental environment

Noting the participant's quote from Turn 99a above, it aligns with Frances Babbage's notion that a spectator is positioned as a participant–observer, with an awareness of "what occurs *within* as well as in front of and around" the individual (quoted by Flockemann, 2019:14-15). This section thus outlines this internal awareness perceived by the participants: with regards to their own internal headspaces, their prior experiences in similar spaces and engaging with similar topics, and their identities.

In terms of personal headspaces, a few participants mentioned that before the event, they were not in a good state of mind. As noted already, one of the participants was struggling with social anxiety regarding Covid-19 and the number of people at the venue, and they additionally explained that they were "*not in a great mood before last night*" (T16a). However, they later noted that "*despite the Covid vibes and despite not being in a good mood, it still was such a lovely space to be a part of*" (T87f), which showcases a shift in personal headspace – and thus of the mental environment – through their engagement being "*part of*" the event. The repetition of "*despite*" is noteworthy here as it indicates a list of reasons for why the participant could have had a poor experience of the event; however, they still enjoyed participating in the space in spite of these aspects.

Another participant was struggling with feeling physically unwell, and also reflected on their identity as a Black woman, and what this often means for them when preparing to go into a new space:

> *I had just gotten my jab, my* [Covid-19] *booster, the day before and I woke up with a headache, and I was like great, just great* […] *and for me also, leaving the house after not feeling too well, and I was just like, now I have to prep. Because <u>every time I leave the house, I carry the fact that I have to be safe as a woman and as a Black person</u>* […] *Like, as a woman, as a Black person, if you're queer, what does it mean to come into a space knowing that <u>there are people who see you, but they don't see you</u>? And their response based on that sometimes just makes it more difficult to be outside. And so, there's always that balancing act that you have to do.* (T92b)

This excerpt from the focus-group discussion highlights the identity-related complexities this individual needs to navigate in terms of dealing with microaggressions[40] and not feeling seen, which contribute to their thoughts and experiences when entering a public space. They later added, however, that "*poetry was the thing that held* [them] *and made* [them] *<u>feel like you're seen</u>* […] *that <u>remind you you're not alone</u> in your struggle. So the space was really good in that way*" (T92c). This example, and the one prior, point out the power that the event had on shifting these participants' individual attitudes and moods prior to the evening, stating that despite their prior concerns, the event did allow them to feel "*seen*".

Adding to this notion of prior experiences playing a role in how an individual experiences a communicative event, one participant – the same participant as in Turn 92 above – shared that they have attended poetry events in the past and were drawn to the event because of this reason:

> *...there were moments where I was like, oh I remember this. This is familiar. This feels so good* […] *<u>poetry is very grounding for me</u> and very revelatory* […] *It's a*

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[40] Microaggressions can be defined as "verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial slights and insults toward [P]eople of [C]olor" (Sue et al., 2007:271).

> *language that I know, and <u>it carries me</u>. It helps me a lot. It makes me just be*
> *<u>comfortable</u> just being weird, I guess.* (T14a)

According to this participant, their prior experience and appreciation for poetry is what helped them navigate the difficulties they faced regarding their identity; it assisted them not only as a motivation to attend the event, but also to be fully immersed in the experience of the poetry and to feel "*comfortable*" in being themself. This open-mindedness no doubt encouraged a sense of connectedness with the poets and the content of the poetry, contributing to the impact of the affective encounter. Further, the personification given to the poetry, "*it carries me*", creates powerful imagery of the participant being supported and guided by the poetry, which is indicative of the potential that poetry could have in encouraging individuals to continue to pursue activist endeavours, even in times of strife.

5.3.3 Social environment

Notable elements impacting the social environment include the communicative event (in this case, the poetry event), the relationships and interactions (here, spectator–spectator and spectator–poet relations), and interplay between similar and different identities.

Spectator–spectator relationships

In relation to the participants' awareness of the other audience members, this differs slightly to the awareness that is stimulated within the physical space, as discussed earlier in this section. Here, I posit that in the physical environment, recognition of other people in the space refers to merely acknowledging that there is a **presence** of these people. This impacted how the room felt in terms of capacity and recognition of some of the identities present in the space. The audience members in the social environment, however, are reflected in the **interactions** with other people in this space, and not merely recognising other people as 'space-holders'.

Participants' awareness of the co-creation of space with the other audience members is reflected in the focus-group discussion, such as in Turn 11c where the participant enjoyed "*the <u>energy and the vibes</u> and how <u>willing</u> everybody was to listen to the stories that were being told*", and in Turn 38 with the recognition that "*the crowd was responding so well*" to one of the poets. Lexical choices such as "*willing*" and "*responding so well*" to describe other audience members point to

the positive collective reaction of the room as a whole to the poet, which no doubt added to the creation of the collaborative atmosphere. The word "*energy*" adds to this notion, creating the idea of a space that exists beyond the physical realm.

Further recognition of the spectator–spectator relationship also includes a reflection from one of the participants (a snippet of which was shared above) on their envy of some other audience members. This envy stemmed from their inability to understand the poetry due to their minimal understanding of the Afrikaans language:

> *...with the Afrikaans thing, I felt a little frustrated because I wanted to know what they were saying. And <u>the crowd was responding so well</u> to her, and I was like damn, I wish I knew what she just said there.* (T38)

The recognition of the crowd's response shows this participant's awareness of other spectators' engagement and connection with the poet and their contributions to creating space.

Spectator–poet relationships

Turn 38 above reflects not only a spectator–spectator relationship, but a spectator–poet relationship as well, with reference both to the participant's desire to have an interaction with the poet as well as their acknowledgment of other audience members' relationships with the poet. It is through this relationship that the exchange of affect takes place, and thus it is a vital element enabling the potential of an affective encounter.

Recognition of the impact that certain poets and moments had on the audience as a whole are noted in Turn 59, with the participant reflecting that the poets "*spoke through things quite a lot and the room got very, very <u>quiet</u> and kind of really <u>focused</u> their attention on what they were saying*". The quietness and focus show the intense relationship created between spectator(s) and poet(s), where the audience is being described as fully immersed in what the poet was expressing. The power of the poets sharing their personal narratives was also reflected by another participant:

> *...they <u>demanded</u> to be seen and they required full attention. And not attention in the sense of being awkward and vulnerable and intimate with them, but being like, "I'm here. I'm <u>bold</u> and this is why I deserve to be here". And <u>commanding</u> that*

kind of presence requires everyone else who's in the audience to kind of just like, arms down, listen, this is the person with <u>authority</u> now. (T66a)

This shows a recognition that the powerful, genuine position the poet (Hendrickse) was taking had a strong impact on this participant and on the audience as a whole. Word choices used here to describe the poet's personality – such as "*demanded*", "*bold*", "*commanding*", and "*authority*" – present the picture that Hendrickse, although speaking about personal and intimate issues regarding feminism and women in South Africa, held a certain power and resilience that suggests a 'fighting back' against these issues. The 'seriousness' of their presence was further noted by participants regarding the line, "not the kind of <u>snoek</u>[41] you want to <u>throw a hook</u> at". This line of poetry is a metaphor indicating that the poet is not the type of person that one would want to 'catch' or 'reel in'. Further, "throw a hook" could be perceived as physically punching someone, and perhaps indicates that the poet is expressing they are not the type of person to be disrespected in this way. Another interpretation is that "throw a hook" could be referring to cat calling: a common issue faced by women across the world, which often leaves one feeling uncomfortable and violated. Again, this line is indicating that Hendrickse is emphasising that they will not tolerate harassment and disrespect. In response to this line, the audience laughed as if it was intended as a joke. However, the participants perceived that Hendrickse was not trying to be humorous:

> *<u>I felt like they weren't trying to be funny</u>. I think people laugh when they're uncomfortable with what other people are doing. I got the perspective from their performance that they were being serious. And then when people would laugh, they'd just acknowledge it and then carry on. (T69a)*

This shows a deeper understanding of the poet's circumstances, one that could be linked to having experienced an affective encounter, which will be expanded on in Section 5.4. This concept of collaboration as a spectator is noted in the focus-group discussion, with participants' word choices – such as "*part of*", "*experience*", and "*participate*" – expressing this knowledge of their collaboration. Turns 27b and 41 are particularly good examples of this awareness, where participants expressed that "*you become <u>part of</u> the performance*" (T41) and that "*it felt like* [they were] *not necessarily invading* [the poets'] *space but just <u>participating</u> in something that really*

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[41] Snoek: A type of fish

felt super special" (T27b). The spectator's involvement in the poetry sharing and participation in creating the space means that there is a heightened connection between the poet and audience member, thus making the exchange of affect more likely.

Further elements of social interaction between the spectator(s) and poet(s) involved some of the well-known elements of live poetry such as call-and-response, cheering, sounds of approval, and applauding, as well as being guided to participate during one of Hendrickse's poems by clapping to assist in creating rhythm. This was noted by one of the participants who stated:

> *...the <u>rhythm</u>[42] behind that and the way they kind of used their words and put it out there, it was quite exquisite. And for me, <u>the way in which they delivered</u> – the <u>rhythm</u> really sold it for me. And I know obviously that is a bit of the hip-hop elements, but I think that really did make it actually feel a lot more <u>impactful</u> and made their words have a lot more weight to them.* (T67a)

Thus, this engagement with the poet and collaboration in creating space and rhythm impacted the way they interpreted the event as a whole and of the specific topics discussed in the poetry. The spectator–poet relationship will be elaborated on as this chapter progresses, and it is an important element of the affective encounter as this relationship results in the feelings of connectedness and empathy that are necessary to drive understanding and community across difference.

It must be noted that for the audience to experience such a deep understanding of the poet(s) in such a short space of time, this is owed (for the most part) to the sharing of vulnerability and intimacy. Turn 27c highlights the participants' awareness of this intimacy of the event and of the narratives being shared:

> *Poetry generally is just so close to your <u>soul</u>. It's so <u>personal</u>. And it just felt so incredibly intimate having these people share these kinds of opinions with us. Well, not even opinions, just their <u>heart of hearts</u>.* (T27c)

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[42] An example of the "*rhythm*" this participant is referring to can be identified in the same line of poetry by Hendrickse as previously mentioned: "not the kind of <u>snoek</u> you want to throw a <u>hook</u> at". The rhyming words "snoek" and "hook" create a natural sense of rhythm in the poetry and undoubtedly added to the impact of the way the poem was "*delivered*".

Lexical choices such as "*soul*", "*personal*", and "*heart of hearts*" have a sentimental connotation, suggesting that this participant had a recognition that the narratives being shared were coming from a deeply personal space on the part of the poets. Similar wording was used by other participants, describing their experiences of engaging with the poetry as if the poets *"...were reading from their journal. Like stuff they wrote down from their heart*" (T60) and that "*It felt like* [they were] *having a conversation with*" the poets (T40). This again speaks to the creation of the spectator–poet relationship and the idea that it is both an intimate and a communicative engagement, almost as if conversing with a friend.

Another participant recognised this personal, authentic sharing and compared it to the kind of stories shared by musicians and dancers as other creatives with different modes of communication:

> *It also felt very raw, which was quite nice because there's nothing to hide behind when you're up on stage. And if you are performing anything else – like, if you're an actor, you're given something to perform. If you're a musician, you have music and melody to work with. And if you're a dancer, you have choreography. But when you're a poet and you're speaking from your heart and there's no music there and there's no one else on the stage with you, you're very vulnerable. There's such an important connection that you have with the person on stage because of that.* (T18a)

This is a further example of the power of the "*connection*" created "*with the person on stage*", where participants acknowledged this relationship and felt grateful to have been included in the shared, created space. Additionally, there is a level of empathy acknowledged here about the bravery it takes to share poetry in such a "*vulnerable*" setting – a concept that will be addressed in Section 5.5.

Another instance alluding to this strong connection created between poet and spectator (due to the intensity of the narratives shared and the intimate space created) is perhaps one of the most powerful turns in the focus-group discussion as it is indicative of the immediate impact of the

affective encounter. This turn was shared in response to the participant being asked if they felt welcomed in the space:

> *Yes, very much so. I felt like, it sounds a bit strange, but <u>I felt like the words became a part of me</u>.* (T29)

The phrase, "*I felt like the words became a part of me*", shows a deep connection and resonance both with the poets and with the stories they were sharing. Here, the individual indicates that the overall experience of the evening can be associated with sharing in a collective identity, whereby there is a strong sense of participation and involvement in the space. The significance of this experience gets to the heart of the affective encounter. It is for this reason that this quotation forms part of the title of this thesis.

<div align="center">***</div>

It is important to recognise that whilst the three environments – physical, mental, and social – can be compartmentalised for separate reflection, they are constantly overlapping and affecting each other. It is the combination of these environments that leads to a created space of connectedness, intimacy, and shared vulnerability – the perfect conditions for affect to take place.

5.4 The affective encounter

So far in this chapter, there has been a reflection on the communicative event, the created space (a combination of physical, mental, and social environments), and the participants' recognition of the vulnerable and intimate narratives shared by the poets. In line with the theorised framework outlined in Chapter 3, it is the combination of these elements that contributes to the moment of the exchange of affect. This 'moment' and the awareness of making it is also known as the "immanence of the communicative event" (Murphie, 2018:v), whereby there is an initial reaction by the spectator – manifesting as an intensity – to a particular aspect of the communicative event.

It is important to remember, as outlined in Chapter 3, that this 'moment' takes place briefly and pre-cognitively, before any linguistic labelling or recognition of an emotion takes place. Therefore, it can be difficult to pinpoint exactly when the affective moment happens. However, it is precisely this difficulty and inability to express one's feelings that exemplifies an affective encounter taking

place, which is **temporarily outside meaning**. Additionally, affect can stimulate a sensory assault that results in an **embodied reaction**, and thus these moments of embodiment described by the participants are also representative of the affective encounter taking place.

5.4.1 Temporarily outside meaning

An example of a moment of participants struggling to find the right words to describe their experience includes using interjections[43] or exclamations as substitutes for the emotive label. For example, Julie's poem, *The Boy*, expresses the difficulties faced by a mother of an autistic child. The last stanza of the poem, and specifically the last line, was raised by the participants as a particularly moving moment:

> He doesn't want to learn how to swim because he cannot stand wet clothes clinging
> to his body.
> So, he promises to practice holding his breath under water in the bathtub we never
> use.
> And we never use the bathtub because he cannot stand to see the plug that covers
> the hole that sucks and sucks in all of the water.
> And this is how the boy's mind works.
> He doesn't know he is the polyester against his own skin.

(Julie, 2022)

The poet is expressing that this child, who is autistic, has sensory processing difficulties, including disliking the feeling of specific textures and fabrics on his skin (i.e. polyester). The last line suggests that the poet feels the child is creating these difficulties for himself because of the way his mind works. The participants reflected on their reactions to the line, using various metaphors to express themselves: "*I was like, joh!*"[44] (T49a) and "*I was like, I was gone*" (T13). The phrase "*I was gone*" is a metaphoric slang phrase used to refer to a reaction to an experience that is usually overwhelming, powerful, or even very humorous. Here, it could indicate the idea of not feeling present in reality due to an inability to cope with what the poet was sharing. These interjections

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[43] Interjection: An utterance or short exclamation that is "sudden" and "expressive of emotion" (Dictionary.com, LLC, n.d.)
[44] *Joh!*: A colloquial expression of exacerbation, from the Afrikaans language

and expressive phrases demonstrate affect taking place due to the lack of cognitive labelling of emotion. The phrases are also in the past tense, implying that the participants are reflecting on their experience during the actual event, and not afterwards at the focus-group discussion, which suggests a genuine and honest recollection of the moment.

A further example of similar reactions to the poems includes Turn 106b: "*The one line I remember actually getting a bit <u>teary eyed</u> because I miss my mom. […] She said, 'Today I need my mother'. And I was like, <u>phew</u>*". The interjection "*phew*" is an expressive reaction to a moment during Ferrus's poem, *My Mother Was a Storm*, where the participant felt a particular relatability and personal response to the line of poetry. The following turn indicates a similar example:

> *But the thing I wanted to mention that stood out for me was Khadija's line, 'I found a reason to mince across the room' and that was when she was referring to someone coming to speak to her at a party and she doesn't want to speak to that person, and she wants to get away and doesn't want them to look at her butt and she doesn't want them to look at her body, and she's just trying to find any excuse to leave this conversation and leave this person who's obviously coming on to her. That was so, <u>yes</u>.* (T127a)

The phrase, "*That was so, <u>yes</u>*" (with emphasis on "*yes*") suggests a relatability to Heeger's experience of being harassed by a man that she did not wish to engage with. Whilst "*yes*" is not an adjective, it is being used here in place of one, which suggests this participant lacked the words to express how they felt through standard emotive labels. Similarly, a participant referred to Bam's poem, *Whiplash* – specifically the line: "a sudden strong wind that cracks the earth / Every day, we fall in randomly, every three hours".[45] The participant responded by using the metaphor, "*that also got me*" (T152). The word "*got*" is an interesting choice as it implies a sense of being 'captured' or 'taken' by the poetry, reflecting a journey or an extremely captivating moment driven by a connection with the poet sharing this intimate narrative.

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[45] As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the phrase "every three hours" is with reference to the generally well-known estimate of how often a woman is killed in South Africa, most often by men (Hendricks, 2019; Madasamy, 2020).

Further, a few participants made use of figures of speech when struggling to find the emotive label to describe the experience brought on by an affective moment. Phrases such as "*that hit me*" (T50), "*that just, like, hit home*" (T67b), and "*you just know how it hits*" (T131) were used. The choice of the word "*hit*" implies an abruptness and the realisation of "making a moment" (Flockemann, 2021:73), explaining more of a bodily reaction than one that can be explained emotively. This is thus an example of an affective encounter with regards to a participant both lacking the words to explain as well as experiencing an embodied reaction.

5.4.2 Embodied reactions

An embodied reaction, as explained in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.4), is generated as an immediate response or a "body first" reaction (Gormley, quoted by Flockemann, 2020:290) to the sensory assault created by the exchange of affect. This could include experiencing unintentional and/or unexpected bodily sensations that are associated with being 'moved', such as blushing, goosebumps, feeling a 'chill' up one's spine, or having raised hairs on one's arms. The concept of 'exchange of affect' (described in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1) is important here as it explains how these deep 'moments' are experienced by the audience, and is in line with my proposed framework for the process of an affective encounter taking place: The combination of the communicative event, the co-created space, and the sharing of intimate narratives creates a connection between the performer (poet) and audience member (i.e. spectator–poet relationship) that results in affect being exchanged between bodies and experienced as a 'moment' or 'flash', which is first realised precognitively and in the body.

The embodied reactions from the poetry event can be analysed in the participants' reflections of their own bodily reactions to the poetry as well as in their descriptions[46] of the poets' physical behaviours at the event. It is necessary to review the poets' physical expressions as this illustrates interaffectivity taking place, where communicative partners are "continuously modifying each partner's affective affordances and bodily resonance" (Fuchs & Koch, 2014:1), thus indicating an exchange of affect and pointing to the continuous and cyclical nature of affect.

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[46] These descriptions, in fact, showcase the participants conducting their own multimodal discourse analyses of the poetry.

Some embodied reactions are more obvious to pinpoint in the focus-group discussion, where the physical experiences are described overtly. To return to Turn 106b quoted in the previous section, "*teary eyed*" is a good example of this. A similar reaction was experienced by a participant in response to Julie and Hendrickse's presence during their poetry sharing:

> *They were just like, "Here I am, this is what I have to say. Here's a slice of my life, enjoy it". And <u>it made me want to cry</u>. Actually, every performance made me want to <u>cry</u>. […] I was like just watching their faces the whole time like with <u>a huge lump in my chest</u> because <u>I felt everything</u>.* (T61)

There are a few instances of embodied reaction to unpack here. Firstly, describing how the poetry made them "*want to cry*" indicates that the participant felt incredibly moved physically. The physical nature of this reaction is precognitive, before linguistic labelling. Secondly, describing a "*huge lump*" in their chest explains a physical reaction, presumably used with a similarity to the common metaphor, 'feel a lump in my throat', to describe being 'moved' by an experience. This shows a recognition of their bodily response to the communicative event. Thirdly, the phrase "*watching their faces*" shows a connection with the poet and engaging with their non-verbal communication efforts (facial expressions). Finally, "*I felt everything*" implies (a) an inability to select a word that appropriately describes their emotion (thus, it was easier to use the all-encompassing word, "*everything*"), and (b) "*felt*" suggests a deep physical reaction to the poetry.

Moreover, there are other embodied reactions that are less obvious in nature as they are less precise in their descriptions of bodily responses. For example, in reaction to Ferrus's poem, *I Have Not Sang Yet* (which is shared in Section 5.5.2), a few of the participants had a dialogue where they expressed resonance with the story of Uyinene's death:

> *A: And then <u>I cried</u> when I—<u>I cry every time I hear Uyinene's name</u>.*
> *B: Yeah, when I heard Uyinene's name, <u>my heart just went like woah</u>. That was a hectic one. I definitely had some kind of <u>physical reaction</u> to that poem.*
> *C: I think we all did.*
> *A: I think it always <u>takes me back</u> to where I was when I heard the news. And so, I was just like…* [they look down and shake their head] (T137–T140)

In the above conversation, all participants expressed a physical reaction. Participant A recalled crying and mentioned that the poetry ignited a moment of memory recollection, indicated with the phrase "*it takes me back*". This aligns with Flockemann's findings wherein a spectator watching a particularly moving piece of theatre commented that they were aware of "witnessing two events at the same time", supporting the idea that emotional states spur memory recollection and, in turn, memory recall elicits emotions (2021:74). Participant A also struggled to communicate their feelings coherently, so their speech trailed off and they shook their head instead of speaking; this implies that they were overcome with emotion and had no words to define these emotions. Participant B directly referenced experiencing "*some kind of physical reaction*" (which Participant C agreed with) and expressed that their heart "*just went like woah*", with both phrases exemplifying a bodily sensation (the latter phrase's interjection, "*woah*", implying a heart surging) and lacking the linguistic labels to express their feelings.

The idea of affect resonating as intensity, with a bodily response before there is a cognitive recognition, is clearly exhibited in a participant's description of understanding and expecting this experience:

> *...with their performances, when I wanted <u>to feel</u> something, I close my eyes. With their performances, when we're talking about Uyinene or the children with autism and all of that and <u>you feel it</u>, and oftentimes when <u>I feel</u> a phrase or a sentence or anything like that, or <u>I feel it</u> coming – because <u>sometimes poets will build it up</u> – and so I close my eyes because I can already <u>feel a lump in my heart</u>, and <u>I really want to feel</u>.* (T64)

The moment of intensity is recognised by "*sometimes poets will build it up*", which implies a development to a climactic moment that will be experienced, which this participant expects. Further, the metaphor, "*feel a lump in my heart*" describes a bodily response caused by experiencing a strong, empathic moment of relation before it can be labelled as an emotion. This creates a pattern with a similar phrase used by another participant, as previously mentioned, "*a lump in my chest*" (T61). It is interesting to note that both instances exemplify a similarity to the common metaphor, 'feel a lump in my throat', although both situated the "*lump*" in the area of their hearts: an area of the body that is associated with feeling. This indicates a personal, deep,

physical reaction to the poetry, described as such by the participants, before an emotion could be labelled. Finally, whist a 'feeling' in the context of this thesis is synonymous with an 'emotion', the phrase 'to feel' holds a different meaning in this turn. Variances of the verb phrase 'to feel', used six times in the above quote, indicate an awareness of making a moment (of an experience taking place) which is described as a physical reaction in this context.

Additionally, in response to the line in Julie's poem, *The Boy*, referenced in Section 5.4.1, "he doesn't know he is the polyester against his own skin", another 'intense' bodily reaction was described by a participant: "*I felt my eye go back in my head. I was just in my body*" (T135). Exclaiming "*I was just in my body*" shows their consciousness of the intensity of the bodily sensation experienced, where there was no space for thoughts or feelings other than what the body was experiencing. Furthermore, the allegory used by this participant of their eye going back in their head is very expressive of an embodied reaction, and it aligns with an observation that another participant had of a similar embodied reaction they perceived Hendrickse to be experiencing during their own poetry sharing:

> *I just saw a lot of tension in their words but also in their face. There was a moment like where they looked up and like rolled their eyes and was like holding their face and you can see a lot of frustration and just like very, very deep emotions just coming out through their performance, and it looked like it was very cathartic for them to just spew out everything they were feeling.* (T74)

This observation of Hendrickse's physical reactions to the 'catharsis' of sharing their poetry indicates a deeper connection with the poet – due to a combination of the created space and the vulnerability shared by the poet. The acknowledgement of the poet's embodied reactions to the experience – noticing their face, the "*tension*" they held, and seeing them look up, roll their eyes, and hold their face – indicates an awareness on the part of the participant about how embodied reactions represent "*deep emotions*" (or affect) even without words. A similar observation of Hendrickse's embodied reactions was noted by another participant:

> *...the only time I felt they let their guard down was when they talked about love. The very last poem that they talked about when they were like, "I wrote this earlier*

and this is about this person that I love" and then <u>you saw them</u> – you saw them
<u>smile</u> and you saw them <u>rub their head</u> and just be more <u>vulnerable</u>. (T69b)

This excerpt exemplifies multiple points raised in this chapter. Firstly, it expresses an understanding of the sharing of a "*vulnerable*" moment, and that this sharing was perhaps more personal and intimate due to the observed change in Hendrickse's shared persona. Secondly, this thus indicates that the participant has formed a connection with the poet, which is also supported by the phrase "*you saw them*". This phrase does not suggest a literal 'sight' of the poet, but is rather used as a metaphor, indicating that the participant's level of empathy and understanding has increased (a concept that will be elaborated on in the Section 5.5). Thirdly, the participant observed physical reactions that Hendrickse had that are assumed to have been unintentional and less guarded than previous descriptions of this poet, as described in Section 5.3.3 (Turn 66a).

This intense awareness of the poet's bodily behaviours, along with the idea of empathy and understanding being expressed, is indicative of the 'return' of affect, experienced during interaffectivity and affective exchange. It could be theorised – perhaps through more first-hand researcher engagement with the poets about their experiences – that this moment noticed by the participant is in fact an example of the *poet* experiencing an affective encounter, due to the return of affective exchange from the audience back to the poet.

<div align="center">***</div>

This section utilised participant reflections of the poetry event to offer examples and suggestions of the affective encounter taking place. This affective encounter is realised as an intensity experienced by the spectator due to a strong, precognitive reaction to the poetry and the sensory assault associated with it. This affective moment continues to manifest as an intensity – if only for a brief 'flash' – before it is then recognised cognitively as an emotion that can be given a label (Flockemann, 2020:288). The sequence of events that takes place leading up to this moment of linguistic labelling works as a "synergic system" (Duncan & Barret, 2007:1184) whereby affect and cognition work together to make meaning.

5.5 Meaning-making

When conducting an affective analysis, whilst the main focus is on the moment of the affective encounter and the expressions that individuals use to describe this moment, it is also important to assess how this moment becomes cognitively realised and how individuals try to make meaning out of their initial, intense reactions. The unsettling and unfamiliar experience of a sensory assault develops into a moment wherein the intensity can be identified cognitively and explained as an emotion through the use of a linguistic label. It is here, in this meaning-making process and linguistic labelling, that affect transitions into emotion. The combination of the communicative event, the created space, and the connectedness established between spectator and poet create a space for critical self-reflection, which is integral to and indicative of meaning-making (Flockemann, 2019:19-20).

5.5.1 Linguistic labelling

As has been stated throughout this thesis, the affective encounter is a moment that occurs pre-cognitively and thus pre-linguistically. It is in the meaning-making process that individuals begin to develop explanations for their experiences and provide linguistic labels for what they perceive to be the 'emotions' felt. This linguistic labelling was evident in the focus-group discussion with participants attempting to explain what the poetry evening caused them to feel.

Many instances of the verb phrase "*I feel*" and "*it felt like*" are present throughout the corpus of data, after which participants used a variety of lexical choices to describe these feelings, such as *inspired*, *impactful*, *hyper-femme*, *empowered*, *raw*, *special*, *intimate*, *welcomed*, *warm*, and *real* (T17; T67c; T114b; T154a; T18b; T27d; T85d; T87g; T88d). Additional adjective choices that were made – without the inclusion of the "*I feel*" phrase – include *pure*, *beautiful*, *passionate*, *relatable*, *visceral*, *powerful*, and *magical* (T22; T97a; T39; T54; T75; T114c; T126).

These emotions were described the day after the poetry event, indicating that there was some time to reflect and to make meaning out of the experiences had during the affective encounter. The adjectives assist in explaining how the poets, poetry, and event as a whole impacted the participants – in what appears to be an impactful, genuine, and positive way.

5.5.2 Recognising relatability

Before delving into how affective encounters can drive 'community across difference', a notion previously explained in Section 5.3.3, the focus-group discussion also showcases how meaning-making can arrive due to experiencing a sense of relatability. Alongside the cognitive realisation of the affective moment, now deciphered as an emotion, is a level of relatability to what the poets were expressing.

As this event was set out to be a space to share feelings regarding GBV and feminism in South Africa, it is expected that the focus group (consisting of five women living in South Africa) would relate to many of the topics covered in the poetry. A prominent example that has already been recognised in this chapter is the relatability to the deep, intense feelings associated with talking about and remembering the victims of GBV. This short poem, *I Have Not Sang Yet*, shared by Ferrus was recognised as particularly moving and relatable by the focus group:

> I have not sang yet, since Uyinene and Jesse.
>
> I tried. But their new names ran into my mouth with unbelievable speed.
>
> I could not swallow. I could not find a sound.
>
> I gulped names: Khwezi, Anene, Courtney.
>
> Could not even breathe. I screamed.
>
> Wanted those names to stop running, but they continued to choke,
>
> desperately pleading and warning.
>
> I don't know if I will ever be able to sing again.
>
> Too many names are stuck on my tongue.
>
> Too many horror movies in daily sequence.
>
> I have not sang yet, since Uyinene and Jesse.

(Ferrus, 2022)

One of the participants noted that this poem was relatable due to their first-hand experience of engaging with these victim's stories: "*...she was talking about Uyinene and Jessie. Because I remember them; I remember their stories. I think that was the one that resonated the most because those were like the events that scarred me the most*" (T24a). The participant's reflection exhibits their recollection of those events – through the repeated phrase, "*I remember*" – as well as the

trauma that they experienced when hearing about them. Thus, this response exemplifies the notion of memory recall discussed earlier in Section 5.4.2 (in relation to Turn 140), where the poetry acts as a means through which participants recall a past feeling or experience that is similar to the present experience. Here, again, the participant is reflecting on the impact that Uyinene's murder had on them, and this alludes to how most young women in South Africa felt about this case.

In relation to GBV and other issues facing women in South Africa, another example of relatability is apparent in Turn 73a with reference to a line from one of Hendrickse's poems:

> *...because being a woman in South Africa, a lot of the times like our norms shouldn't be normal. And I feel like a lot of the time we'll joke about, you know, walking to your car with your keys in your knuckles and things like that. But in reality, it's not something to be joking about. And one of the things they said was, "jy lyk soos kak".*[47] *So, for me, like it's one of those things where guys will catcall you on the streets and like, if you don't reciprocate with them then like you're the bad guy because we're not validating their unwanted validation of you. And that was something that like stood out for me that was like, every woman in the room could understand where that came from.* (T73a)

This participant explains in detail why they understand where the poet is coming from in terms of what it means to be regarded as a woman in South Africa, and elaborates on some of the daily struggles women face a means of survival. A similar expression of relatability in this regard is shared by the same participant in Turn 73b: "*sometimes when you can understand where something is coming from in what they're saying, or you've experienced the same thing, that sometimes you'll be like, 'Oh ja,*[48] *no, like I get you*'" (T73b). Here, the phrase "*I get you*" indicates that the participant understands where the poet is coming from. Additionally, there are instances throughout the corpus where participants used the word "*resonate(s)*" (T24b; T96; T114d; T161a) to describe the relation they felt to what the poets were saying due to their similar experiences as

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[47] *Jy lyk soos kak*: Meaning, 'you look like shit' in Afrikaans

[48] *Ja*: Meaning 'yes' in Afrikaans and used colloquially as a more informal expression of agreement (similar to 'yeah')

women in South Africa. These turns exemplify how the participants identified with the narratives shared by the poets, and the collective mourning over the loss of these women to GBV.

5.5.3 Empathic engagement, critical reflection, and community across difference

Along with the participants resonating with and relating to some of the poetry, there were also moments of empathy expressed for poets' narratives even though the participants could not relate to the exact stories being shared. In these instances, the combination of elements building up to the affective encounter created a 'moment' strong enough for an empathic reaction to occur. This empathy has the potential to drive attitude shifts, which could lead to behavioural and discursive changes, eventually resulting in ideological, societal, or political transformation. Thus, a review of the empathic engagement felt is perhaps one of the most important aspects of conducting an affective analysis when assessing affect as a tool for activism.

The empathic encounters experienced[49] were in reaction to a variety of topics, including historical experience, race, and language. For example, the significance of the day the event took place – the 27th of April, Freedom Day – was noticed by one of the participants who admitted that they only remembered the importance of the day when Ferrus shared her poem about it at the event:

> *…I was sitting there like, wait! Freedom Day is today! Freedom Day was when the first voting and democracy, and I was like, <u>this is actually a really special day</u>. And it only at the end of the day hit me how special of a day the 27th of April is. I woke up in the morning and I was like, cool it's a public holiday, yay I don't have to go to work. But I didn't really reflect on what <u>the meaning of the day</u> was. And when she spoke about it, I was like, it's probably <u>so significant for her</u>[50] and what she's been through and what she went through with her mother. And I'm sitting here and I'm listening to her story about that, and I have <u>no idea how she feels but she's</u>*

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[49] This is specifically referring to stories of lived-experiences shared by the poets that the participants did not have first-hand experiences of.

[50] In her poem at the event, Ferrus spoke of voting in the first democratic elections in 1994 at the age of 41, which she experienced alongside her mother who was 68 at the time. Neither she nor her mother, as People of Colour, had been able to vote previously.

expressing how she feels through her words and it's so amazing to actually be a
part of that and listen to her experience. (T30)

The participant's recognition of "*the meaning of the day*" and how "*significant*" it was for the poet showcases how, even though this participant had "*no idea how* [the poet] *feels*" due to differences in identity and experiences, the connectedness created in the space resulted in a moment of empathy and understanding, creating this sense of 'community across difference'. Ferrus's sharing of this personal narrative meant that this participant could be guided through experiencing an affective encounter and driven towards a critical reflection in the process of meaning-making, wherein a deeper recognition of the poet's experience was realised, even though this participant had no relatability to the poet's experiences in this regard. In response to this participant's comment, another participant noted that Ferrus mentioned her age at the time when the poet shared the following words:

> That day, on April 27th, 1994
> I took my mother's hand, for it was a new day in our land.
> She was 68 and I was 41.
> And as the morning sun made its daily run,
> we walked slowly, step by step.
>
> (Ferrus, 2022)

In reaction to this, the participant perceived that "*that must have been a complete paradigm shift in your existence*" (T34). This exemplifies the participant's recognition that experiencing such a change in the socio-political structure of the country as a middle-aged woman must have been a life-altering experience for Ferrus. This is proof of an empathic understanding established even without relating to many aspects of Ferrus's identity including race, age, and historical background.

Another example of participants experiencing this understanding (and thus creating a sense of community across difference) is the way in which the participants spoke about the Afrikaans language used frequently by the poets. In the focus group, not one person thought of themselves as fluent in Afrikaans. Most of the poets, however, shared their stories in Afrikaans (either as fully

Afrikaans poems or by code switching). One would assume that this language barrier impacted the effectiveness of the event and of the affective encounter; however, on the contrary, it became highly indicative of the impact of affect in driving understanding across difference. For example, one participant noted in Turn 36 that they were "*able to understand what they were saying without actually understanding it*" and could "*feel that understanding through just the way it was delivered*".

This speaks to Lynn Mario T. Menezes de Souza's notion regarding translation as a "recognition of difference" and a "recognition of incompleteness" (2019:12) in that there is an acknowledgement by the participant that it is acceptable to not understand everything being said, which in fact alludes to an understanding of its own – one that speaks to a perceptiveness of the poet as an individual who has the right to express their thoughts and narratives in a language that is not English. Furthermore, Menezes de Souza speaks of translation in a decolonial sense, whereby translation can be thought of not as a means to *eliminate* difference, but rather to *recognise* difference (2019:12-13). In doing so, one can begin to acknowledge differences and recognise the partiality and "multiplicity" of knowledge, where all ways of knowing are regarded as equal (Menezes de Souza, 2019:13). In Turn 36 mentioned above, the focus-group participant is expressing a recognition that whilst there is difference, they are accepting of this difference. This showcases the power of the affective encounter in enabling understanding across difference, supporting the notion that "not understanding is part of understanding" (Menezes de Souza, 2019:12).

The created space and connectedness with the poet meant that this participant, with very limited understanding of the actual words shared by the poet, could still relate to the passion and intensity of the narrative being shared. Analogous with this example, another participant mentioned an empathic encounter in relation to one of the poet's expressions of contempt towards the English language and its symbolism in relation to its history of oppression resulting from colonialism:

> *...one point in her poem where she got very intense when she was talking about the English-Germanic language* […] *for me, <u>being a White person, it was humbling to hear</u> that kind of stuff and <u>understand that there are generational traumas</u> and things that I have to deal with – not me personally, but at least as a group. And it*

felt very raw, but it also helped, I think, <u>open up my understanding</u> of certain aspects of what she goes through. And I know I would never be able to understand it myself. (T97b)

This showcases a sense of critical reflection by the participant, recognising that there are elements of the poet's identity (i.e. race and a cultural history of slavery, oppression, and apartheid) that, although this participant "*being a White person*" could never identify with, enabled a sense of recognition and empathy for the poet's experiences. This, again, speaks to the notion of 'recognition of difference', and we can begin to understand how live poetry creates a space for critical reflection, which has the potential to drive attitudinal changes that could lead to the discursive and behavioural changes needed for social transformation.

Another participant, with more of an experienced awareness of the poetry scene, supported this idea in Turn 99b:

I'm familiar with the use of local dialects and <u>language as protest</u>. […] I already have experience in being at events where there are people who code-switch or use a different language for their poetry, and <u>it was deliberate; it was intentional to shut you out</u>. So I respected that, and I understood the logic behind that and what it represents. But more than that I also know that in addition, <u>it's not for you</u>. When you don't understand a language and conversations that are intimate in a different language, it's deliberate in that way and so you have to respect that. (T99b)

These thoughts shared by the participant will be unpacked more in the next section with relation to poetry's potential for driving change. However, it is important to highlight here as it acts as a precursor to a strong moment of empathic engagement and understanding across difference:

The other thing for me is, even in addition to that, it's also <u>a language that has a different history in South Africa</u>. So that also gives it quite a different layer. It makes it quite interesting in how <u>you have to respect the intention and the reasoning behind that</u>, but also <u>you have to navigate and carry the history and response you have</u> to that specific language. So that was how I was able to experience that in

> *reflection. [...] so there's that. But also depending on the relationship that you have with Afrikaans, like what does that mean for you in that space?* (T99c)

In this turn, it is implied that the participant feels negatively towards the Afrikaans language due to the "*history in South Africa*" – presumably referencing Afrikaner Nationalism, apartheid, and Afrikaans as the 'language of the oppressor'.[51] However, this participant recognises that although they may have a specific feeling towards Afrikaans (thus in opposition to how some of the poets feel about the language), they can still "*respect the intention*" behind using a non-English language to express identity and culture, and potentially as a specific choice to create protest discourse. Therefore, this turn indicates that despite the differing viewpoints about a contentious issue in South Africa, this participant can still feel empathy towards the poets' discursive choices, driving a sense of community across difference.

This idea of community across difference was also established in the focus-group discussion regarding the various interpretations of what 'feminism' meant to each poet. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the topics regarding feminism ranged, covering ideas of nature as a feminine energy, GBV, resilience, rebellion, love, and motherhood. Further, it is likely that the participants each have their own idea of what feminism is. Yet, despite these differences, the participants remained receptive to the varying ideas. Heeger, for example, announced on stage:

> ...the way I define feminism, as in feminine, is not about vaginas; it is an energy which lives in every single human and actually every specie. And the problem is that it's not being honoured, and that it's not being held up as something that we need to respect – because that's why we do what we're doing to the planet, because we don't respect feminine energy in the way that we should.

In response to this moment, one participant noted, "*when she came on stage she was like, 'I'm not gonna do this'. Because that's not the only thing that feminism means*" (T112). Following this, another participant added that it "*was a really nice, refreshing take on feminism*" (T113). The participants' recognitions of Heeger's words accompanied with a confirmation that feminism can

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[51] The notion of Afrikaans as the 'language of the oppressor' is believed to have stemmed from the stigmatisation created during apartheid (Sibanda, 2022:2). An interesting additional note on this idea is that "young people saw Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor but they didn't see English in that way" (Isaacs, quoted by Sibanda, 2022:2).

mean different things – beyond the typical notions of fighting against GBV – highlights the receptiveness from the participants on the different takes of feminism. This idea is further emphasised in Turn 127b, with the participant recognising and appreciating "*all these women from all these different backgrounds and they're so inclusive and so themselves*". This recognition, again, creates a sense of empathic engagement despite the differences in identities, and it further enhances the notion of community across difference.

One of the interpretations of feminism established during the event was that of motherhood, which can be noted as a common theme. To this theme, poets shared stories of their own mothers or of experiences being mothers. Of significance in terms of establishing a community across difference, reflection can be made again on Julie's poem *The Boy*, which shares the narrative of a mother struggling to connect with and explain things to her son with autism. Referring to this, one of the participants exclaimed that they "*could almost <u>imagine how tough it is</u> to be a mother to an autistic child*" (T49b). This awareness of the difficulties that one would face in this circumstance and the idea of stepping into someone else's shoes by trying to "*imagine how tough*" the situation might be, again points to an instance of engagement across difference, stimulated through a critical reflection during the meaning-making process following an effective encounter.

Further instances of critical reflection were evident in the focus-group discussion as there were many moments were participants recognised a change in their previous perceptions, knowledges, and perspectives. Here, I refer once again to Turn 97b mentioned earlier wherein a participant reflected on their identity as a White person and their acknowledgment that there are elements of the poet's identity that this participant could never fully relate to. In response to this experience, the participant noted that it helped "*open up* [their] *understanding of certain aspects of what* [the poet] *goes through, and* [they] *know* [they] *would never be able to understand it* [themself]" (T97c). This indicates a moment of empathic engagement with the poet's experience as well as a critical reflection on the unavoidable disparity between the experiences of the participant and the poet, but one where the poet's poetry sharing supported the participant to develop a better sense of understanding.

A final example on critical reflection, and one which is quite profound in the participant's awareness of an obvious shift in attitude, exists as a result of a line from one of Hendrickse's poems:

> *The thing that Amy said that stood out to me was "love is activism". And I have never thought of that, but it really is. Because activism does come from a place of love, and a lot of people have fought really hard to love the people that they love.* […] *When I do think of activism, I think it comes from a place of hurt and pain and wanting something better for yourself. But actually, it's also coming from a place of wanting that for other people and a deep love, so much so that you're sacrificing yourself for the greater good, and that is love.* (T115)

The phrase, "*I have never thought of that*" exemplifies both a critical reflection as well as the beginning of a shift in attitude, with the words, "*But actually*" indicating a change in mindset. This participant explains that the impact of what the poet shared resulted in a cognitive shift from viewing activism as a tool through which to express pain and hurt, to viewing it as a tool through which to express love "*for the greater good*". In terms of following the proposed framework for organising an affective analysis, this illustrates the 'attitude change' element (which is unpacked in Section 5.6.1) where, following the affective encounter and the meaning-making process, there is a shift in previously held views.

5.6 Potential for change

> Experiencing a performance does not end once the lights come up and the audience leaves; the performance has not disappeared. We necessarily wrestle with our experience and allow it to produce new places to engage, create, and critique future performances.
>
> (Powell & Shaffer, 2009:14)

As exemplified in Turn 115 in the previous section, there is potential for poetry to create shifts in individual attitudes. As conjectured in this thesis, these attitude shifts – which could occur during, immediately after, or some time after the event – could lead to changes in future discourses and behaviours, with the long-term aspiration of societal transformation. These shifts do not

necessarily occur during or immediately after the affective encounter; they often ruminate and later appear in (re)constructed discourses and actions.

During the focus-group discussion following the event, there were instances that point to the strong potential for this (re)construction to occur. As with Turn 115 previously mentioned, there were numerous moments of critical self-reflection wherein participants expressed a shift from previously held norms of their individual knowledge base. These moments and their potential can be reviewed in relation to participants explaining how they felt before the event took place, and then following. Conducting a brief review of the pre- and post-event attitudes, discourses, and behaviours enables a discussion regarding the possibilities for live poetry to support significant changes.

5.6.1 Attitudinal and behavioural shifts after the event

Perhaps a key moment within the focus-group discussion was when one participant shared that their deeply felt emotions and strong connections with the poets inspired them to sage[52] their home "*...because poetry is very grounding for me and very revelatory, I got home and I saged. I was really in that space*" (T14b). Later, this participant reflected that the reason for being inspired to do this was because of the actions of Hendrickse when first taking to the stage:

> *...before they started they kind of prayed about the space and welcomed and gave gratitude. I think that was also what set me off to also go back home and sage. So there's always something special about someone who comes in and recognises that there are people who have come before us that made this possible and made it possible for us to be able to exist in certain spaces and places. And it just sets the tone.* (T66b)

There are a few things to unpack in the above turn. Firstly, it exemplifies a moment of critical reflection that was perhaps brought on because of the group reflection during the focus-group discussion. This critical reflection includes an awareness of the poet and the way in which they participated in creating the space, as well as a reflection of the poet's influence on the participant.

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[52] The act of saging one's home – also known as 'smudging' – is an intentional, ritualistic act performed to remove negative energy from a space (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2017).

This highlights the poet's connection with the space which, in turn spurred the establishment of a strong spectator–poet relationship due to the respect and recognition the poet had for the "*people who have come before us that made this possible for us*". The word "*this*" is presumably with reference not just to the particular poetry event, but to the wider inclusive spaces that are now available in the country due to the actions of people in our country's past. All of these reflections and the overall awareness by the participant resulted in a shift in mindset that encouraged and inspired them to engage in a specific behaviour (saging their home).

Other examples of participants' attitudes and mindsets shifting after the event include participants mentioning how "*inspired*" they felt (T17; T18c), with one exclaiming that they were so inspired afterwards that they felt encouraged enough to potentially begin writing their own poetry: "*I want to go write my own poetry. I've never done that, but I was just so inspired*" (T18c). Additionally, with reference again to the participant who shared that they were struggling with social anxiety before coming to the event and therefore were not in a good headspace, they stated that the evening "*completely revolutionised the way* [they] *were feeling*" and that they woke up the next day "*feeling so much better and so much more in tune with the world*" (T16b). The phrase "*in tune with the world*" suggests an enhanced understanding of others in the world and of their unique experiences. Further, the word "*revolutionised*", synonymous with 'transformed', holds a powerful connotation – one that alludes to the potential power of live poetry to support revolutions and transformation within others and within society as a whole.

Although there are many more instances from the corpus that could be exemplified and analysed, there is perhaps one turn worth emphasising that showcases the potential power of live poetry in encouraging the kind of change needed to support feminist activist movements. One participant exclaimed that although some of the topics covered during the event were heavy, emotionally intense, and triggering due to similar experiences as women in South Africa, they still sensed strong reserves of resilience from the poets: "*I didn't go home feeling apathy; I felt empowered*" (T154b).

The word "*empowered*" is no doubt a strong indicator of successful protest discourse. It alludes to a sense of strength within an individual and "having the knowledge, confidence, means, or ability to do things or make decisions for oneself" and to claim one's rights (Merriam-Webster,

Incorporated, n.d.). Within the broader women's rights movements and feminist movements such as #MeToo, the concept of empowerment is ever-present and continuously needed in order to drive the success of the movements forward. In Turn 154b, the participant did not feel a sense of pity, sadness, or apathy about the topics of feminism shared at the poetry event; they felt empowered. This speaks to an underlying motivation and desire to engage in future thought processes, discourses, and behaviours that serve the participant's needs – presumably, in this context, the need to support the fight for women's rights and safety in South Africa.

5.6.2 Is live poetry the right avenue for activism to succeed?

It is important to note that whilst the findings of the focus-group discussion seem hopeful for driving effective transformation, it is possible that this seems to be the case because each of the participants were open to engaging with the poetry and with the discussion that followed. Even if the participants had no prior ties to live poetry, they still made the decision to engage, which implies a pre-determined openness and willingness to listen and thus to be affected by the narratives shared. When approached with the question, "Do you think that live poetry has the potential to influence how people think?", participants responded unanimously that whilst the space does have merit in this regard, it is not necessarily a space that 'speaks to' all people:

> *...it's not for everyone, and I think that's okay. I think it just means that we have to have as many artistic mediums that resonate with everyone as possible. Because there's no limit to how we can share the realities of the war in a way that resonates with every different person and interest and things like that.* (T161b)

Here, a participant recognises that although the space was moving and impactful for them, it may not have the same effect for everyone, and "*that's okay*". They continue to suggest that artistic mediums in general do however have the power to impact people, and that by having a multitude of these mediums with the same activist messages, there is potential for more people to be reached. The lexical choice "*resonate*" above shows an underlying understanding of the experience that art – which drives affective encounters – can have on individuals. The phrase "*the war*"[53] with

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[53] This lexical choice also aligns with a few lines of Bam's poem, *Mute*: "An army with no ammunition / Have you ever heard of a war with no sound?" (Bam, 2022). This poem may have been the reason the participant opted to use those words.

reference to feminism and women's experiences in South Africa is heavily laden with strong emotions and symbolic meaning, with reference to the extreme violence experienced and the intense fighting that is ongoing – both by perpetrators and in fighting back as women.

Following the comment in Turn 161b, another participant added:

> *We all process information differently.* […] *It's definitely something to consider if you're wanting to get a message across. Like, what are all the other sensory processes and how can I get that other person to process this information?* (T162)

This idea of different processing methods by different people was further commented on by other participants, who expressed that "*nothing can just be one dimensional*" (T163) and that "*we should be teaching and learning about these things that people are still ignorant to, in multi-sensory ways*" (T164). This dialogue between the participants showcases a broader awareness of how human beings function in different ways, and recognises the importance of having discourse about these important issues (women's rights, feminism, GBV, women empowerment, etc.) in many different ways so that they are tangible to as many people as possible. In this way, these different artforms could elicit their own kinds of affective encounters (all unique and dependent on the specific created space and the specific communicative event), which could then lead to necessary attitudinal, discursive, and behavioural changes to support societal transformation.

Nevertheless, the impact of the live poetry event on this particular group of people who engaged in the focus-group discussion must be recognised. As has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, the poetry event resulted in strong moments of affect taking place, which did indeed result in attitudinal, discursive, and behavioural shifts. Thus, whilst live poetry may not be the right avenue to drive *all* people towards positive changes, it does hold huge potential to enable successful changes for some.

5.7 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, a data analysis was presented using the framework for conducting an affective analysis that was initially proposed and explained in Chapter 3. The themes covered in this data analysis followed the proposed framework, unpacking the different elements needed to enable an

affective encounter to occur, the components of the affective encounter itself, and the processes and shifts that take place after the experience.

To begin, the communicative event of the poetry event was contextualised, followed by an overview of the created space. The created space included the physical environment (the actual place the event took place and the objects and people existing in that space), the mental environment (relating to the individual participants' moods, influence from prior experiences, identities, etc.) and the social environment (consisting of the spectator–spectator and the spectator–poet relationships). Following this, moments of affective encounters were identified, with participants being temporarily outside meaning (expressed through participants' inabilities to articulate how they felt) or experiencing embodied reactions, both as responses to the overwhelming experience of the sensory assault caused by affect. Further, a review of the meaning-making process was conducted, identifying elements such as linguistic labelling, recognising relatability, engaging in critical reflection, and experiencing empathic engagement and community across difference. Finally, the potential for the affective encounter to bring about change was addressed, identifying moments in the focus-group discussion that pointed to attitudinal and discursive shifts after the event, with a brief discussion on whether live poetry is the right avenue for supporting the success of activist efforts.

In the chapter that follows, there is a discussion on the results obtained from this affective analysis. In this discussion, the research questions are answered and conclusions are drawn.

Chapter 6: Discussion and conclusion

"I didn't go home feeling apathy; I felt empowered."

6.1 Introductory remarks

The above turn that opens this chapter (T154b) concisely encompasses much of what was identified in the focus-group discussion data in terms of the potential that live poetry holds for supporting societal transformation. As briefly overviewed in Section 5.6, there are moments from the focus-group discussion that indicate a potential for live poetry to drive attitudinal changes which, in turn, influence discursive and behavioural changes. As explained in the methodology chapter, this thesis posits that it is in these discursive and behavioural changes (that are external from the poetry space and perhaps much longer lasting) that further affective encounters could occur in other people who were not present for the poetry. This could theoretically – and ideally – create a ripple effect wherein continued discursive (re)construction of the communication shared during the poetry event emanates to affect society as a whole due to a widespread and continuous experience of empathic engagement.

This chapter serves as a further discussion of the data analysis and findings, to expand on what came up and to assess how the findings aided in answering the research questions. As a reminder, the four research questions are as follows:

1. What are the elements needed to enable an affective encounter to take place?
2. How can these elements be organised to enable a more robust affective analysis of a data set?
3. In what ways does live poetry provoke affective reactions for selected audience members, and how are these moments reflected on and described?
4. What follows an affective encounter, and how could this support activism and promote needed societal change?

As well as answering the research questions, this chapter outlines some findings that were inconclusive, discusses the limitations of the research, and presents suggestions for how future research could be improved and expanded on in the field of Affect theory. Finally, this chapter

presents an argument for the importance and power of the affective encounter in supporting the success of activist efforts.

6.2 Answering the research questions

6.2.1 Elements enabling the affective encounter

Question 1: What are the elements needed to enable an affective encounter to take place?

First outlined in Chapter 3, the theoretical framework chapter, I theorised a framework made up of the elements that are needed in order for an affective encounter to occur. These elements were identified both in other literature in the field of Affect theory as well as drawing from observations during the poetry event and the focus-group discussion afterwards. As was depicted in Figure 3.2, the multiple elements that establish an effective space for driving affect include the communicative event and the created space, which consists of physical, mental, and social environments.

With regards to the communicative event, this could be either verbal (such as live poetry) or non-verbal (watching a dance, for example). This event is necessary as this is where the discursive engagement occurs between 'performer' and spectator. With the initial communicative event in place, the space is then created within that realm. The physical environment within the created space includes aspects such as the setting (place and décor), the existence of other people in this space, the lighting and sound, and so on. The mental environment refers to the specific individual's headspace, the influence of their prior experiences, and their identity. Finally, the social environment includes the interactions with other people in the space and the interplay between people with similar and different identities. These different elements of the created space often overlap and interact, continuously influencing one another and thus the overall experience of the communicative event in which the space occupies.

These theorised elements were supported in the focus-group discussion, with participants specifically and implicitly addressing them. Broadly speaking, elements of the venue's visual appearance that were referred to include the dim lighting, homey décor, proximity of the participants to the stage, and the venue's small size filled with many people, which all added to creating an authentic and intimate atmosphere.

The aspects of the mental environment that were recognised by participants included their personal headspaces (including concepts such as excitement to attend the event, social anxiety, awareness of needing to navigate a social situation as a Person of Colour, and feeling physically ill), an awareness of their specific engagement with the event, an awareness of the shifts in their personal headspaces before and during/after the event, and their prior personal experiences that impacted the way they perceived the event and engaged with the poetry.

Finally, elements of the social environment that were addressed included the spectator–spectator relationship (the audience interacting with each other and observing each other's reactions to the poetry) and the spectator–poet relationship. More intricate elements of these interactions included language barriers (with most participants unable to understand the majority of the Afrikaans that was spoken at the event), awareness of people with certain identities having vastly different lived-experiences (race, historical background in South Africa, age, etc.), personal perceptions of the poet, and an awareness of and engagement with the intimacy of the personal stories shared by the poets.

The boundaries of how these elements can be interpreted are not fixed. For example, an individual could be watching a video recording of a dance on a screen and experience an affective encounter. Whilst there are no other people around them physically, there is still an imagined sense of connection with the dancer, and previous experiences of the individual's social life will impact how they perceive this relationship with the dancer. With this flexibility of definition in mind, without the combination and interaction of all these elements, it is unlikely that an affective encounter will take place. In sum, the elements needed to enable an affective encounter to take place include: the communicative event and the created space (made up of the physical, mental, and social environments).

6.2.2 An organised affective analysis

Question 2: How can these elements be organised to enable a more robust affective analysis of a data set?

With regards to answering this question, it is important to recall that this thesis took on the methodological position of being inductive and exploratory, using the data as the main guiding

force for establishing the direction of the research. Thus, whilst the framework for conducting an organised affective analysis was initially outlined in the theoretical framework chapter, it was only possible to establish this structure after beginning the data analysis process, which consisted of a thematic analysis, a feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA), and a review of affect. Initially this review of affect was broader, basing the analysis process around loosely engaging with themes. However, after finding some difficulty in structuring the data analysis in an effective manner from which to properly review the process of the affective encounter, I determined that this more organised approach was necessary.

The proposed framework for these elements was thus outlined in the theoretical framework (in Figure 3.2) as a guide for engaging with the structure of the data analysis chapter. The proposed framework is somewhat cyclical in that after the affective encounter occurs, it (theoretically) causes attitudinal shifts in individuals that result in discursive and behavioural changes, which then generate further affective encounters to occur in other people, thus spurring a new cycle of affect to begin. The proposed structure is as follows:

1. The communicative event
2. Created space: Physical, mental, and social environments
3. The affective encounter
4. Embodied reactions to sensory assault
5. Meaning-making
6. Attitude shift
7. Behavioural and discursive changes
8. Transformation

An organised affective analysis can thus be conducted by utilising this framework, analysing the process from the initial elements needed to cause an affective encounter, to the aspects of the affective encounter itself, and through to the outcomes that follow the affective encounter. Additionally, each element can be broken up into specific characteristics that can further guide the structuring of the affective analysis. A simplified version of the initial diagram from Chapter 3 is depicted below in Figure 6.1, for ease of reference.
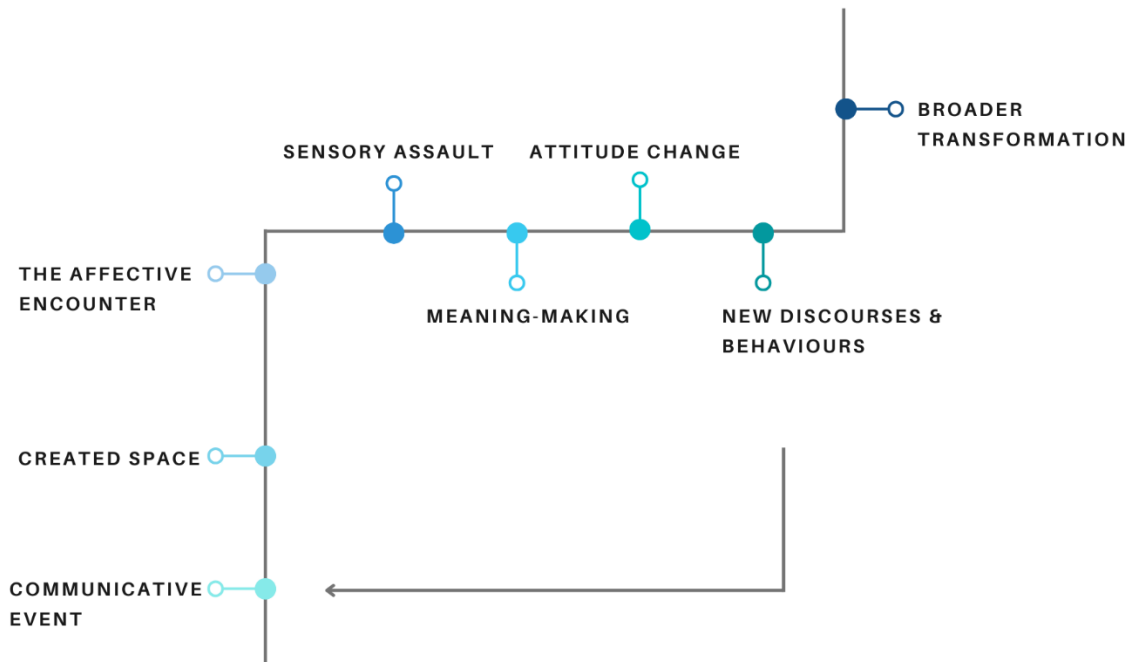
Figure 6.1: The structure and impacts of an affective encounter. (Created by: Jenah McKenzie)

The outcome of utilising this proposed framework can be reflected on from its use in Chapter 5, whereby each element in the framework (as well as specific characteristics of each element) could be addressed based on the focus-group discussion. Although one must be wary of introducing strict or inflexible rules and parameters to every theory in academia,[54] this paper argues that the proposed organised approach to conducting an affective analysis is important as it paints a clearer picture of the impact that affective encounters could have on broader societal change. If we can visualise how affect can support the success of important activist efforts, it is necessary to then understand precisely how it is that an affective encounter could be induced, in order to encourage its occurrence in various contexts to support transformation.

Additionally, as has been repeated throughout this thesis, affect in and of itself is unstructured, and thus the proposed framework for conducting an affective analysis should be used as a guide rather than as a rigid structure. The recursiveness and fluidity of Affect theory should be maintained, with the use of the framework varying across different research, with different researchers and

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[54] This is especially true in the socio-linguistic field, where newer theories are continuously being presented – and should be welcomed – as alternatives to common, traditional methods of analysis, and where there is a motivation to move away from a 'correct' way of engaging in academia towards a space that is more inclusive and accessible, and that takes into account the 'messiness' of 'real-life' feelings and behaviours.

objectives. By identifying these elements making up the proposed framework (based around the experience of the affective encounter), and organising them according to specific research objectives, it is possible to conduct a more robust affective analysis of a data set.

6.2.3 The affective encounter in live poetry

Question 3: In what ways does live poetry provoke affective reactions for selected audience members, and how are these moments reflected on and described?

The focus-group discussion data are rich with affect, indicating multiple moments of the affective encounter taking place in varying forms. As has been continuously pointed out in this thesis, affect takes place pre-cognitively and before linguistic labelling can occur. However, despite the ability to specifically refer to an affective encounter taking place, participants still reflected on and described these moments in two ways: referring to embodied reactions experienced (as a reaction to the sensory assault) and exhibiting difficulty in expressing their feelings, thus exemplifying affect as existing temporarily outside meaning. These moments were thus analysed in detail in Chapter 5's affective analysis.

As a general overview, examples of embodied reactions experienced (whether literally or figuratively) by the participants included feeling surges in their hearts, their eyes rolling back, and crying, with one participant powerfully expressing a more abstract embodied reaction: "*I was just in my body*" (T135). Further, there were observations by the participants of the poets showcasing embodied reactions, including elements such as facial expressions and gestures. In terms of exhibiting difficulty in expressing one's feelings, this is illustrated in the data with interjections, such as "*phew*" (T106b), and expressive phrases, such as "*I was like, joh!*" (T49a).

6.2.4 From the affective encounter to activism

Question 4: What follows an affective encounter, and how could this support activism and promote needed societal change?

As depicted in Figure 6.1 presented in Section 6.2.2, this thesis posits that after the affective encounter, the opportunity exists for significant changes to occur within individuals, which later could affect other people, and ultimately could support societal transformation. This concept is

important in this research because it indicates the possibility for affective encounters to support the success of activist efforts, through deep connections, critical self-reflection, and a (re)construction of discourses and behaviours. In the data analysis, these concepts were addressed in Sections 5.5 and 5.6.

After experiencing the pre-cognitive moment of the affective encounter, the meaning-making process occurs and individuals begin to rationalise, interpret, and explain the experience of affect. This is done through identifying linguistic labels (naming specific emotions), engaging in critical self-reflection to make sense of why they experienced the moment in the way they did, and establishing a deeper understanding for the communicative situation they're in and the other person(s) they're engaging with – this drives empathic engagement and the sense of community across difference.

In the focus-group discussion, participants utilised various adjectives to describe the poetry, the poets, and the event as a whole: authentic, intimate, powerful, inspirational, etc. Critical self-reflection involved an understanding of aspects that were both relatable to the participants (due to having experienced similar feelings and situations on account of sharing the identity of being women in South Arica) and not relatable. For the latter aspects, participants identified that although they did not relate to what the poets were sharing, they still felt a deep connection with the poets themselves and gained insight into the past and present struggles for these poets (on the basis of race, past experiences, age, etc.). These self-reflections thus created moments of empathic engagement, both during and after the event, wherein participants were able to feel a sense of community across difference (i.e. togetherness despite having vastly different identities and lived-experiences).

Following this meaning-making process, the idea is that these critical reflections and deeper understandings begin to spur changes in individual attitudes and perceptions. These attitudinal changes are identifiable as either shifts in previously held views (of people, interactions, history, etc.) or shifts in the motivation to share these attitudes and perceptions with others. If the motivation is strong enough, then further discussions and behaviours can be (re)produced to share and exhibit this new shift in thinking in overt, expressive ways. Following this, this thesis conceptualises that these new discussions and behaviours – in the right circumstances – could

result in other people engaging in these interactions to experience their own moment of the affective encounter. Thus, a new affective cycle would be occurring, which could in turn cause another affective encounter in someone else, and so forth. The combination of all of these meaningful affective moments can serve to empower others and drive movements forward, to support needed societal change.

6.3 Inconclusive findings, limitations, and future research

Whilst the results from the focus-group discussion and data analysis are promising, it is important to acknowledge and expand on some of the ideas brought up by the focus-group regarding whether participants agreed that poetry events could in fact drive societal shifts in attitudes. As indicated in Chapter 5, whilst the participants experienced the impact of the poetry and felt empowered by it, they also raised the point that poetry will not resonate with everyone in the same way; there are other art forms that may work better for those people (e.g. art, music, film, etc.). Thus, although the findings in this paper point to the positive impact live poetry can have in supporting societal transformation, this thesis is only one research project. As highlighted by Odendaal, there is an "undeniable singularity […] to each show, because each session happens only once and the specific collection of people at the event will never be the same again" (2017:57). Perhaps if a different group of participants were to attend the same event, they would not have experienced the same level of connection with the poets and narratives shared.

Additionally, there are elements of the proposed structure of the affective analysis that are still inconclusive in this research. This relates mostly to the 'future' events that follow the affective encounter. With the research conducted for this paper, there is no way of knowing if the event succeeded in causing not just attitudinal changes, but discursive and behavioural changes that serve to support the feminist movement. Further, there is no way of knowing what potential lag might exist between experiencing the attitudinal changes and then acting on these changes in future discourses and behaviours, or to assess how the impact of other, new spaces might negatively affect the individual's decision to engage in their changed behaviour. A potential resolve to better understand these uncertainties would be to have a second focus-group discussion with the same participants a few weeks or even months after the first discussion, to ask questions regarding

specific experiences that participants might deem to have been influenced by the affective encounter and the poetry event.

A second potential flaw in the proposed framework is regarding the second affective encounter, the one which theoretically occurs in other people due to the changed discourses and behaviours of the individual who attended the live poetry event. The question must be raised as to how this second communicative event could produce the same level of affect required to cause the cycle of the affective encounter to repeat, especially considering that this second communicative event is likely not going to be in the form of poetry or even in another artistic medium. For this to happen successfully, there would need to be very specific elements in place to mimic the created space of the poetry event in order to encourage empathic listening and an openness to connect. However, it is of course possible for an affective encounter to occur without the presence of all elements noted in the proposed framework. Depending on how individuals choose to present their ideological shifts, affective encounters could take on other forms or occur in very simple settings, such as in debates, on posters, in seminars, and so on. Affect does not only occur in environments typically associated with feeling 'moved' such as live poetry events, music concerts, or theatrical performances. Future research could thus be conducted to assess the longer-term impacts of the initial affective encounter, examining the various ways in which participants engaged in discursive and behavioural changes in line with their attitudinal changes.

Along with assessing the longer-term effects of the affective encounter, future research could also investigate the notion of 'exchange of affect' by engaging not just with the participants, but with the poets as well. By interviewing the poets about their experiences of sharing live poetry, affect can (hopefully) be identified and patterns can be drawn to track and evaluate the exchange of affect between spectator and poet.

6.4 Concluding remarks

This thesis drew on numerous theories as lenses through which to conduct an affective analysis of South African feminist live poetry including Lazar's (2005; 2007; 2014) feminist critical discourse analysis, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, and Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) general socio-linguistic framework of identity performance. Significantly, the works of numerous Affect theorists were drawn on – as well as the focus-group data set itself – to guide the creation of a

proposed framework for conducting an affective analysis, which was successfully utilised in the data analysis presented in Chapter 5.

The live poetry event, which created a space for marginalised or absent topics to become visible in the form of intersectional feminist discourses, resulted in powerful affective encounters that inspired members of the audience to actively engage with the communicative event and thus with the people sharing their stories. This enabled an empathic engagement and an understanding across difference, which was reflected in the focus-group discussion. As well as enabling a better understanding of the lived-experiences of other women, the event created a powerful sense of solidarity amongst the focus-group participants in relation to each other and to the poets. This was emphasised throughout the affective analysis and illustrated through the descriptions of strong affective moments that left the participants feeling empowered.

In addition to indicating the potential that exists for live poetry to enable affective encounters and support activist efforts, this thesis also outlined a proposed framework for conducting an organised affective analysis. This, I believe, will contribute to future research, particularly research that wishes to assess the opportunities for affective encounters to support societal transformation.

Overall, the findings of this thesis are significant because, as has been reiterated throughout the data analysis chapter and this chapter, they showcase that live poetry has the potential to support some kinds of transformation. Through the co-created environment, strong moments of affect occurred, which resulted in feelings of empowerment as well as critical reflections from the participants. These critical reflections included re-assessing previously held views and recognising the difficulties faced by others with different experiences and identities. This recognition is the first step towards a better understanding of others' experiences and towards identifying ways in which to increase understanding and to act in solidarity for a more socially just society.

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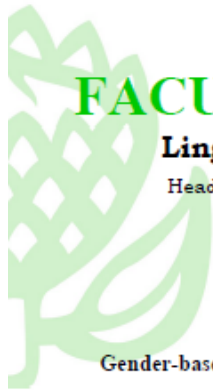Yaa de Villiers, P. 2010. *The everyday wife*. Modjaji Books.

Appendix A

Prompts for the focus-group discussion:

- Please share a little bit about yourself: what are you studying, how old are you, where did you grow up, what languages do you speak, etc.?

- Have you attended a live poetry production before? What were your expectations versus what actually happened?

- Without putting too much thought into your answer, what are some initial thoughts you have about the evening?

- Were there any specific moments, or maybe poets, that stood out for you or that resonated with you?

- Did you feel a change in the way that you understood the poet depending on how they delivered their poems?

- Did you experience any physical reactions while watching the poetry?

- Did you feel welcomed in the space?

- How did you feel when poems were shared completely or partially in Afrikaans; could you still connect with the poets even though you could not understand the words?

- A few of the poets spoke about their work not exactly fitting the 'mould' of feminist poetry. What did you think of this and about how they viewed feminism in their own ways?

- What did you think of the space that was created? This relates to not just the venue, but also the interactions between audience and poet. How do you think everyone contributed to creating this space for engagement and reflection?

- Do you think after the event and our discussion tonight that your outlook has changed on anything?

- Do you think that live poetry has the potential to influence how people think?

Appendix B

Information sheet for the focus-group participants:[55]

FACULTY OF ARTS
Linguistics Department
Head of Department: Prof F. Banda

HSSREC
Research Development
Tel: 021 959 4111
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Information Sheet

Gender-based violence in South African spoken word poetry: A multimodal discourse analysis & review of audience affect

I am a student in the Linguistics Department at the University of the Western Cape. I would like to interview you for my Masters thesis. My research looks into topics of gender-based violence (GBV), feminism, sexism, and women empowerment as portrayed through discourses in spoken word poetry in South Africa. Additionally, my research reviews the effects of these poetry performances on audience reactions and perspectives.

The aim of this research is three-fold. Firstly, this study intends to review the discursive ways in which spoken word poets share their narratives and speak out against the injustices of patriarchal oppression and GBV in the South African context. Secondly, this study wishes to better understand the context of South African spoken word poetry through a feminist lens. Finally, this study is interested in understanding the ways in which spoken word poetry can be used to provoke affective responses by audience members regarding South African feminist issues.

Your role in this research, as a self-identifying woman living in South Africa, is to participate in a small focus group discussion with myself and four to five other participants. As a group, before the discussion, we will watch a performance of a spoken word poem that discusses issues of GBV and related themes. Following this, I will prompt the group with a series of questions regarding your experiences and feelings whilst watching the poetry performance. This discussion will take approximately two hours. An audio recording will be made to ensure that I accurately recall the information you provide. Additionally, I will make a written transcript of the audio, which can be made available to you on request. The focus group discussions and responses (data) will not be shared with parties external to the research project without your permission. The audio recordings and written transcriptions will be stored on a password-protected USB.

The discussion will be semi-structured, meaning that I will ask a few questions as starting points that will lead further discussions depending on your responses.

For privacy, your name will be changed to a pseudonym for this study and any future publications. Any additional markers of identity (such as your location, physical appearance, etc.) will also not be included in any publications.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions or to pull out of the study at any point (including after the discussion group process). These decisions will be met with full respect, without consequence or explanations needed.

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[55] Note that this form was created before the thesis focus shifted and name was changed.

Due to the nature of this study, regarding topics of GBV and feminist issues in South Africa, it is possible that some questions or topics of conversation may be triggering. The focus group discussion, however, will be guided mostly by your responses and the responses of the other participants. You will not be asked to elaborate on any personal experiences in relation to gender-based violence and you will not be forced to answer any questions. However, if you feel uncomfortable at any point in the research process, you are encouraged to request a change in topic. Additionally, should any part of the discussion group process (before, during, and after) cause distress, you are encouraged to contact myself, my supervisors, or any of the resources (provided at the bottom of this page), to talk through your concerns or queries.

If you agree, I will ask you to sign the attached consent form.

For further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact me on my cell phone (083 234 3538) or via email (4161576@myuwc.ac.za). You may also contact my supervisors, Prof Zannie Bock (zbock@uwc.ac.za) or Ms Mooniq Shaikjee (mshaikjee@uwc.ac.za) in the Linguistics Department.

Thank you for your participation,
Jenah McKenzie

Resources:

- LIFELINE
  0861-322-322 or 021- 461-1111

- RAPE CRISIS CENTRE (https://rapecrisis.org.za/#)
  021-447-9762 (English) 021-361-9085 (isiXhosa) 021-633-9229 (Afrikaans)
  WhatsApp Counselling: 083-222-5164
  E-mail: communications@rapecrisis.org.za

- THUTHUZELA CARE CENTRE (Managed by Rape Crisis)
  Designated forensic and medical service available to rape survivors as an emergency service in the 72 hours immediately after a rape.
  021-690-1000

- NATIONAL EMERGENCY NUMBER
  (Police, ambulance, fire)
  10111

- SADAG (South African Depression & Anxiety Group)
  0800-567-567 (toll free)

Research Ethics Office:
Tel: +27 21 959 4111
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

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- FAMSA
  For individual, couple & family counselling.
  Observatory 021-447-7951, Gugulethu 021-637-6706, Khayelitsha 021-361-9098, Tygerberg
  Office 021-946-4744, Worcester 023-347-5231, Elsies River 021-933-0192, Mitchell's Plain
  021-391-6015

- TRAUMA CENTRE FOR SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE AND TORTURE
  021-465-7373

- SAARTJIE BAARTMAN CENTRE
  For counselling for domestic violence and provision of safe accommodation
  021-633-5287

- TEARS FOUNDATION
  SMS *134*7355#
  Call 010 590 5920

- POWA (People Opposing Women Abuse)
  011 642 4345

- UNITED SANCTUARY AGAINST ABUSE
  Offers counselling and shelter for abused women.
  Woman Abuse Line 0800-150-150

- HIV/AIDS HELPLINE
  0800- 0120-322

- TRIANGLE PROJECT
  For individual and couple counselling for LGBTQI clients
  021- 448-3812

- CAPE MENTAL HEALTH SOCIETY
  021-477-9040

- GOOD HOPE PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (PAARL)
  Free psychological services and community-based interventions.
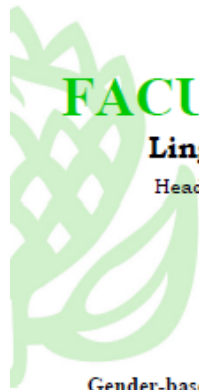 021 863-3127/8 (leave a clear message after which you will be contacted)

Appendix C

Non-disclosure form for the focus-group participants:[56]

FACULTY OF ARTS

Linguistics Department

Head of Department: Prof F. Banda

HSSREC
Research Development
Tel: 021 959 4111
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Gender-based violence in South African spoken word poetry: A multimodal discourse analysis & review of audience affect

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. Any questions I may have about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation entails and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone by the researchers and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits. I also understand that confidentiality is dependent on participants' in the Focus Group maintaining confidentiality.

I hereby agree to uphold the confidentiality of the discussions in the focus group by not disclosing the identity of other participants or any aspects of their contributions to members outside of the group.

Participant's full name: _____

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Dean: Prof DJ Brown, djbrown@uwc.ac.za
Faculty Manager: Ms S Mcwatts, smcwatts@uwc.ac.za
Dean's Administrator: Ms JS Flusk, jflusk@uwc.ac.za
Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 South Africa
T: +27 (0)21 959 2235   F: +27 (0)21 959 3636
www.uwc.ac.za/arts

Tel: +27 21 959 4111: Research Ethics Office
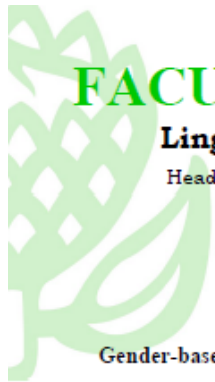Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

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[56] Note that this form was created before the thesis focus shifted and name was changed.

Appendix D

Information form for the poets:[57]

FACULTY OF ARTS
Linguistics Department
Head of Department: Prof F. Banda

HSSREC
Research Development
Tel: 021 959 4111
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Information Sheet

**Gender-based violence in South African spoken word poetry: A multimodal discourse analysis &
review of audience affect**

I am a student in the Linguistics Department at the University of the Western Cape. I would like to interview you for my Masters thesis. My research looks into topics of gender-based violence (GBV), feminism, sexism, and women empowerment as portrayed through discourses in spoken word poetry in South Africa. Additionally, my research reviews the effects of these poetry performances on audience reactions and perspectives.

The aim of this research is three-fold. Firstly, this study intends to review the discursive ways in which spoken word poets share their narratives and speak out against the injustices of patriarchal oppression and GBV in the South African context. Secondly, this study wishes to better understand the context of South African spoken word poetry through a feminist lens. Finally, this study is interested in understanding the ways in which spoken word poetry can be used to provoke affective responses by audience members regarding South African feminist issues.

Your role in this research, as a female-identifying spoken word poet living in South Africa, is to participate in a one-on-one interview with me to discuss your experiences in the South African performance poetry scene. The interview will take approximately one hour. An audio recording will be made to ensure that I accurately recall the information you provide. Additionally, I will make a written transcript of the audio, which can be made available to you on request. The interview responses (data) will not be shared with parties external to the research project without your permission. The audio recordings and written transcriptions will be stored on a password-protected USB.

The interview will be semi-structured, meaning that I will ask a few questions as starting points that will lead further discussions depending on your responses. Questions will revolve loosely around your experience in the South African spoken word poetry scene, your experience as a woman in this environment, your experiences presenting discourses regarding topics such as GBV and women empowerment, audience reactions to your poetry performances, and your objectives as a performance poet.

In addition to this interview, I will be conducting a critical discourse analysis on one or more of your poetry performances. For this reason, I am requesting to have access to a video-recording of one of your live poetry performances, specifically one of you performing a poem that speaks to issues of GBV and feminism. If you do not have a video of one of these performances, I will attend a live performance and request your permission to video-record the performance in order to conduct my analysis.

For privacy, your name will be changed to a pseudonym for this study and any future publications. Any additional markers of identity (such as your location, physical appearance, etc) will also not be included in any publications. However, please be aware that there is a risk that you may be identified due to the reference to, and use of, your poetry in the discussions or in the discourse analysis. If you should, at any point, wish me to remove some of your material from my data, I will be happy to do so. I am also

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[57] Note that this form was created before the thesis focus shifted and name was changed.

very willing to share with you my final analysis for your comment, before I submit my research project.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions or to pull out of the study at any point (including after the interview process). These decisions will be met with full respect, without consequence or explanations needed.

Your information will be used to guide my discussions regarding the context of the South African spoken word poetry scene. Additionally, the poems that you provide will be analysed using a multimodal critical discourse analysis through the lens of a feminist perspective.

Due to the nature of this study, regarding topics of GBV and feminist issues in South Africa, it is possible that some questions or topics of conversation may be triggering. The interview, however, will be guided mostly by your responses. You will not be asked to elaborate on any personal experiences in relation to gender-based violence and you will not be forced to answer any questions. However, if you feel uncomfortable at any point in the interview process, you are encouraged to request a change in topic. Additionally, should any part of the interview process (before, during, and after) cause distress, you are encouraged to contact myself, my supervisors, or any of the resources (provided at the bottom of this page), to talk through your concerns or queries.

If you agree, I will ask you to sign the attached consent form.

For further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact me on my cell phone (083 234 3538) or via email (4161576@myuwc.ac.za). You may also contact my supervisors, Prof Zannie Bock (zbock@uwc.ac.za) or Ms Mooniq Shaikjee (mshaikjee@uwc.ac.za) in the Linguistics Department.

Thank you for your participation,
Jenah McKenzie

Resources:
- LIFELINE
  0861-322-322 or 021-461-1111

- RAPE CRISIS CENTRE (https://rapecrisis.org.za/#)
  021-447-9762 (English) 021-361-9085 (isiXhosa) 021-633-9229 (Afrikaans)
  WhatsApp Counselling: 083-222-5164
  E-mail: communications@rapecrisis.org.za

- THUTHUZELA CARE CENTRE (Managed by Rape Crisis)
  Designated forensic and medical service available to rape survivors as an emergency service in the 72 hours immediately after a rape.
  021-690-1000

- SADAG (South African Depression & Anxiety Group)
  0800-567-567 (toll free)

Research Ethics Office:
Tel: +27 21 959 4111
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

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A place of quality, a place to grow, from hope to action through knowledge

- FAMSA
  For individual, couple & family counselling.
  Observatory 021-447-7951, Gugulethu 021-637-6706, Khayelitsha 021-361-9098, Tygerberg
  Office 021-946-4744, Worcester 023-347-5231, Elsies River 021-933-0192, Mitchell's Plain
  021-391-6015

- TRAUMA CENTRE FOR SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE AND TORTURE
  021-465-7373

- SAARTJIE BAARTMAN CENTRE
  For counselling for domestic violence and provision of safe accommodation
  021-633-5287

- TEARS FOUNDATION
  SMS *134*7355#
  Call 010 590 5920

- POWA (People Opposing Women Abuse)
  011 642 4345

- UNITED SANCTUARY AGAINST ABUSE
  Offers counselling and shelter for abused women.
  Woman Abuse Line 0800-150-150

- HIV/AIDS HELPLINE
  0800-0120-322

- TRIANGLE PROJECT
  For individual and couple counselling for LGBTQI clients
  021-448-3812

- CAPE MENTAL HEALTH SOCIETY
  021-477-9040

- GOOD HOPE PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (PAARL)
  Free psychological services and community-based interventions.
  021-863-3127/8 (leave a clear message after which you will be contacted)