

Reshaping Remembrance  
Critical Essays on Afrikaans Places of Memory



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Critical Essays on Afrikaans Places of Memory

Albert Grundlingh  
and  
Siegfried Huigen

*Editors*

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## Koos Kombuis and Collective Memory: An Introduction

*Siegfried Huigen and Albert Grundlingh*

As the year 2006 gave way to 2007, a song and an accompanying music video about the Boer general Koos de la Rey caused quite a stir in South Africa. When this song was played in bars and at barbecues, young white Afrikaners would stand with their fists clenched against their chests and sing along: 'De la Rey, De la Rey...' And tears would flow. According to news reports, the 'De la Rey thing' had made many of them 'proud' of their roots. Worried ANC politicians expressed concern because they saw this as the start of an ethnic revival that could disrupt South Africa. The phenomenon even made it to the world press.

One of the more balanced reactions to the De la Rey song is an article by the Afrikaans beat poet Koos Kombuis on *Litnet*, 'Bok van Blerk en die bagasie van veertig jaar' (Bok van Blerk and the baggage of forty years).<sup>1</sup> In this article Kombuis confesses his conflicting reactions to the song. Rationally, he rejects the song and the Boer War elements in the music video. He sees it as 'a call to war, a sort of musical closing of the ranks'. Some months before Kombuis had distanced himself publicly from his Afrikaner identity in a Sunday newspaper, from the 'baggage that has been forced on me by people who have now been trying to prescribe for forty years who and what an Afrikaner is. What an Afrikaner is supposed to believe in. Whom he should vote for, which shit clothes he should wear and how he should spend his public holidays'.<sup>2</sup> This notwithstanding, Kombuis is unable to offer any resistance to the emotional appeal of the song: 'Why, if I experienced my resignation from Afrikanerdom as such a gloriously liberating step, do I feel so inexplicably profoundly touched by the De la Rey song? It is embarrassing'.

In reply to Kombuis's question 'why', it can be surmised that both the song and the video, with their images of the leadership, a concentration camp and Boer fighters, draw on the collective memory of white Afrikaners, on something they learned within the family and, especially for the older ones, at school and in church. Kombuis's reaction already points in this direction when he says that when he hears the song, he longs to be back at Sunday school and 'feels like rejoining the army on the spot and shooting the hell out of the Kakies and other K stuff'.<sup>3</sup>

The role of collective memories was first investigated seriously by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs in his ground-breaking works *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (The social frameworks of memory) and *La mémoire collective* (The collective memory). These publications from 1925 and 1950 were rediscovered in recent years by historians doing research on memory. According to Halbwachs, every one of us obviously has his own memories, but at the same time we also share group memories.

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<sup>1</sup> Litnet, 28 November 2006.

<sup>2</sup> *Rapport*, 15 January 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Also compare Grundlingh's essay on the 'De la Rey' song in this book.

One remembers as an individual, but in this one is not alone. The environment in which one grew up and in which one lives forms a framework which determines the shape and content of memories and helps to codetermine identities. Groups can even produce memories in individuals which they never ‘experienced’ in a direct sense.

Collective memories are fluid as regards past events. The interests and requirements of the present determine collective memory. As generations pass, memories fade away. The period of collective memory is generally estimated as going back one hundred years from the present. Within the confines of three or four generations, the past still remains ‘warm’ – it maintains a link with the living. The past predating this period cools down and becomes part of the domain of historical memory, the terrain that is kept alive artificially by specialist historians. Here, too, the influence of the present is not absent, because only certain aspects of the vast area encompassed by the past are researched by historians.<sup>4</sup>

Halbwachs argues that social groupings form the memories and identities of individuals. Kombuis’s compulsive thoughts of Sunday school and the South African Defence Force also indicate the direction in which his reactions to the De la Rey song are determined. It was Sunday school and the Defence Force, among others, that shaped his memories and that cause him to be touched by the De la Rey song.

The book *Reshaping Remembrance* contains a series of critical essays about a number of collective Afrikaans memories – memories which have already almost gone cold as well as the more recent ones, such as the De la Rey song. The original Afrikaans version of the book sought to encourage Afrikaans readers to reflect on their memories. It may be gratifying to get high and forget about things that bother you and feel proud of your origins, but it would be unwise to suppress the problematic aspects of the past. It is, for one thing, not conducive to dialogue with other citizens of South Africa. Given the burden of apartheid guilt, the memories of Afrikaans-speaking whites cannot unfold in the present without reservations or nuances. ‘They’ will still hold you responsible, no matter how hard you try to forget. After all, at present it is ‘they’ who set the debate, who put whites more or less in the position of the ‘other’. Censored, sanitised memory is not healthy either. It is better to come to grips with the past, not to push it away behind a barrier of protective wishful thinking. Freud showed that the latter could cause nightmares.

The approach followed in this book differs from the way in which the collective memories of Afrikaners were dealt with twenty years ago. In the publication of the Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Bodies (FAK), *Afrikanerbakens* (Afrikaner beacons) of 1989, a series of historical monuments, resorts, church buildings and statues were described. ‘Together they want to express the story of the Afrikaner’, as the editor put it.<sup>5</sup> The style in which the ‘beacons’ were described was not detached from the spirit of the time prevailing in the late 1980s, when the National Party was coming under

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<sup>4</sup> M. Halbwachs, *Les cadre de la mémoire* 1925, *La mémoire collective* 1950, [http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/Halbwachs\\_maurice](http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/Halbwachs_maurice); P.Nora, ‘Between memory and history: Les Lieux de Mémoire’, in: *Representations*, Spring 1989, 7-24; P.H. Hutton, ‘Sigmund Freud and Maurice Halbwachs: The problem of memory in historical psychology’, in: *The History Teacher*, February 1994, 145-158; J. Assman, ‘Collective memory and cultural identity’, in: *New German Critique*, Spring/Summer 1995, 125-133; S.A. Crane, ‘Writing the individual back into collective memory’, in: *The American Historical Review* 102(5), 1997, 1372-1385; J.K. Olick & J. Robbins, ‘Social memory studies: From ‘collective memory’ to the historical sociology of mnemonic practices’, in: *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, 1998, 104-140; J.K. Olick, ‘Collective memory: The two cultures’, in: *Sociological theory* 17(3), 1999, 333-348; P. Hutton, ‘Recent scholarship on memory and history’, in: *The History Teacher*, August 2000, 533-548.

<sup>5</sup> M.J. Swart et al. (eds), *Afrikanerbakens*. Auckland Park: FAK 1989.

increased domestic and foreign pressure because of apartheid. With white domination tottering and the future uncertain, a need was felt to leave a tangible record of what could be regarded as ‘Afrikaner beacons’ for posterity. But at the present juncture even the concept of ‘Afrikaner beacons’, with its associations of immutability and prescriptiveness, is an anomaly.

In this book on collective memory among Afrikaners, the contributors have examined so-called *memory sites*. This term does not necessarily refer to physical, topographic sites. Following in the footsteps of Pierre Nora and Jan Assmann, the term memory site is used in a metaphorical sense in this book. According to Assmann and Nora the collective memory ‘crystallizes’ around certain points of attachment to the past that develop into symbolic figures. In this way the past develops into a reality that has a persistent formative force. Such sites of memory can be both material and immaterial: buildings, places, events, acts, books, people. In media theory terms, one could call them icons. Such places are memory sites not because of their materiality, but because of the symbolic function that they fulfil. ‘Site’ is therefore also understood here in the metaphoric, heuristic sense, much in the same way as a *topos* in classical rhetoric. At a memory site, memories are found. The memories can be consoling, but often painful as well. Take examples of German memory sites: there are the fairytales of Grimm and the poet Goethe, but also Hitler’s bunker in Berlin, the Berlin Wall and Auschwitz.<sup>6</sup>

Although this book links up with similar books such as the French *Les lieux de mémoire* (The Realms of Memory, 1981-1992), the German *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (German Places of Memory, 2001) and the Dutch *Plaatsen van Herinnering* (Places of Memory, 2005-2006), it differs from these in that we have restricted ourselves to the past century. Afrikaners as an ‘imagined community’, a group of individuals who view themselves as a nation, have not been in existence for much more than a century, according to the Afrikaans historians Floris van Jaarsveld and Hermann Giliomee. Moreover there is a trend, even among Afrikaans-specialist historians, to restrict historical interest to the preceding century. At the time when the Great Trek was commemorated, historical interest still went back as far as 1838, but at present the Anglo-Boer War increasingly seems to be the limit. European historical consciousness goes back further and is more strongly established, because until recently the French, for example, were still taught that the Gauls were their ancestors. The shorter time frame is another reason why this book covers a smaller scope than the multivolume European works.

The book ignores more potential topics than it includes. The limited pool of Afrikaans researchers available and their particular research interests more or less dictated the choice of topics for this book. For example, we as editors would also have liked to include essays on the Dutch Reformed Church, the Pickup Truck and the Ox Wagon, the secret Afrikaner Broederbond and the National Party, the poets Breyten Breytenbach and Ingrid Jonker, the Border of the Republic and the Army, the Afrikaans publishing giant Naspers and the South African Broadcasting Corporation, the Farm and the Small Town, the General Dealer, the South African Railways, the Mine and the Kruger National Park, Verwoerd and Mandela, Mandela’s Afrikaans defence lawyer

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<sup>6</sup> F. Yates, *The art of memory*, London 1966; P. Nora, ‘Between memory and history: Les Lieux de Mémoire’, in: *Representations*, Spring 1989, 7-24; J. Assman, ‘Collective memory and cultural identity’, in: *New German Critique*, Spring/Summer 1995, 125-133; E. François & H. Schulze (eds), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, I. Munich 2001, 9-24; H.L. Wesseling, *Plaatsen van herinnering. Een historisch successverhaal*. Amsterdam 2005.

Braam Fischer, the Soweto Uprising in 1976, the university town of Stellenbosch and Pretoria, the capital of South Africa. As it is, the book covers both material and immaterial culture, the sublime and the banal, with a special emphasis on race and language, because these two elements used to dictate who was considered to be an Afrikaner.

The following contributions are essays such as Montaigne understood this genre – writings in which certain problems are examined in a personal way. The essays were expected to contain critical analyses of memory sites. Each contributor was allowed to choose his or her own emphasis within the overarching point of departure of the book. The authors' brief was also to do this with detachment in order to stimulate the reader to reflect on the subject instead of identifying himself or herself emotionally with it. However, maintaining a critical distance does not of necessity exclude intense involvement with the material.

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## The ‘Volksmoeder’ – A Figurine as Figurehead

*Elsabé Brink*



Figure 2.1 A Boerevrou. The ‘Noitjie’ as she was used as logo of the Afrikaans women’s magazine *Die Boerevrou*

The ‘Volksmoeder’ is the Afrikaans manifestation of the universal Mother of the Nation phenomenon. In South Africa she cuts a fine, statuesque figure; she is a figurehead, a figure of speech, an idealised figure of womanhood as well as a petite bronze figurine. During the course of the twentieth century this figurine became a figurehead which marshalled Afrikaner women and girls to commit themselves in the service of their families and their ‘volk’ – a nation in the making. With this call to arms, the Volksmoeder was appropriated as an evocative and emotionally laden site of memory to which several generations of Afrikaner women readily responded.

As a site of memory, the bronze figurine of the Volksmoeder still carries her years well even now in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. One of about twenty copies of the Afrikaans sculptor



Figure 2.2 A Vierge. A fifteenth century prototype of the ‘Noitjie’

Anton van Wouw’s 1907 figurine ‘Nointjie van die Onderveld, Transvaal, Rustenburg, sijn distrikt’ (Maiden from the Upcountry, Transvaal, Rustenburg district) has found a home on my bookshelf. This little Volksmoeder – rather a petite girl – has a round face, a fine, sharp little nose, downcast eyes, a tiny mouth and a somewhat cheeky fringe escaping from her bonnet. Her small shoulders are pulled downwards under the weight of her shawl and her hands are neatly clasped in front of her. At barely 40cm she resembles a fourteenth century Virgin Mary, with eyes submissively downcast, waiting pensively, patiently, politely and passively to be dusted. She is the visual shorthand of the ‘nobility and the beauty of the young Afrikaans girl which should inspire many to simplicity and greater spirituality’.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1919 and 1932, this figurine became the trademark of the first successful and widely read Afrikaans women’s magazine *Die Boerevrou*, and a symbol of the idealised Afrikaner woman and of national motherhood.<sup>2</sup> The motto of the magazine, an extract from a poem by the Afrikaans writer Jan F.E. Celliers – which goes, ‘I see her triumph, for her name is – Wife and Mother’, complemented the visual message that the figure was fragile yet strong, and could and would emerge triumphant in the face of adversity.

<sup>1</sup> The figure forms part of Van Wouw’s oeuvre of small statues, which includes depictions of Paul Kruger, black miners and San/Bushmen hunters. M.L. du Toit, *Suid-Afrikaanse Kunstenaars, Deel I: Anton van Wouw*. Cape Town: Nasionale Pers 1933, 29. In 2009 the original cast of the Volksmoeder was auctioned for almost R1 million. All translations from Afrikaans into English by the author.

<sup>2</sup> It was published by Mabel Malherbe, a formidable woman who became the first female mayor of Preoria and the second female member of the parliament of the Union of South Africa; a veritable Volksmoeder forever engaged in the struggle.

Seen against the background of the trauma of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), of the great loss of life of women and children, as well as of the material destruction of the rural areas, Celliers' triumphant woman makes sense. Women needed the encouragement and reassurance that they would be able to overcome the dire post-war conditions.

Like Celliers, his poetic counterpart, Van Wouw was intimately involved in the post-war project of visualising the Volksmoeders as ultimate victors in the struggle for life and survival. In a vein similar to his figurine's, Van Wouw's 1913 majestic group of three women in bronze at the Women's Memorial in Bloemfontein, commemorating the suffering of women and children during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), depicts Afrikaans women as patient and long-suffering Volksmoeders. Larger than life, elevated on a podium at the base of a sandstone obelisk, they transcend the death and suffering commemorated by the Memorial. They survey the landscape and the future, fully conscious of their assigned calling to struggle on behalf of the nation. Rather than remaining victims of war, women's dignity and worth needed to be restored by portraying them as heroines who made great sacrifices at the altar of the nation. In this manner, an attempt was made to deal with the trauma of war and the huge loss of civilian life, especially that of children.<sup>3</sup> The Boer woman needed to be reassured that despite the grievous loss of her children she remained a good wife and mother, and that indeed she was the mother of the future nation. The Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organisations (FAK)) contended: 'Despite the humiliation, the wretchedness and suffering, she keeps her head held high as if she sees the unseen – the resurrection of her nation'.<sup>4</sup>

During the first half of the twentieth century the Volksmoeder became an important component in the propaganda arsenal of Afrikaner nationalism. The formal description – her verbal image – appeared just after the Afrikaner Rebellion (1914) and the end of the First World War (1914-1918). In 1918, the women of the Free State Helpmekeer Kultuur Vereniging, (Free State Mutual Aid and Cultural Society) commissioned Dr Willem Postma (aka 'Dr Okulis' – Oculis) to write a book *Die Boervrou, Moeder van haar Volk* (The Boer Woman – Mother of her Nation). His description of the Volksmoeder is closely correlated with the visual representation of both the figurine and the bronze composition at the Women's Memorial in Bloemfontein. He echoes the need to provide reassurance and positive reinforcement to the Boer woman:

We need not feel shame for the Boer woman. We have every reason to honour and love her. No better, more noble mother than the Mother of the Boer Nation has in a more complete and richer sense ever nurtured a nation. Her history, her life is beautiful, pure, honest and dignified.<sup>5</sup>

Dr Okulis devotes a chapter to the 'Character of the Boer Woman' in which he describes in detail her sense of religion and of freedom, her virtue, self-reliance, selflessness, her housewifeliness and her inspirational role. She has noble and enviable qualities. She is brave, friendly, a hard worker, honest, hospitable, frugal, peace-loving and content with her destiny in life.

Shortly after the appearance of Postma's book, Eric Stockenström's book *Die Vrou in die Geskiedenis van die Hollands Afrikaanse Volk* (The Woman in the History of the

<sup>3</sup> J. Snyman, 'Die politiek van herinnering: spore van trauma', in *Literator* 20(3) November 1999, 15-16.

<sup>4</sup> Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings, *Afrikanerbakens*, Johannesburg: FAK 1989, 102.

<sup>5</sup> Dr Okulis (Postma W.), *Die Boervrou: Moeder van haar Volk*. Bloemfontein, Nasionale Pers, 1922, ii.

Dutch-Afrikaans Nation) appeared. It is a concise yet ambitious history of Dutch-Afrikaans women from 1568 to 1918. Stockenström imbues the *Volksmoeder* with similar character traits as Dr Okulis, such as housewifeliness, virtue and inspiration. According to Stockenström even the Voortrekker women of the 1838 Great Trek fully appreciated their calling as *Volksmoeders*, and in time they became the mothers of the future Afrikaner nation. Both writers devote much attention to the women's role in the Great Trek; especially the threat of Susanna Smit, the formidable wife of the Voortrekker pastor, Erasmus Smit, that she would cross the Drakensberg bare-foot rather than submit to British rule. Yet both men avoid discussing the suffering of women during the Anglo-Boer War. The trauma of 'onse oorlog van onuitwisbare heugenis' (our war of indelible memory), and the 'swart gruwelregister' (dark record of horror) remain too close to the surface for Dr Okulis and his fellow Afrikaners to attempt to present and record it in a general history.<sup>6</sup>

Despite its formal portrayal in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the genesis of the *Volksmoeder* as figurehead is firmly rooted in the nineteenth century. In the late 1880s the 'Vrouwen Zending Bond' (Women's Missionary League) of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape Colony maintained that women, besides their housewifely duties, needed to play a constructive role outside the home in the church and the nation. Especially in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War, women nationalists considered it to be their duty to uplift their shattered fellow countrymen and women. In the Cape Province the 'Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging (ACVV)' (Afrikaans Christian Women's Society) chose a fitting nationalist slogan: 'Church, Nation, Language'.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to this high-minded ACVV slogan, in 1904 – pre-dating the *Boervrou* – the Transvaal South African Women's Federation (SAVF) chose the quoted excerpt from Jan F Celliers' poem. For them the uplifting of especially working class women and young girls represented the immediate challenge which would contribute concretely to the reconstruction of the nation idealised by the ACVV. Women needed constant reminders that they could triumph over adversity, could succeed at motherhood and would be able to resurrect the nation. Membership in the SAVF and service to the nation were considered to be the calling and the purpose of a Boer woman's life and work. After twenty years of such service women were rewarded with so-called 'Volksmoederknopies' (Mother of the Nation buttons). These buttons were considered to be of such sentimental value that upon the death of the recipient, her button needed to be returned to the SAVF for safekeeping in a commemorative album.<sup>8</sup>

During the first decades of the twentieth century these hard-working *Volksmoeders* moved away from their traditional areas of labour – social and welfare work amongst their fellow citizens – into more political playing fields. As a result of the 1914 Afrikaner Rebellion and the imprisonment of the Anglo-Boer War hero, General Christiaan de Wet and other rebel leaders, the 'Klementiebeweging' (Movement for Pardon) – later the 'Nasionale Vroue Helpmekaarvereniging' (National Women's Mutual Aid Society) – was founded. By means of local fundraising drives, large amounts of money were raised to pay the fines of these leaders so as to secure their release from prison. Petitions were circulated countrywide and were signed by 50 000

<sup>6</sup> W. Postma, *Die Boervrou: Moeder van haar Volk*. Bloemfontein, Nasionale Pers, 1922, 141-142 The fact that only 15 pages of a book with 234 pages dealt with the Anglo-Boer War probably indicates just how difficult Postma found it to write about the war.

<sup>7</sup> M. du Toit, 'The Domesticity of Afrikaner nationalism: volkmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929', in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29(1) March 2003, 163-167. Available at <http://www.jstor.org>.

<sup>8</sup> E. Brink, 'Man-made Women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volkmoeder', in C. Walker, (ed.) *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*. Cape Town, David Philip 1990, 286-288.

women. On 4 August 1915, about 3.000 women marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to present petitions to Governor-general Lord Buxton demanding the release of General De Wet and 118 other prisoners.<sup>9</sup>

As a result of this protest action, the 'Nasionale Vroue Party' (NVP) (National Women's Party) was founded in 1914 in the Transvaal and in 1922 in the Orange Free State. NVP chapters were organised in the Cape and Natal shortly thereafter. Members, middle-class NVP women, considered themselves to be the equals of, and not subservient to, their male counterparts in the National Party (NP). From the 1920s onwards the official mouthpiece of the VNP, '*Die Burgeres*' (The Citizeness) urged its female readers to read and to extend their knowledge so as to be able to develop and express informed views on all political issues.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, in her column in *Die Burger* called '*Vrouesake*' (Women's Matters) the Afrikaans writer M.E. Rothmann known as 'MER' urged her readers:

... we women should acquire knowledge in order that we may be able to judge well and wisely, and that we may truly be able to serve our nation as citizenesses as well as (in the first instance!) Mothers.<sup>11</sup>

In 1930 the NVP reached its zenith, but when white women were enfranchised in the same year, Volksmoeders were presented with a difficult choice. From all sides they were told that the true nationalist goal was not merely the attainment of political power, but the achievement of a higher ideal, that of the creation of a nation. The men of the NP called upon the NVP women to amalgamate with the NP in a spirit of sacrifice and cooperation in order to achieve the higher national goal in which women's matters would be incorporated. Acquiescence to this request meant the demise of the NVP, whereupon Volksmoeders returned home to 'save the nation', individual household by household.<sup>12</sup> The findings of the Carnegie Commission of Inquiry into the Poor White Problem of South Africa provided these women with a clear job description.<sup>13</sup> In essence more than 300.000 fellow Afrikaners, who lived in dire poverty, could not be allowed stray from the Afrikaner fold and needed to be saved.<sup>14</sup>

During the 1920s, the Great Depression of the 1930s, as well as during the hardships encountered during World War II, the Volksmoeder-figure sustained Afrikaans working-class women as well. During this time, as a result of the large-scale migration from the Transvaal and Free State countryside to the Witwatersrand, thousands of Afrikaans families led a hand-to-mouth existence in urban slums. Here young Afrikaans girls found work in the expanding clothing and tobacco industries as well as in local

<sup>9</sup> A. Ehlers., 'Die Helpmekearbeweging in Suid Afrika: die Storm- en Drangjare, 1915-1920', in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid Afrikaanse Geskiedenis*, Jaargang 54, Vol I, Pretoria: Government Printer, 1991.

<sup>10</sup> L. Vincent, 'Power behind the Scenes: The Afrikaner Nationalist Women's Parties, 1915-1931', *South African Historical Journal* 40, (May 1999), 56-59.

<sup>11</sup> *Die Burger*, 29 Desember 1925: Du Toit, M., 'The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929', in: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29(1) March 2003, 174. Available at <http://www.jstor.org>.

<sup>12</sup> *Die Burger*, 29 Desember 1925: Du Toit, M., 'The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929' in: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29(1) March 2003, 7-69. Available at <http://www.jstor.org>.

<sup>13</sup> Carnegie Commission, *The Poor White Problem in South Africa*, Vol.I-V. Stellenbosch: Pro-Ecclesia Publishers, 1932. MER's report, The Mother and Daughter of the Poor White Family was incorporated separately in Vol. 5.

<sup>14</sup> D. O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the development of Afrikaner Nationalism*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press 1983, 26.

sweets factories. As their fathers and brothers could not readily find work, many became the breadwinners of the family. As members of the Garment Workers Union (GWU) under the stewardship of its well-known secretary, Solly Sachs, these young women became the storm troopers of a militant trade union. They loyally supported one another and their union, and fought for better working conditions. Their unionised actions caused not only their employers, but the fathers of the nations – the secret Afrikaner Broederbond, in particular – endless sleepless nights.<sup>15</sup>

During the 1938 commemorative Great Trek celebrations, the Volksmoeder, a portrait in words and a two-dimensional figurine, became a three dimensional figurehead. The Voortrekker outfit of Van Wouw's *Noitjie* became the fashion statement of the time. Throughout the entire county, in villages and towns, women dressed in authentically recreated Voortrekker dresses and bonnets. They were accompanied on the Commemorative Trek by men with newly-grown beards, waist coats and leather trousers. Ox wagons such as the *Johanna van der Merwe*, the *Magrieta Prinsloo* and the *Vrou en Moeder* (Woman and Mother) representing and commemorating Great Trek heroines created a central place for women. Prospective young Volksmoeders entered into holy matrimony on many wagon kists, whilst others brought their children to be christened with names such as 'Eufeesia' or 'Kakebeenia'. A decade later, in 1948, this rekindled fervour for a heroic heritage contributed substantially to the election victory of Afrikaner nationalism.

In their own *Kappiekommando* (Bonnet Brigade) the young working Afrikaans women of the GWU shared in these emotion-laden celebrations. They likened their personal struggles for survival in the city with the hardships of life on trek. On the one hand, the factory women identified with the innocence and beauty of the colourful expression of Van Wouw's *Noitjie*. On the other, they strongly identified with the courage and resolve of a generation of forceful, nearly forgotten women. They declared that as workers they would take the lead, and like Susanna Smit, they too would cross the Drakensberg on their bare feet.<sup>16</sup> However, unlike their middle-class sisters, their trade union with its goal of improving the lot of their fellow workers provided the context in which they worked. Anna Scheepers, a trade union leader declared in 1940: '... like the Voortrekker woman in this country, women workers contribute to the advancement of the trade union movement and the nation as a whole'.<sup>17</sup>

After World War II, as happened elsewhere in the world, women withdrew from the labour force. During the 1950s and 1960s fewer young women and daughters of these factory women entered the labour market. As a result of greater material prosperity, as well as the protective labour legislation of the apartheid years, fewer white married women needed to work.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the state also began to play a greater role in addressing social and welfare issues. As a result, middle-class women who had previously found an outlet for their energies in voluntary welfare work, were able to enter the professional labour market. For example, for 17 years Johanna Terburgh worked as an unsalaried social worker for the *Rand Armsorgraad* (Rand Poor Relief

<sup>15</sup> E. Brink, 'The Afrikaner women of the Garment Workers Union, 1918-1939'. Unpublished MA, University of the Witwatersrand, 1986.

<sup>16</sup> E. Brink, 'Man-made Women: Gender, class and the ideology of the volksmoeder', in C. Walker, (ed.) *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1990.

<sup>17</sup> E. Brink, 'Purposeful Plays, Prose and Poems: The writing of the Garment Workers, 1929-1945' in C. Clayton, *Women and Writing in South Africa: A Critical Anthology*. Johannesburg: Heineman, 1989, 112.

<sup>18</sup> As in the past, women who were engaged in wage labour, were studied in depth; on this occasion by one Dr. Mrs D.M. Wessels, *Vroue en Moeders wat Werk: Die Invloed van hul Beroepsarbeid op die Huisgesin en die Volk*, Kaapstad: NG Kerk-Uitgewers, 1960.



Figure 2.3 A klerewerker. Members of the Garment Workers Union proudly modelled their Voortrekker outfits, whilst marketing their union and its magazine.

Council) amongst impoverished young Afrikaans girls. During the 1950s she made a dramatic career change to become the director of an Afrikaans tourist bureau in Johannesburg.<sup>19</sup>

During this globalising period, the Volksmoeder became an obsolete figurehead and forgotten figurine, clad in her long and now very old-fashioned Voortrekker dress gathering dust at the back of the cupboard. Yet, the Volksmoeder spirit survived as the characteristics of the Volksmoeder and of idealised womanhood were reshaped, repackaged and disseminated in a more sophisticated mould. During the early 1960s the Afrikaans translation of a book by an American sex expert, one H. Shryock, *Die Ontluikende Vrou: 'n Boek vir Tienderjarige Meisies*, (The Emerging Woman: A book for teenaged girls) was reprinted four times. In translation, the sex education section of the book read like a popular motor-mechanics manual, awash with clutches, nuts and bolts. In addition, the Volksmoeder's idealised characteristics were presented more fashionably and with a distinctly international flavour. As before, the writer argued that it was appropriate for a young woman 'to nurture a friendly and loveable manner' and

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<sup>19</sup> E.L.P. Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad*, Vol. II. Pretoria: HAUM 1986, 38-40. Also the University of Johannesburg's Archive on the Afrikaners on the Witwatersrand, A54 Johanna Terburgh Collection. Terburgh was actively involved in the Handhawersbond, a society working for the promotion of the Afrikaans language.

condemned the young woman who read too many novels and, as a result, did not devote herself to charitable works.<sup>20</sup>

In the new, affluent suburbs, the *Volksmoeder* had to compete with the imported feminist ideas of a Steinem, Friedan or De Beauvoir. Hence, during the sixties and seventies, the *Volksmoeder* figurehead came to represent a narrow-minded and inflexible mindset. As a result of the onslaught of the modern, the *Volksmoeder* lost her traditional substance and power. In 1969 the Afrikaans poet M.M. Walters satirised the former figurehead:

Volksmoeders van V.V.V.-vergaderings  
Onwrikbaar by die werk – kompeteer  
By the pastorie(s)pens en bazaar – vol, voller, volste.<sup>21</sup>

(Volksmoeders at women's meetings  
Steadfast on the job – compete  
At the parsonage, pantry, belly and bazaar – full, fuller fullest)

Yet the values which the *Volksmoeder* symbolised and championed managed to survive. Dr Jan van Elfen, a well-known Afrikaans writer of self-help manuals for a variety of audiences – mothers, daughters and sons – responded to the call to educate a new generation of Afrikaans women. Between 1977 and 1980 his life skills manual for young girls *Wat meisies wil weet* (What girls want to know) was reprinted five times.<sup>22</sup> In a break with tradition, the blurb declares cheekily that '...every girl would like to know more about sex'. In line with these modern trends, Van Elfen discusses matters such as venereal disease, sexual feelings and lesbian relationships, and illustrates his sex education with anatomical diagrams. Yet, in a barely concealed manner, his warnings to his young readers echo the familiar old *Volksmoeder* message:

But you will not find happiness if you try too hard to break free from the rock from which you were carved ... A person who liberates him/herself from what is his/her own, will be engulfed by life. It is most important that you should protect your identity (the person you are) ... the religious and cultural values which you know so well; the view on life which you have acquired and life's lessons which you have taken to heart and should make a permanent part of your personality as a teenager. It is these things that turn you into a good person, a person who will be welcomed into society.<sup>23</sup>

With the outbreak of the clandestine war in Angola and the increasing violence experienced within the country after the 1976 Soweto Uprising, there was no mass movement of Afrikaans women who raised their voices for or against the war. Indeed, the patriarchy remained firmly in the saddle and women were advised that they should limit their involvement to supporting their husbands in the bedroom only:

... You should stand alongside him, even more so than during the times of the Voortrekkers when a woman had to stand next to her man...as a guard here in the

<sup>20</sup> H. Shryock, *Die ontluikende Vrou; 'n Boek vir tienerjarige meisies*. Cape Town: Sentinel 1961, 108.

<sup>21</sup> M.M. Walters, *Apochrypha*. Cape Town, Nasionale Boekhandel: 1969.

<sup>22</sup> J. van Elfen, *Wat Elke Meisie wil Weet*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1977. In addition to his illustrated guidance manuals for teenagers, he wrote extensively on the care of babies, toddlers and children, along with a medical guide for women and a book on love and sex in marriage.

<sup>23</sup> J. van Elfen, *Wat Elke Meisie wil Weet*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1977 6.

bedroom, who with an intuitive ear listens to what is taking place in the deepest recesses of the nation ...<sup>24</sup>

Afrikaans women had to strike a balance between the 'total onslaught' on Afrikanerdom and the lives of their children. It is almost as if Afrikaans women had forgotten that they were indeed flesh-and-blood mothers of a nation of young men confronting other mothers' sons on the battlefield. At grassroots level they merely baked rusks, biscuits and sticky-sweet 'koeksisters'. Every Saturday afternoon on the programme 'Forces Favourites', they broadcast syrupy messages to their sons and the troops on the border. How did mothers react when their sons returned from the border dead, wounded or 'bossies' – Afrikaans shorthand for post-traumatic stress syndrome?

Today the concept of a narrowly defined Volksmoeder as a site of memory elicits contradictory responses from a random sample of Afrikaans women. Anchen Dreyer, a senior member of the national parliament, is of the opinion that the Volksmoeder should not be seen only as a symbol of narrow-mindedness and regression. Rather, the Volksmoeder also has enviable characteristics: independent views, entrepreneurship, survival skills, and a history of self-help and social uplift.<sup>25</sup> Marinda Louw, a 30-year old publisher, maintains that women with strong personalities – real mothers of the nation – can be found everywhere, across racial and cultural divides. She feels that women have a greater capacity for human involvement, for gauging people's needs and how to fulfil these needs.<sup>26</sup> Dalena van Jaarsveld, a post-graduate student in anthropology and now a journalist who grew up in the new South Africa, agrees: '... There is no longer a cultural mother of South Africa, only real mothers who plait hair, who are loving and hospitable and who nurture many children'.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> L. Maritz, 'Vroue, ons stille vegters', in: *Die Burger*, 3 Februarie 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Ms Anchen Dreyer, 25 July 2007, Johannesburg.

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## The Location

*Gerrit Olivier*

I

I must have been in about standard six when I first heard that the location in our town also had a name: Sandbult. I can't remember whether I heard this by accident or whether I had asked about it, but I do know that I heard the word for the first time from my father. He was the mayor and could be assumed to know the names of the town's suburbs: Harmonie, Buytendag and Murrayville, where the white people lived, and, at the edge of the town, the place I could never think of as a 'suburb' but which was later to become known to me as Sandbult. And that's what it was: a sandy hill next to the Stormberg Stream. There was also a location for Coloureds, with a name reflecting higher aspirations or maybe just the name-giver's mischievousness: Eureka. Names that were not known to many people apart from city planners and municipal officials, names which appeared on town maps in a dusty office, but nowhere else. For the rest of us, white and black, these were simply 'locations'.

Such places are not supposed to exist anymore. Some circumspection has crept into the definitions provided by dictionaries – and soon the little sloppy research I start doing begins to feel like a rather scandalous undertaking. Boshoff and Nienaber<sup>1</sup> report in their *Afrikaanse etimologieë* that the word 'location' was, according to the *New English Dictionary*, first used in the United States as a name for the place where one lived. They trace the origin of the term to the Latin *locus* ('place') and *locare* ('to appoint a place'). Jean and William Branford<sup>2</sup> define the historical meaning as 'the land granted to a party of Settlers' – a meaning which is recorded in detail with reference to the United States of America in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. In *A Dictionary of South African English* the current meaning of the word ('a segregated area on the outskirts of a town or city set aside for black housing or accommodation') is marked as 'obsolescent'.<sup>3</sup> The *Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (HAT) from 1965 is more matter-of-fact and succinct: 'Residential area for Coloureds or Bantus, usually near a town or village'.<sup>4</sup> Thirty years later the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (WAT) declares that the word 'is felt to be discriminatory and derogatory, particularly in its application to the policy of apartheid', and adds a meaning which I haven't come across in other sources: 'inhabitants of such a residential area'.<sup>5</sup> The WAT also refers to a meaning which

<sup>1</sup> S.E. Boshoff & G. Nienaber, *Afrikaanse etimologieë*. Pretoria: Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns 1967: 393.

<sup>2</sup> J. & W. Branford. *A Dictionary of South African English*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Cape Town: Oxford University Press 1991: 180.

<sup>3</sup> J. & W. Branford. *A Dictionary of South African English*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Cape Town: Oxford University Press 1991: 180.

<sup>4</sup> P.C. Schoonees et al. *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse taal*. Klerksdorp: Voortrekkerpers 1965: 513.

<sup>5</sup> D.J. van Schalkwyk et al. *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*. Volume 9. Stellenbosch: Buro van die WAT 1994: 352.

deviates from the standard according to which the location is always situated close to or directly adjacent to a town or city: ‘Administrative area comprising land for Black people that includes, apart from residential areas, farm-lands and pasture, and which as territorial unit also forms a geo-political and administrative unit, usually under a headman.’<sup>6</sup>

What real help does an Afrikaans-speaking person in his fifties get from these lexicographical sources, in a book on places of memory? The starting-points provided by the dictionaries are scanty, with too little history, too little inspiration, and research in historical and sociological works does not appear to me to be the right place to start. So I decide to go looking for help in the place where one can find the proverbial needle in a haystack: Google.

Location means: place or position. That, at least, we know. According to *Wikipedia* (not always that expert or reliable, I hear) one can think of it as ‘absolute location’. An example would be the location of Location in the Eastern Cape, which, according to the web site Falling Rain Genomics, on Google, lies at latitude 31° 28’ south and longitude 27° 21’ east, 1 397 meters above sea level.<sup>7</sup> Alternatively, and again according to *Wikipedia*, the term may be considered more geographically as ‘relative location’. In terms of this meaning, once again according to Falling Rain, Location is located 0.9 nautical miles east of Indwe – the closest town, 18.3 nautical miles from Rossouw to the south, 4.3 nautical miles from Ventersrust to the east and 4.3 nautical miles from Milan to the south.

For a few days these facts about a place named Location – the only place with this name that I could find on the world-wide web – make me quite restless. How could it be that a place with quite a few inhabitants (around 2 966 in a radius of 7 kilometers, according to Falling Rain) still bears that name today? A further excursion on the net suggests that one should not be too surprised about this, not if Bethlehem, Brandfort, Graaff-Reinet, Heilbron, Klipplaat, Piet Retief, Wepener and Zastron each has a New Location, with its own postal code, which is therefore still officially regarded as a place, 15 years after 1994,<sup>8</sup> or if the municipality of Knysna continues to fund and administer a White Location Clinic.<sup>9</sup> The term is clearly not totally or universally as obsolescent or derogatory as dictionaries would have us believe – and the web provides abundant evidence for this truth. ‘The “location” becomes a trendy fashion term,’ the *Namibian* writes with reference to Katatura, the location at Windhoek.<sup>10</sup> In the seventeenth edition of *Minawawe on Track*,<sup>11</sup> a very cool web-based magazine, I read about ‘Kasie style’ and ‘Location culture’ – a term which as Loxion Kulca has become a sexy name for fashionable shoes, clothes, handbags and makeup.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> D.J. van Schalkwyk et al. *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse taal*. Volume 9. Stellenbosch: Buro van die WAT 1994: 352. Here it should be added that the Reverend Pettman distinguishes between an Eastern Cape usage (land next to a village) and a Natal usage (tribal area with a population of 10-12 000) in his *Africanderisms*. London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1913: 298-299. *A Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles*, too, refers to ‘rural location’ as a meaning that occurred specifically in Natal, and also mentions the meaning of a piece of land allocated for cultivation by a farmer to his workers (Oxford University Press 1996: 425-426).

<sup>7</sup> <http://fallingrain/world/SF/1/Lokasie.html>. All Web sources were consulted in August 2007.

<sup>8</sup> <http://saweb.co.za/postcodes/n.html>.

<sup>9</sup> <http://capegateway.gov.za/afri/directories/facilities/6422/20448>.

<sup>10</sup> <http://namibian.com.na/2006/December/national/0666DF84EA.html>.

<sup>11</sup> <http://minawawe.co.za/news/issue17/17.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> <http://loxionkulca.com/home.asp>.

The Falling Rain web site includes a graphical depiction of the cloud cover above Location and the rainfall chart for the past week. Who collects all this information? I look at the images and print them on my Laserjet, but the thought that the place must be a figment of the imagination, that exists only on the world-wide web, will not go away. Having grown up in the Eastern Cape, I have heard of Rossouw and Indwe, but the other neighbouring towns – Fairview, Milan and Guba (two Italian names?) – are completely unknown to me. *Lokasie* simply must be in the Eastern Cape, however: the closest airport is indicated as being in Queenstown, 36 nautical miles away. Just to make sure of this, I go back to Falling Rain and click on Ventersrust, then on the Tuscan-sounding Guba, then on Milan. Each of these three places appears with its geographical coordinates and neighbouring towns on three maps of Southern Africa, the Eastern Cape and the immediate surroundings respectively. The incredulous browser can move the mouse in all directions and also click on a satellite photo that can be enlarged for a closer look. But now I notice a worrying little warning at the bottom of each map: ‘not valid for navigation’ (except, of course, on the internet).

During my next Google excursion I suddenly discover a new place on Maplandia.com, a web site with a name evoking all sorts of exotic connotations: Mgwalana, close to Indwe. It has the same coordinates (31° 28’ south, 27° 18’ east) as the above mentioned Lokasie.<sup>13</sup> On the same page, there is an advertisement which talks enthusiastically about how one can investigate, plan and pay for a visit to South Africa, and therefore to Mgwalana, by using the services of Expedia.co.uk: ‘Expedia offers airline tickets, hotel reservations, car rental, cruises, and many other Mgwalana or South Africa in-destination services from a broad selection of partners. Feel free to use the Expedia travel services from below, start your Mgwalana holidays today!’ Those who can’t wait are invited to ‘dive’ immediately into Mgwalana by using Google Earth’s unique three-dimensional satellite map.

Is this my Eureka moment, my entry to a place which raises visions of an exotic rural experience in cyber space? The satellite photo makes one suspect a certain aridness. Big erosion marks are clearly visible, and beneath the photograph there is another warning: ‘This map is informational only. No representation is made or warranty given as to its content, user assumes all risk of use.’

When I come across ‘school Uppuygunduru in Ammanabrolu, Prakasm, Andhra Praddesh, India’ and ‘Huelmo, Puerto Montt, Lhanquihue, Chile’ under Maplandia’s ‘Latest placemarks’ my suspicions get the better of me once again – and so I go searching for someone to consult in Indwe. According to a very friendly woman at the Buyani Cooperation Project, an organisation I track down on the internet via Prodder, ‘the NGO and development directory of South Africa’, there are indeed quite a few locations near Indwe, but certainly no Location. She talks about ‘locations’ as if they were nothing to be ashamed of. The nearest location to Indwe is Lupapasi, she says – and indeed, Lupapasi, too, can be found on the web, on Traveljournals.net<sup>14</sup> and Geonames,<sup>15</sup> where it appears with exactly the same coordinates as Lokasie and Mgwalana; Geonames even has an aerial photograph of it.<sup>16</sup> A warning similar to those on Falling Rain appears on the Traveljournals web site: ‘Maps and coordinates for Lupapasi are approximative and not valid for navigation.’

<sup>13</sup> <http://maplandia.com/south-africa/easter-cape/indwe/mgwalana>.

<sup>14</sup> [http://traveljournals.net/explore/south\\_africa/map/m1829296/lupapasi.html](http://traveljournals.net/explore/south_africa/map/m1829296/lupapasi.html).

<sup>15</sup> <http://geonames.org/981340/lupapasi.html>.

<sup>16</sup> On Falling Rain, however, I search in vain for Lupapasi and only find Lupapazi in Limpopo Province.

I decide that on my next trip to the Eastern Cape I should perhaps pass through Indwe and see for myself whether Lokasie/Mgwalana/Lupapasi does in fact exist, and under which, or how many, of the three names that are associated with a given set of coordinates. Maybe even have a cappuccino in Milan or Guba? In the meantime, my little detective work leads me to speculate that perhaps the uncertainty about the valid name may unintentionally provide a clue to what we as Afrikaners have always imagined 'the location' to be: a place that could be named haphazardly, but which always possessed certain geographical and non-geographical coordinates. Always the same place, whatever its name may have been?

## II

The relative position of the location, always thought of in relation to other places, provides one key to its location in both the South African landscape and white memory. The idea of being apart in a place which specifically had to be apart in the Branford definition ('a *segregated* area on the outskirts of a town or city *set aside* for black housing and accommodation';<sup>17</sup> my italics) appears in all the dictionaries and historical guides that I have consulted. Now and then there is mention of a residential area with greater autonomy, a 'geopolitical or common law unit',<sup>18</sup> or of 'rural areas where Africans congregated or had exclusive rights of occupation'.<sup>19</sup> But such places are certainly not locations as dictated by memory; they are reserves or homelands or, as my grandfather would have said, part of 'kaffir land'. Although Rosenthal<sup>20</sup> also signals another meaning, the location remains part of a town or city; situated on the outskirts of a town or city; visible from a town or city – or if not visible, then tangible; something one was always aware of somehow.

The hierarchy implied by this adjacent position emerges clearly from Saunders' statement under the heading 'Urban segregation' that 'many whites saw towns as essentially the creation of the white man'.<sup>21</sup> When I think of the towns of my youth I can recall a few instances apart from the already well-known Soweto where the name of the location was known to us: Duncan Village in East London, for example, or the Mdantsane that was built years later. All other locations, however, belonged to a town. We spoke of 'Aliwal North's location', 'Queenstown's location' and so on, without knowing or asking whether these places had their own names. And suddenly I can't help wondering: what happens to the location in Peter Blum's 'Woordafleiding'?<sup>22</sup> The location is not mentioned in that poem, even though it is as much part of any town as the Dutch Reformed Church or the post office. A town without smoke coming from the

<sup>17</sup> J. & W. Branford. *A Dictionary of South African English*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Cape Town: Oxford University Press 1991: 180.

<sup>18</sup> D.J. van Schalkwyk et al. *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse taal*. Volume 9. Stellenbosch: Buro van die WAT 1994: 352.

<sup>19</sup> C. Saunders, *Historical Dictionary of South Africa*. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press 1983: 101.

<sup>20</sup> E. Rosenthal, *Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Cape Town: Juta & Company 1978: 285.

<sup>21</sup> C. Saunders, *Historical Dictionary of South Africa*. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press 1983: 183.

<sup>22</sup> P. Blum, *Steenbok tot poolsee*. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel Beperk 1955: 21-23. In 'Woordafleiding' ('Word Derivation') the word *dorp* is traced to words such as *dreiben* in German and *to drive* in English, in an etymological play that leads to a surprising metamorphosis, freely translated: 'O you little villagers, guests of Brief Sojourn! / Chosen people of an eternal Exodus / I see you take the open veld on the hoof / following the road – your flimsy ropes get torn – / your walking sticks catch the wind like masts, and you push / always further.'

location surely cannot really be a town?<sup>23</sup> Shall we then accept that the location, submissively as its status requires, joins Blum's village in being uprooted and disappearing into the unknown – or could this be a case where the location remains long after the village has disappeared down the main road? What a pity Blum didn't write an etymological poem about the location as well.

The characteristic position of the location next to a town is closely related to the fact that, in the course of South African history, there was an increasing insistence on separating locations from white residential areas. In this context, Saunders<sup>24</sup> talks about a *cordon sanitaire* between the location and places where white people lived, and in *blank* by Judin and Vladislavic I find the following under 'buffer zone':

The Native Affairs Department laid down as a general rule that locations were to be separated from areas occupied by other population groups by buffer zones 500 yards wide, and from all other external boundaries by buffer zones 200 yards wide, unless such boundaries were main roads, in which case the zones were to be 500 yards for a national road and 300 yards for a provincial road. Rows of trees could be planted in buffer zones, but the land could not be developed.<sup>25</sup>

Here we see a glimpse of the statutory consolidation of a South African topography that had started to become the norm under Shepstone in Natal. Did the town planners of my youth think of terms such as *cordon sanitaire* and 'buffer zone' when they decided that the location would be on the other side of the Stormberg Stream? Or were such ideas superfluous as Black people already knew where their place would be? Everyone from Sandbult who wanted to visit the white town had to cross the dry stream bed, and when the stream was in flood, carrying huge amounts of shit that had been deposited into it, they had to take the longer route over the ramshackle bridge at the other side of a big bend in the stream – a detour of almost a kilometer. The few inhabitants of Sandbult who possessed a vehicle also had to travel this route: past the cemetery and the foot of the mountain, and then right over the bridge.

According to Saunders,<sup>26</sup> black people voluntarily settled on the outskirts of Cape Town in the nineteenth century; the first group for whom a location was identified where only they were allowed live was the Indians who arrived as mine labourers in the Transvaal in the late nineteenth century. In Cape Town and Port Elizabeth the outbreak of bubonic plague at the start of the twentieth century provided a handy excuse for the removal of black people from 'white' residential areas. Apart from the view that towns were the creation of white people and therefore places where only they should live, the increasing territorial segregation was also driven by the so-called 'sanitary syndrome': the fear for the spreading of disease.

When I read this I realise how strong I still have associations even today with filth, infection and disease when I think of the 'location'. The sanitary cordon or buffer zone would protect us against the stench and germs of the place on the other side of the

<sup>23</sup> In the second stanza of N.P. van Wyk Louw's 'Karoo-dorp: someraand' ('Karoo Town: Summer Evening') we read: 'en rook uit die lokasie rook / en by die dorpsdam sing / en mense in tennisbroekies loop / die koper skemer in' ('and smoke coming out of the location / and some singing at the town's dam / and people in tennis shorts / walk away into the copper dusk'). N.P. van Wyk Louw, *Versamelde gedigte*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1981: 253.

<sup>24</sup> C. Saunders, *Historical Dictionary of South Africa*. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press 1983: 101.

<sup>25</sup> H. Judin & I. Vladislavic, *blank. Architecture, Apartheid and After*. Rotterdam: NA Publishers 1998:11.

<sup>26</sup> C. Saunders, *Historical Dictionary of South Africa*. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press 1983: 183-184.

stream. In his analysis of ‘native space’ in East London, Minkley enumerates a number of metaphors of sickness and tumours that were related to the ‘black spots’ where ‘pondokkie aggregations’ or ‘clottings of pondokkies’ or a ‘lawless conglomeration of Coloured and Native persons’ could be found.<sup>27</sup> ‘To the casual observer it is an “eyesore”, a “blot on the landscape”, the Britten Commission reported in 1942; ‘to the scientist it is the natural excrescence of a diseased economy’. Around this time, the word ‘pondokkie’ became part of South African English. Minkley writes: ‘Pondokkies were linked to dirt, dirt to excrement, excrement to disease, and disease to the moral degradation of the inhabitants.’<sup>28</sup> In Duncan Village, the raid at 5 a.m. and the facility for disinfection formed part of a set routine. Police agents examined women’s petticoats in search of lice and if one was found, the whole household would be taken to the dip tank. Heads were shaven, bodies sprayed with toxins and clothes thrown into boiling water.

There was considerable disagreement between the planners of apartheid and those who had to implement the policy around the question how permanent the inhabitants of locations were supposed to be. Historically, the location is not so much a place where one could freely choose to live as a place where one was settled and located, or removed to, by someone else. For the settler in America or South Africa the verb *locare* was activated: someone else would determine where one lived. The later inhabitant of the location, however, was preferably *not* seen as a settler of any kind. His or her presence was regarded by the more rigid ideologues of the time as one of complete subservience to the needs of the white inhabitants of the town or city. The most memorable articulation of this view is to be found in the so-called Stallard Doctrine. The Transvaal Commission for Local Government chaired by Colonel Stallard explained this position in its report of 1922 as follows: ‘The Native should only be allowed to enter urban areas, which are essentially the White man’s creation, when he is willing to enter and minister to the needs of the White man and should depart therefrom when he ceases so to minister.’<sup>29</sup>

These words suddenly remind me of the siren that used to go off in my home town at nine every evening as a warning to all black people to leave the white area. When the Vienna Boys’ Choir performed there one evening, the choir master experienced a panic attack: the sound reminded him of the sirens before a bombardment. What explanation, I wonder, would the mayor have given that night?

The location which I remember is the kind of place about which the Britten Commission wrote with morbid lyricism in 1942:

The pondokkie (...), in its design, owes nought to any school of architecture, European or Asian, ancient or modern. Its conception is determined entirely by the scraps of material that go into its structure, pieces of corrugated iron, old tins and drums, rough boughs, sacking. Anything which can possibly offer protection against the weather. Piece by piece, scrap material is bought, begged, or filched and added to make room for a growing family. There are no windows, no ceilings, and very

<sup>27</sup> G. Minkley, “‘Corpses Behind Screens’: Native Space in the City’, in: H. Judin & I. Vladislavic, *blank. Architecture, Apartheid and After*. Rotterdam: NA Publishers 1998: 203-206. As late as 1995, Du Pré and Eksteen list as synonyms for ‘lokasie’ ‘agterbuurt, ghetto, gops(e), hol, kroek’ (‘slum, ghetto, low area, den, hovel’), L. Du Pré & L. Eksteen, *Groot Afrikaanse sinoniemboek*. Pretoria: Van Schaik 1995: 189.

<sup>28</sup> G. Minkley, “‘Corpses Behind Screens’: Native Space in the City’, in: H. Judin & I. Vladislavic, *blank. Architecture, Apartheid and After*. Rotterdam: NA Publishers 1998: 203-206.

<sup>29</sup> C. Saunders, *Historical Dictionary of South Africa*. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press 1983: 165.

often no door. Sanitation is non-existent. Many of these hovels would do a disservice to animals. The pondokkie is the lowest standard of human habitation.<sup>30</sup>

When I think about it carefully, this is the kind of place I *remember* and not really the kind of place I actually *saw* the few times my siblings and I drove into Sandbult with Stefaans, whose job it was to deliver groceries for my father's shop. There were streets and street lights and stop signs and little gardens (although, I remember, no pavements) and people in front of their houses or on stoeps (front verandas) or sitting in chairs. But not one of these visual impressions was strong enough to erase the mental image of the location in its dustiness, chaos and unfamiliarity.

The thing that was most real about the location was the noise it produced. On weekend nights the location became a few lights in the distance and a wall of incoherent sound, which to me as a child evoked a sphere of drunkenness and uncontrolled merriment. They could drink, that was for sure. Only later a small question would arise in me about what else the people could do there on a Saturday night, with no amenities for entertainment. My sources explain that the location as place of residence was qualified by two additional views that became ideologically entangled as time moved on. The first was that there really were no black residents in white areas, only people who came there on a brief sojourn and whose actual place of living was somewhere else. The location was by (white, apartheid, our) definition a place of provisionality, a stopover, a place of transit, an outpost of the homeland. In the course of time the right to live there, or even to be there, became more and more curtailed. The second view, which is also recorded in detail by Minkley, was that black people did not need to be accommodated in the same way as we were. A report from 1954 on technical elements in urban Bantu housing therefore states: 'In South Africa, the non-European standard for space is about half that allowed in civilized countries.'<sup>31</sup>

### III

The location was in essence a place of paradox: a place that really was no place, a residential area that was in principle deemed to be temporary and inhospitable. The provisional nature of the location was one of our greatest illusions. The above quote on building standards for Bantus forms a prelude to a remarkable development: the movement away from the amorphous, sandy place on the other side of the stream of my youth and towards the orderly grid of KwaThema, Mdantsane and many other places which would occupy a much larger patch on Google than the elusive locations of the Eastern Cape. In the 1950s, the government decided that the filth, infection and disorderliness of the old locations should be replaced by the utopia of new residential areas based on minimum standards, scientifically determined needs, orderly patterns and Western norms (albeit adjusted and halved) for the use and occupation of space. The NE51/9, the basic four-room house of the 1950s, made its appearance. Within a political framework in which the black person was in principle always seen as a guest, this 'workman's cottage' was, incongruously, designed to serve as family home, in a bizarre interplay between the apartheid official's obsession with control and the modernist

<sup>30</sup> G. Minkley, "'Corpses Behind Screens': Native Space in the City", in: H. Judin & I. Vladislavic, *blank. Architecture, Apartheid and After*. Rotterdam: NA Publishers 1998: 205.

<sup>31</sup> G. Minkley, "'Corpses Behind Screens': Native Space in the City", in: H. Judin & I. Vladislavic, *blank. Architecture, Apartheid and After*. Rotterdam: NA Publishers 1998: 205.

architect's dream of scientific design that could call into being a new human subject.<sup>32</sup> Towards the end of the 1960s almost all houses in black urban areas were the outcome of an enormous construction plan by the state, with standardized designs and similar building materials,<sup>33</sup> in a rigorous pattern which embodied the futile hope of creating a new, law-abiding, spotlessly clean and controllable human being out of the mythical chaos and squalor of the location.

I suspect that for most white people of my age anything we may ever actually have seen of the location is archived together with much more compelling images of a place on the other side of a river or railway line or road, a place which could from the beginning, and maybe irretrievably, only be imagined. I look at the satellite images of Lokasie/Mgwalana/Lupapasi and ask myself: are they less real than what I can remember of Sandbult? All this is as near to me and as far away from me as the post-1994 residential areas with four-room houses that I see from the highway.

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<sup>32</sup> D. Japha, 'The Social Programme of the South African Modern Movement', in: H. Judin & I. Vladislavic, *blank. Architecture, Apartheid and After*. Rotterdam: NA Publishers 1998: 436-437.

<sup>33</sup> O. Crankshaw & S. Parnell, 'Interpreting the 1994 African Township Landscape', in: H. Judin & I. Vladislavic, *blank. Architecture, Apartheid and After*. Rotterdam: NA Publishers 1998: 439.

## A Coloured Expert's Coloured

*Hein Willemse*

'I am hoping fervently and in faith that the divine resides in every living being; that nobody is anybody's superior or boss [...] give us the strength to become South Africans' – Jan Rabie<sup>1</sup>

'One may indeed ask: with friends such as Jakes Gerwel, Allan Boesak, Hein Willemse and Neville Alexander, does the Afrikaner really need more enemies?' – Dan Roodt<sup>2</sup>

I

In 1983, a Minister's wife made the following off-the-record remarks during a campaign speech:

But traditionally the Coloureds have no history of nationhood. They're a different group, i.e. all different types of people.

Between us and [our] small group when the press aren't present. You know, they're a separate group. The definition of a Coloured in the population register is of someone who is not a Black, and not an Indian, in other words a non-person. He is not ... not ... not. They're leftovers.

They're people who were left over after the nations were sorted out. They're the rest. When Ida [?] had the Cape Corps here in Vereeniging last week or two weeks ago, I looked at them and my heart bled because not one of them had the same facial features.

You know we all at least look European, but they ... some looked Indian, some looked Chinese, some looked white, some looked black. And that is their dilemma. They have no binding power.

Their binding power lies in the fact that they speak Afrikaans, that they're members of the [Dutch Reformed] Church. That is their binding power.

The Indians are a small group, also a splinter group of a nation somewhere in Africa (sic) and, between us, [...] they need a bit of supervision. And the supervision [and] our authority (*baasskap*)<sup>3</sup> of the white [man] are built in the whole system.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Rabie, *Ons, die afgod*, A. A. Balkema, Cape Town, 1958, p. 145. All translations from the original are mine.

<sup>2</sup> *Afrikaner*, 12 May 2007, 'Wie sal ons bondgenote wees?' (D. Roodt), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> In this context *baasskap* could also be translated as 'supremacy' or 'dominance'.

The person who expressed herself so categorically was Mrs Marike de Klerk (1937–2001) – for what it is worth, a Miss Willemse – the first wife of F.W. de Klerk, former Minister of Internal Affairs and later State President. Her remarks were made during a referendum campaign speech to persuade white women to vote for the National Party’s 1983 policy reform that entailed the creation of a tricameral parliament to accommodate people classified as ‘Coloureds’ or ‘Indians’. Fifteen years later, she described her motivation for the speech as a plea for ‘the acceptance of the Coloureds who, for so many years, had been marginalised, humiliated and excluded by an unjust system of racial classification’. By the end of the 1980s, and again during 1993 when these remarks surfaced again De Klerk endured much public criticism. Her defence was that the version, transcribed from a secret tape recording, contradicted her intentions; that her intended ‘nuances were lost’ and that she ‘was struggling desperately to convince friend and foe that I intended the opposite.’<sup>5</sup>

In 1993, the office of the State President issued a statement in which Marike de Klerk declared that there existed ‘a warm and cordial co-operation between [myself] and the coloured community’; that as a consequence of ‘our close cultural bonds I – as an Afrikaans-speaking South African – have a special appreciation of the contribution by the Coloured community to South African society.’<sup>6</sup> In a separate declaration, F.W. de Klerk, as the State President, indicated that his wife fought a titanic struggle against the negative and narrow-minded racism of the far right in white politics. From every platform she promotes the concept of reform and renewal.’ About her use of the ‘non-person’ notion, he said that she used this concept with respect to the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950 in which Coloureds are described in negative terms as non-blacks and non-white and therefore ‘in quotation marks and by definition non-person’. She had, according to the statement, ‘in no way reflected negative opinion, feeling or attitude towards coloureds as a population group. Anybody who so alleges is malicious and attaches an inaccurate interpretation to my wife’s comments.’<sup>7</sup>

Even if one accepts that Mrs de Klerk’s sympathetic nuance was lost or that the excerpt was taken out of context – and I have no reason to doubt her sincerity – she presented to her intimate gathering – ‘among us and [our] small group’ – a reflection of deep-seated ideological opinions. Views that, in the 19th and 20th centuries, had gained social acceptability in South Africa, and views that still persist in our current discourses on South African identities and social differences. Especially her inelegant and awkward formulation, free from the subterfuge of Party Speak, points to how deeply apartheid patterns of thinking were entrenched in popular thought. Despite the vehement criticism levelled at De Klerk, particularly from the ranks of English language and leftist Afrikaans newspapers, she – clumsily – articulated views that were at the core of social relationships in South Africa.

However, De Klerk was no reflexive thinker. Her remarks were not idiosyncratic or original. These attitudes and views had been circulating for generations in the colonial public debate and broadly within Afrikaner nationalist circles. Her later discomfort may have had much to do with the embarrassment of having been caught out with unrefined racist views in the 1980s, at a time of apartheid euphemisms, or with the fact that she

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<sup>4</sup> *Vrye Weekblad*, 24 February 1989, ‘Marike de Klerk in volsinne aangehaal’ (E. Wessels), p. 3. See also *Sunday Express*, 30 October 1983, ‘Startling claims about coloureds by Minister’s wife’ (A. Getz), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> M. Maartens, *Marike. 'n Reis deur somer en winter*, Carpe Diem Boeke, Vanderbijlpark, 1998, p. 96.

<sup>6</sup> *The Argus*, 11 March 1993, ‘Marike ‘hurt by unjust accusations’ (D. Cruywagen), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

expressed views that were whispered behind closed doors in contemporary polite white society. Indeed, in the decades after 1948, the crude racism of the earlier formulators of apartheid was replaced with the emphasis on the lessening of 'race conflict', 'self-determination' and 'separate development'.<sup>8</sup>

In this chapter, it will be demonstrated that De Klerk presented mediated ruling political and social ideas in her speech. The matters she raised – the Coloureds' reluctance to be 'an emerging nation', their lack of cohesion, their somatic and phenotypic diversity, their Afrikaans-ness or their perceived attachment to the Dutch Reformed Protestant tradition and the interests of white dominance – formed the framework of separatism, paternalism and apartheid. I shall point to some connections between De Klerk's remarks and the ideas of the architects of apartheid.

## II

Frantz Fanon wrote in *Les damnés de la terre*, translated into English as *The wretched of the earth*, that the colonist often declared that he knew his native, '[f]or it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence.'<sup>9</sup> It could be said that 'the Coloured' to whom De Klerk referred here was a discursive creation formed in social intercourse and established over more than three hundred years.<sup>10</sup> The Coloured was perceived as different, deficient, less than human and in need of guardianship. This is an attitude generations of 'Coloured experts' elevated to respectability. In South Africa, the Fanon equivalent was the white individual, the white government official, the white politician, the apartheid ideologue or the SABRA social scientist who had 'known their Coloureds from childhood'.<sup>11</sup> Adam Small traced the phenomenon of the Coloured expert back to slavery when slave owners had to appraise and 'know' their 'subjects'.<sup>12</sup> By extension, De Klerk became in her campaign speech the proverbial 'Coloured expert'.

However, 'knowing' the other always has a dialectical counterpart, namely the revelation of the self. When De Klerk pronounced on the Coloured, she also simultaneously revealed herself. One of the key assumptions of apartheid was the 'particular racial differences' of South Africans. Some of the early architects of apartheid argued that, 'the Boer nation, with their particular European race heritage and

<sup>8</sup> See also S. Dubow, *Illicit Union. Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1995, p. 276.

<sup>9</sup> F. Fanon, *The wretched of the earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967 [1961], p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> The concept of 'Coloured', like *Afrikaner* (in its usage before c.1850), *hotnot* (Hottentot), *bruinmens* (brown person) *kleurling* (coloured) or *bruin mens* (brown person) takes its place next to those terms originating from colonially structured societies to define the offspring born from sexual relationships between colonists/settlers and indigenous people. For example, in South America, the rest of Africa, Europe or Asia common concepts such as *mestis*, *mestizo* and *mulato/mulatto* were used. This abundance of terminology gives an indication of the sometimes Social Darwinist inspired efforts to describe these people and their degrees of 'admixture': *bastard*, *cafuzo*, *catalo*, *eurafrikaner*, *eurasian*, *eurindian*, *fustee/fustie*, *griffe*, *griffo*, *guacho*, *halfblood*, *halfcaste*, *hybrid*, *cross*, *quadroon*, *quateroon*, *quinteroon*, *ladino*, *marabou*, *mestee*, *mestis*, *mestiso/mestisa*, *mixed race*, *mulatto*, *octoroon*, *sacatra zebrule*, *terseroon*, *zambo* ...

<sup>11</sup> The South African Buro for Racial Affairs was established in 1948, and from the outset 'it attended energetically and efficiently to the various intricate issues relating to racial affairs [...] SABRA laid down a clear, defined policy and stated its viewpoint very clearly', according to T. E. Dönges (1955: 1), a National Party cabinet member and later State President-designate.

<sup>12</sup> G. J. Gerwel, *Literatuur en Apartheid*, Kampen-uitgewers, Kasselsvlei, 1983, p. 77.

composition, [...] that apparently adapted biologically in a peculiar manner to South Africa has also for this reason a special calling in this country.’<sup>13</sup> In the apartheid context ‘European appearance’ signalled more than biological pedigree; it also represented an index of assumed characteristics and self-imposed moral and religious responsibilities:

Armed with a strong constitution, a browning skin that protected us against the sunrays, adequate sweat glands for cooling in the warm climate, numerous offspring, and an insistent nature with most of the characteristics of the Northern Race, an abhorrence of miscegenation, a people rooted in this country through adaptation and traditions spanning over ten generations – and lo and behold (*siedaar*), the conditions for self-assertion, lo and behold, the basis for my faith in the Boer and his future in this country entrusted by our fathers as a precious pledge to us in building up a Christian white civilisation with guardianship over people of colour.<sup>14</sup>

When De Klerk’s heart bled because ‘not one of [the Coloureds] had the same facial features’ and compared them to herself and her audience (‘we all at least look European’) she spoke with this deeply rooted assumption of ‘European appearance’ of which one of the constituents was ‘an abhorrence of miscegenation’. When she told the intimate company of her audience that the Coloureds – ‘all different types of people’ – had ‘no history of nationhood’ she accepted that one of the undisputed assumptions of human existence was membership of an apartheid-defined ‘nation’ (*volk*), and by implication, recognition of the codes of ‘race awareness’ and ‘race pride’. The frame of reference that De Klerk held up for ‘nationhood’, revealed classical apartheid thought, a direct consequence of Afrikaner nationalism: ‘nations [that] have been sorted out’, ‘the population register’, appearance (‘we all look European’), ‘binding power’, ‘Afrikaans’, ‘the [Dutch Reformed] Church’ and above all the ‘authority of the white [man]’. De Klerk (and her intimate audience) accepted unreservedly the fictions of apartheid and the intellectual framework defined by apartheid thought.

These views could be traced to the influence of German Romanticism, people’s nationalism (*volksnasionalisme*) and Kuyperian interpretations of Calvinism that developed linkages between culture and ‘nationhood’ (*volkskap*), that individuality could be expressed only within the context of group identity which was supported by the belief that ‘nations’ (*volkere*) and their cultures were destined. The nation was regarded as ‘a natural, pure and integrated unit’ with demonstrable ‘organic vision’.<sup>15</sup> For the architects of apartheid ‘race apartheid’ and the ‘creation’ of ‘separate nation communities’ (*aparte volksgemeenskappe*) were essential.<sup>16</sup>

Fundamental to De Klerk’s tacit acceptance of ‘nationhood’ (*volkskap*) was that imagined community known as ‘the Afrikaners’ or the political discourse known as ‘Afrikaner nationalism’.<sup>17</sup> The South African history to which she referred was white mystification, established by both colonial and apartheid historiographers.

How deeply these views were embedded could be deduced from a remark by an apartheid apologist when he employed Johann Herder’s early 19<sup>th</sup> century

<sup>13</sup> G. Cronje, *’n Tuiste vir ’n nageslag – Die blywende oplossing van Suid-Afrika se Rassevraagstuk*, Johannesburg, Publicité Handelsreklamediens (Edms.) Bpk., 1945, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> G. Eloff quoted in Cronje, *’n Tuiste vir ’n nageslag*, p. 32

<sup>15</sup> See Dubow, pp. 261–2.

<sup>16</sup> Cronje, *’n Tuiste vir ’n nageslag*, p. 168.

<sup>17</sup> The concept ‘imagined community’ is borrowed from Anderson. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, New York, Verso, 1983.

romantic-nationalist concept of the 'soul of the nation' (*volksiel* = from the German *Volksseele*). The unidentified minister said among other things that despite their Western cultural heritage Coloureds had no 'own nation soul' (*eie volksiel*): that 'mixing with the average Coloureds as an unique group was not permissible in terms of Scripture. Although they had adopted the culture of Westerners, it does not necessary follow that an own nation soul was born out of it'.<sup>18</sup> One of the intellectual formulators of apartheid, Prof. Dr. Geoffrey Cronje, former Professor of Sociology at the University of Pretoria stated 'that the Coloureds for their own wellbeing (*and obviously in the interests of the whites*) must develop into a separate nation, according to their own potential, so that they can create an own nationhood' (added emphasis).<sup>19</sup> That these two opinions may appear to be contradictory is only in appearance. At base of both points of view is the belief that the Coloureds – or the 'Natives' or the 'Indians' – can merely be secondary participants in a predominantly white history and that their existence can be measured only in terms of apartheid definitions.

For the Afrikaners – 'our beautiful white nation'<sup>20</sup> – to be civil, cohesive and 'white', their whiteness had to be circumscribed. 'White' in this sense became a code for 'superior intelligence and breeding', perceived purity ('European blood purity'), Christianity, 'civilisation' but mostly the lionised European phenotype.<sup>21</sup> These delimitations had to differentiate the Afrikaners from the greater number of heathens, the 'pure uncivilised': 'the Bantus, the Kaffirs, the Africans, the natives, the aboriginals, the black people – whatever one chooses to call them [...] whom the novelist Sarah Gertrude Millin described as 'bold and virile and prolific'.<sup>22</sup> That line of division was the Coloured. Apparently Coloureds – the bastards and hybrids – being partly civilised not only merged native 'non-civilisation' and European 'civilisation', but also served as a buffer against the 'indigenous native' even though the 'race quality of the Coloured' (*rassegehalte van die kleurling*) was deficient.<sup>23</sup> The Coloured according to a former secretary general of Native Affairs, Dr. W. W. M. Eiselen, was not like the 'native' temperamentally 'disposed' to physical labour but also 'unreliable through lack of temperance in the use of liquor'.<sup>24</sup> The unacceptable phenotype, somatic or social

<sup>18</sup> A. Small, *Die eerste steen?*, H.A.U.M., Cape Town, Pretoria, 1961?, p. 38. In response to this, Small articulated this insight similar to that of Anderson who years later would formulate the theory of an 'imagined community': 'The establishment of Afrikanerhood [...] is no 'born-from-an-own-nation-soul matter. [...] The Afrikaner's 'identity' is not an original pure natural given, but a consciousness cultivated gradually through historical circumstance'; 'the 'culture of the Afrikaner' are [...] borrowings appropriated over time.' (p. 40).

<sup>19</sup> Cronje, *'n Tuiste vir 'n nageslag*, pp. 38, 140 ff.

<sup>20</sup> H.R. Abercrombie, *Afrika se gevaar. Die Kleurlingprobleem*, Die Burger-boekhandel, Cape Town, 1938, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Compare Cronje, *'n Tuiste vir 'n nageslag*, p. 11. See also G. Cronje, W. Nicol and E.P. Groenewald, *Regverdige Rasse-apartheid*, Stellenbosch, Christen-Studenteverenigingmaatskappy, 1947, for a justification of apartheid on Biblical grounds. Regarding this form of Christianity, Small wrote: 'He who wants to be a boss can be no Christian, and he who wishes to be a Christian can be no boss. Likewise, he who wishes to be a slave can be no Christian, because Christianity contains the ideal of the highest freedom and the highest responsibility.' Small, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> S.G. Millin, *The South Africans*, Constable & Co, London, 1926, pp. 217, 213. As regards indigenous 'purity', refer to one of Millin's characters in *God's Stepchildren*: 'It was the tradition among the school boys, as it was among their fathers [...] that one preferred a real straightforward black man to a half-caste. Whatever else the black man might be, he was, at least pure.' S.G. Millin, *God's Stepchildren*, Ad Donker, Johannesburg, 1986 [1924], p. 247.

<sup>23</sup> Cronje, *'n Tuiste vir 'n nageslag*, pp. 146–9.

<sup>24</sup> W.W.M. Eiselen, 'Die Kleurling en die Naturel', *Die Kleurling in die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing. Referate gelewer op die sesde jaarvergadering van die Suid-Afrikaanse Buro vir Rasse-Aangeleenthede* (SABRA), s.p., s.p. 1955, p. 122.

shortcomings that the Afrikaners suppressed in themselves could then exist, but then removed in the Coloured.<sup>25</sup>

Marika de Klerk could only express what was supposed to be a positive step in National Party political thought – the political accommodation of the Coloured – in negative terms. Not to do it would equate the Afrikaner to the Coloured. And that could not be allowed, since this would presumably transgress the limits of whiteness. In this regard, De Klerk resonated a history of representation where the Coloured could merely be a shadow and a ‘mimic of whiteness’ and the Afrikaner.<sup>26</sup> She used the same rhetorical conditionality that General J.B.M. Hertzog used in his oft-quoted Smithfield speech in 1925:

He [the Coloured] has originated and exists among us; knows no other civilisation but that of the white people, *however much he is deficient in this*; possesses a view of life, which is fundamentally that of the white people and not of the natives, and speaks the language of the whites as mother tongue [added emphasis].<sup>27</sup>

For De Klerk there was no ambivalence regarding the Indians: that ‘small group, [...] a splinter group of a nation somewhere in Africa (sic)’ and they needed ‘a bit of supervision’. With the Coloured, this was different. Shortly after having declared emphatically that Coloureds had ‘no binding power’ (added emphasis), she caught herself identifying cohesive characteristics, viz. ‘that they spoke Afrikaans, that they were members of the [Dutch Reformed] Church’. Earlier, for the average Afrikaners Afrikaans and membership of one of the traditional Afrikaans churches were characteristics of a rooted Christian National tradition. For De Klerk, merely mentioning these probably called to mind the Afrikaners for these characteristics were regarded as the cherished sources of their ‘binding power’. At that point in her speech, there was no essential difference between the Coloured and the (undeclared norm of the) Afrikaner. For De Klerk, if these characteristics were sources of the Afrikaner’s ‘binding power’ then it should have the same ‘cohesiveness’ elsewhere. But in fact, a rich variety of Protestant, Catholic, charismatic, Islamic and non-traditional religious denominations characterised the apartheid-defined community she had in mind.<sup>28</sup>

Underlying her slip of tongue was the ambivalence of the Afrikaner towards the Coloured: ‘They spoke the same language as we do and are members of the same church but they *are* not us’. Hence the differences had to be clearly defined. How fundamental these differences were and how deficient the Coloured’s (inferior and childish) emotional life was – even within a shared religious tradition – were expressed elsewhere by a letter writer in a newspaper polemic on D. J. Opperman’s poem ‘Kersliedjie’ (‘Christmas Carol’): ‘The Coloured’s attitude towards God is definitely not ours. [...] Their funerals are also more tragic, because *it is as if they cannot comprehend the afterlife fully like we do* and hence the loss is greater. Their sense of religion they

<sup>25</sup> Robert Young pointed out that disgust is not a value free reaction: ‘Disgust always bears the imprint of desire’ and among racist thinkers such as Gobineau ‘we find an ambivalent driving desire at the heart of racialism: a compulsive libidinal attraction disavowed by an equal insistence on repulsion.’ R. J. C. Young, *Colonial desire: Hybridity in theory, culture and race*, Routledge, London, 1995, p. 149.

<sup>26</sup> Compare Millin when the narrator in *God’s Stepchildren* said the following about a character’s imitation: ‘she had, *as most half-caste children have*, a capacity for imitation. She copied the manners and habits – even the gestures and intonations – of [the white mistress]’ (added emphasis). Millin, *God’s Stepchildren*, p. 83.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in D. P. Botha, *Die opkoms van ons derde stand*, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1960, p. 101.

<sup>28</sup> See A. J. Venter, *Coloured. A Profile of Two Million South Africans*, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, Pretoria, 1974, pp. 381–96.

only know *through the small things they see and understand around them*' (added emphasis).<sup>29</sup>

This ambivalence also applied to another shared cultural feature, namely the Afrikaans language, which with Afrikaner nationalist appropriation became the 'language of the Afrikaner'. J. H. Rademeyer in one of the first Afrikaans dialect studies found that 'these Coloureds [referring to the Griquas and the Basters of Rehoboth] all speak a type of corrupted Afrikaans' and he found that 'the Coloured language of our country has always served one purpose: to amuse!'<sup>30</sup> It is relevant to indicate that Rademeyer earlier in his argument defined his sample group as 'pitiable creatures', thereby linking the 'corrupted', deviant language with the deficient Coloureds.<sup>31</sup> In the development of 'Standard Afrikaans' or literally 'Generally *Civilised* Afrikaans' (Algemeen-*Beskaafde* Afrikaans) other varieties of Afrikaans were often declared lower order forms, deviating from the white standard ('civilised') norm.

For the Coloured to exist, he had to be defined in terms of his dependence on the 'white man' / 'the European', but particularly in terms of his deficiency, his regression, his sinfulness.<sup>32</sup> It could not be otherwise in this framework, because '[e]conomically and culturally they represent a lower stratum of European civilization'.<sup>33</sup> The perceived malformation of the Coloured was apparently innate. This was how D.J. McDonald in his Stellenbosch M.A. (the field of study was not indicated) *Die Familie-lewe van die Kleurling* ('The family life of the Coloured') argued this view: The Coloured was 'born in shame and in shame he continued his life and this to his own detriment and destruction'.<sup>34</sup> How unchangeable this malformation was, was probably proven by 'the poverty and dismal family conditions not exclusively determined by external material shortcomings but by an *inner moral corruption and rot that lay at its root*' (added emphasis).<sup>35</sup> In McDonald's mind this inherent malformation was due to the 'lack of a national and tribal consciousness' (*volks- en stambewussyn*) that manifested itself in 'frightful forms' particularly 'in the sexual area'.

With this history of inherent malformation, 'the lack of a national and tribal consciousness' and their low ranking on the European scale of civilisation, De Klerk's Coloureds became a 'negative group'. In the apartheid definition of the Population Act that she quoted, human beings could only exist in 'national and tribal contexts'. In drawing on such a long history of negative imaging she could arrive at the ringing conclusion that the Coloured was a 'non-person', 'leftovers' and 'the rest'. Even if De Klerk uttered these observations somewhat critically her reference to 'non-person' or 'non-human' evoked a number of historical associations. One of these was to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Western European civilisation discourse where 'non-human' presented an extreme point on the civilisation continuum: at the one extreme 'human being' (civilised) on the other 'non-human' (non-civilised). A 'non-human' or the not-yet-fully-human being could only develop or progress through appropriate training like

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in A. M. Jordaan, *Mites rondom Afrikaans*, unpublished D.Litt. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2004, p. 297.

<sup>30</sup> J.H. Rademeyer, *Kleurling-Afrikaans. Die taal van die Griekwas en die Rehoboth-Basters*, Swets & Zeitlinger, Amsterdam, 1938, pp. 5, 11–2.

<sup>31</sup> Rademeyer, p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> See D.J. McDonald, *Die Familie-lewe van die Kleurling: met 'n noukeurige ondersoek na die Stellenbosche Kleurling Familie*, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1933, p. 97.

<sup>33</sup> E.H. Brookes quoted in Venter, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> McDonald, pp. 98, 94, 96.

<sup>35</sup> Also compare Millin, *The South Africans*, p. 195: 'The coloured man is the fruit of the vice, the folly, the thoughtlessness of the white man. [...] The association was devoid of lyricism. No Hottentot girl ever preened herself before her white lord, declaiming: "I am black, but comely"'.

christening to evolve into a ‘human being’.<sup>36</sup> This point of view would have found resonance with some white South African opinion-makers, especially those influenced by Social Darwinism. A race-obsessed Millin let one of her characters express the idea of not-yet-fully human being as follows: ‘[some] Europeans [...] could hardly regard these brown and black folk as quite human.’<sup>37</sup> Allan Boesak in one of the strongest criticisms of the Afrikaans equivalent of Coloured, namely *kleurling*, stated that the word was connected to ‘non-person’ and apartheid dominance:

[This word *kleurling*] is something that white people have imposed on me [...] that in their eyes, I was always a nothing: *a non-person, someone they don’t need to respect* [...] If I allow my identity to depend on their judgement it not only implies that they may decide my future, my being and my person [...] but that I [also] put my future and person in their hands.<sup>38</sup>

If differentiation and the creation of ‘race consciousness’ and ‘race pride’ were strategies ‘to stabilise and ensure the separate continued existence and identity of our major racial groups’, then guardianship was the self-imposed (Christian) duty of the Afrikaner nationalist.<sup>39</sup> The civilising and christening task of the classical colonial tradition also entailed paternalistic guardianship for Afrikaner whiteness.<sup>40</sup> McDonald stated this duty as follows:

The prevailing conditions of this generation [of Coloureds] who are living among the whites render the duties and obligations of the white man as guardian of the deprived and less civilised people so much more serious. The white man first has a sacred duty to fulfil towards the Coloureds themselves to assist in placing and elevating them to a higher living standard.<sup>41</sup>

Later, Dönges, as Minister of Internal Affairs, would defend the policy of influx control as a step to defend the Coloured against undesired influences: ‘Today, the Coloured needs protection; protection against the influx of the natives, against bad influences and firebrands among themselves, protection against himself, for instance against alcohol abuse and miscegenation and other social ills.’<sup>42</sup> G. J. Gerwel in *Literatuur en Apartheid* indicated how, in the older Afrikaans literature, such protection and the ‘good-natured paternalism of the master’ often presupposed the ‘childishness’ of their subjects:

Characteristic of this way of life was a childlike inability to make ethical distinctions and hence a short-sighted carelessness, the abuse of liquor and merry-making, loose and loud cathetic lives, extremely large and poorly nurtured families, rough women abuse, naïve incomprehension of the contents of mimicked religious customs, and a general banality in almost all areas of life.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>36</sup> A. Mbembe, ‘African Modes of Self-Writing,’ trans. Steven Rendall, *Public Culture* 14 (1), 2002, p. 249.

<sup>37</sup> Millin, *God’s Stepchildren*, p. 295.

<sup>38</sup> See Gerwel, p. 182.

<sup>39</sup> Dönges, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> G. Cronje, *Voogdyskap en Apartheid*, J. L. van Schaik, Pretoria, 1948, pp. 15–7.

<sup>41</sup> McDonald, p. 131.

<sup>42</sup> Dönges, p. 5. Also see Eiselen (1955: 124): ‘As guardians of the Coloureds we have to bear in mind that influx and continuous residence of natives in the Western Province could very easily lead to moral decline and economic impoverishment of the Coloured community’ (added emphasis).

<sup>43</sup> Gerwel, pp. 173, 200.

In the year, 1983, in which Gerwel's study was published, De Klerk proved how abiding paternalism was in South Africa when, she with reference to the 'Indians', referred to their 'supervision' preferably under the 'authority of the white [man]'.<sup>44</sup>

### III

In conclusion: the construct of the Coloured as a unique but ambivalent, lesser, regressive, and needy creature had a long history in South Africa. This imaging had such an enduring presence that it was manifested in De Klerk's mediated form in the 1980s. Only aspects that appeared directly and in reference to the quoted text have been discussed here. Therefore abiding stereotypes such as inter alia the 'characteristic humour of the Coloured' have been excluded from this discussion. Marike de Klerk described her speech as paving the way for the political inclusion of 'Coloureds who have been marginalised, humiliated and excluded for so many years by an unjust system of racial classification.' However, in spite of her sympathetic intentions, she could not escape the long history of what Breyten Breytenbach in his well-known 'Blik van buite' ('View from the outside') speech referred to as *die vuilpraat van die ander* (the bad-mouthing of others), because as has been demonstrated her ideas were not idiosyncratic but bore the palimpsest of a history of colonial and apartheid thought.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> For the apartheid proponent Cronje the 'only real final and abiding solution' for the 'Asian question of Africa' was 'total repatriation' to India. See G. Cronje, *Afrika sonder die Asiaat – Die blywende oplossing van Suid-Afrika se Asiatevraagstuk*, Johannesburg, Publicité Handelsreklamediens (Edms.) Bpk., 1946, p. 205.

<sup>45</sup> B.B. Lasarus, [ps. B. Breytenbach], *'n Seisoen in die paradys*, Perskor, Johannesburg, 1976, p. 127.

#### CHAPTER 4

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## Bantu: From Abantu to Ubuntu

*Kees van der Waal*

To speak about ‘the other’ is not a matter of course. Just as ‘us’ usually carries a positive meaning, the affective value of ‘them’ is usually less optimistic. We experience this sharply when outsiders write or speak about us in a manner that hurts. Afrikaans-speakers are sensitive to the use of terms such as ‘*Afrikaners*’, ‘*blankes*’ (whites), ‘*kleurlinge*’ (coloureds) and ‘*Boere*’ (farmers). A racist video, made at the Reitz residence of the University of the Free State, recently caused quite a stir. The stereotyping in the media of white Afrikaans-speakers as racists was a painful experience to many who felt ‘*ons is nie almal so nie*’ (we are not all the same). Terms referring to people, especially terminology of social categories, are political instruments and not merely objective labels in the same class as the taxonomies of fishes or stars. The notion of ‘Bantu’ is a good example of the way in which a label for a social category follows social practice, in contrast to the assumption underlying the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (that practice follows language). Over time, a term such as this one accretes various meanings, some of which may be linked to strongly divergent emotions. The term ‘Bantu’ contains, similar to ‘*Afrikaner*’, positive and negative meanings in Afrikaans and in other languages in South Africa, depending on the historical moment, the social positionality and experience of the users.

‘Bantu’ as a term went through a number of important shifts in meaning. It originated as a linguistic term that denoted the kinship links between a large number of indigenous languages and this meaning was retained in the field of African languages. The term was subsequently also used to refer to the people that spoke these languages, e.g. in anthropology. The notion became naturalised in the everyday languages of South Africans and attained official status in government policy and legislation. In the second half of the 20th century the notion became entangled with the apartheid policy as it referred to black people and their inferior political position. It is this connotation that gave the term a strong negative emotional content among the opponents of apartheid. As the apartheid policy was increasingly debunked, the negative connotation grew and made the term itself unacceptable. Especially the freedom struggle and the global rejection of apartheid had an effect on the use of the term in South Africa. From the 1980s onwards the use of the term decreased and was ultimately replaced by ‘black’. Today, the term is seldom used outside its reference to African languages, although one can still hear it among conservative whites and coloureds.

My argument about the use of the term ‘Bantu’ is that the notion was created in a specific social context and that it evoked strong resistance due to its negative associations. As the resistance changed the context, the use of the term had to adapt and this process eventually led to the demise of the term, especially since people experienced it as oppressive and undemocratic. The term ‘Bantu’ is in this sense one of a lineage of terms that became unacceptable, starting with ‘Kaffir’, followed by ‘native’, then ‘Bantu’. More recently, ‘black’ and ‘African’ became the politically correct terms. The social and political use of the term ‘Bantu’ in South Africa is

permanently tied to the divide-and-rule politics of both the British imperial and the Afrikaner regimes. The notion was therefore rejected, together with white supremacy.

Concepts usually exist in sets and their meanings imply boundaries with contrasting ideas. The terms ‘*blanke*’ and ‘*Afrikaner*’ with their racial connotations developed as opposites to ‘Bantu’ and ‘non-white’ but also in relation to these terms. These terms may disappear in future if Afrikaans-speakers reject the racial element as negative baggage. The problem with any labelling of a social category is that it is an attempt to generalise by using a term that assumes a social classification. A term denoting a group or social category easily leads to negative stereotyping and essentialism. This means that one characteristic is taken to determine the identity of every member of the social category. In this essay I briefly look at the origin and development of the term ‘Bantu’ in order to explain its changing meanings with reference to the various contexts in which it existed. Ultimately, the question is: why did these shifts occur and what do they tell us?

### Origin in linguistics

The first use of the term ‘Bantu’ as a scientific category was documented in 1862 with the publication of the book *Comparative Grammar of South African Languages*, by Wilhelm Bleek. Under the influence of Sir George Grey, this German linguist decided on this name in order to group the languages of black people in South Africa together in one category, based on their strong grammatical resemblances, but also to have a term originating from these languages. Missionaries and linguists had by that time already proven that the grammatical structure of the indigenous African languages in South Africa showed many similarities and that they were related to the language groups north of the Limpopo. With this innovation, based on the Zulu word for people, *abantu*, the use of the term ‘Kaffir languages’ came to an end and a more acceptable term was created: ‘The Kafir Language belongs to an extensive family of languages [...] Members of this family of languages, which we call the Ba-ntu family [...] are also spread over portions of West Africa ...’<sup>1</sup>

This linguistic meaning has, therefore, already been in existence for about 150 years and is still widely used in the study of African languages to denote a large group of languages, spoken from West Africa to East, Central and southern Africa, across a third of the continent. The German linguist Carl Meinhof even reconstructed a hypothetical original Bantu language, termed ‘Ur-Bantu’. The origin of this group of languages lies probably in West or Central Africa and is associated with a rapid spread of the population across large parts of the continent, from approximately 2000 years ago.

Due to the political use of the term ‘Bantu’ in the second half of the 20th century, the notion of ‘Bantu languages’ started to suffer from the political association. The result was that departments of Bantu languages at South African universities changed their names to ‘African languages’ by the mid-1980s. Evidently, the new term was less precise, but at least it did not give offence by association. Outside of South Africa the term ‘Bantu languages’ lives on as it creates no problem at all, due to the fact that the negative political association is not applicable.

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<sup>1</sup> W.H.I. Bleek, *Comparative Grammar of South African Languages*. Cape Town: Juta 1862, 2.

White *volkekunde* and anthropology: ‘The Bantu’ as ‘tribes’ and ‘peoples’

One of the first areas in which the notion of ‘Bantu’ appeared outside African language studies was in anthropology. At the University of the Witwatersrand a Bantu Studies Department had been established by 1921. Stellenbosch University appointed Dr. W. M. Eiselen in 1926 as the first lecturer in ‘*Bantoelogie*’ (Bantu Studies). He would play an important role in the implementation of the policy of ‘separate development’ in his later life. Initially the study of Bantu languages was also located in these departments. The ideological difference between social anthropology at the mainly English-speaking universities and the form of anthropology that was to be known as ‘*volkekunde*’ at Afrikaans-speaking universities already appeared in the early years of the discipline in South Africa. Basically the difference was that a unitary South Africa was taken as the unit of study in social anthropology, whereas ‘*volkekundiges*’ emphasised segregation between black and white as well as the cultural distinctions between ‘peoples’ among Bantu-speakers. The book of Bruwer (1956) *Die Bantoe van Suid-Afrika* (*The Bantu of South Africa*), written in the *volkekunde* tradition, reflects the dominant ideas of his time among white Afrikaans-speakers: ‘For three centuries already the whites and the Bantu are neighbours in South Africa [...] It is therefore necessary that we should understand each other as peoples. Despite this self-evident fact there are hardly any publications in Afrikaans which discuss the Bantu as ethnic communities (*volksgemeenskappe*).’<sup>2</sup> He continues: ‘Apparently, the Bantu did not develop into large civilised communities.’ And: ‘Throughout southern Africa the history of the Bantu peoples is one of continuous mutual struggle, conflicts, genocide and violence.’<sup>3</sup> Note that ‘the Bantu’, according to Bruwer, have to be studied as ‘peoples’ and that their development is lower than that of ‘the whites’. The prime *volkekunde* text, prescribed for decades to Afrikaans-speaking students of *volkekunde*, like myself, *Inleiding tot die Algemene Volkekunde*<sup>4</sup> consistently spoke of ‘Bantu tribes’, because ‘the Bantu’ could only be conceived of in terms of ‘tribes’ and ‘primitive peoples’ in the paradigm of apartheid.

Likewise, in English-speaking anthropology, the term ‘Bantu’ appeared regularly as a name for the people and not only the languages. *Bantu Studies* was launched in 1921 as a journal for the anthropology and linguistics of the indigenous people and languages of southern Africa and, as was to be expected, was renamed to its present name, *African Studies*, in later years. An overview of the anthropological knowledge about ‘the Bantu’ appeared in 1937 with the Cape Town anthropologist, Isaac Schapera as the editor: *The Bantu-speaking Tribes of South Africa: an Ethnographical Survey*.<sup>5</sup> The new title of the 1974 edition, with David Hammond-Tooke as the editor, was significant: *The Bantu-speaking Peoples of Southern Africa*.<sup>6</sup> ‘Tribe’ was no longer seen as an appropriate term, but the existence of ‘peoples’ was uncritically, as in Afrikaans, linked to the existence of languages.

An important publication from this period was the well-known *Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa* of 1935, compiled by the state ethnologist, N. J. Van

<sup>2</sup> J.P. Bruwer, *Die Bantoe van Suid-Afrika*. Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers 1956, voorwoord (my translation).

<sup>3</sup> J. P. Bruwer, *Die Bantoe van Suid-Afrika*. Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers 1956, 228 (my translation).

<sup>4</sup> P. J. Coertze (ed.), *Inleiding tot die Algemene Volkekunde*. Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers 1959.

<sup>5</sup> Schapera, I. (ed.) *The Bantu-speaking Tribes of South Africa: an Ethnographical Survey*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller 1946.

<sup>6</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke (ed.) *The Bantu-speaking Peoples of South Africa*. London: Routledge 1974.

Warmelo (Department of Native Affairs).<sup>7</sup> It indicated the historical relationship of different chieftaincies and showed by means of maps and tables where the subjects of the chiefs and headmen were settled. This survey and classification was part of the state's implementation of the policy of segregation which was already applied in the 19th century in colonial South Africa and which led to systematic and unequal separate allocations of land in the 19th and 20th centuries. Again, the link between 'tribes' and 'Bantu' is striking. Incidentally, the estimated number of rural 'Bantu' in this publication was based on the number of tax-payers per district. The classification of Van Warmelo was based on a combination of criteria: historical and political groupings, geographical distribution, cultural traits and language, as none of these on their own could be used for a watertight classification – typical of the problem that emerges when an attempt is made to produce a systematic classification of people.

### 'Bantu' as a term among black people

Although the official classification of 'the Bantu' would have a profound impact on the access to resources such as land and development, about all in the country used and accepted the term initially. In 1918 reference was made to the Bantu Women's Movement. The African author S. M. Molema completed a book on the black people of South Africa in 1918 that was only published in 1921 (due to the scarcity of paper in the war time) as *The Bantu: Past and Present*. Molema used the terms 'natives', 'Bantu', 'Bantu nation' and 'Bantu race' as synonyms, as was then common in general usage. His description of the history, language and customs of 'the Bantu' followed the pattern of his time and expressed the civilisational prejudice that was associated with formal education and the Christian faith. However, he was outspoken about the injustices of land dispossession and the absence of political rights that led to active resistance by the 'Bantu National Congress' (his term for the South African Native National Congress, later known as the ANC).<sup>8</sup>

The ANC continuously demanded political rights for black people in South Africa. In the periodical of the ANC, *Umsebenzi*, it was formulated in the following terms in the 1940s: 'The Bantu must demand equal economic, social and political rights, ...'.<sup>9</sup> Two clearly separate meanings of the term were therefore evident: one that emphasised separation and tribal affinity, especially in the Afrikaans conservative, but also in the English liberal use of the term, and another that foregrounded the unity of black people and their rights in the progressive and radical use of the term, especially as used by black authors.

Another remarkable use of the term 'Bantu' among black people is as a personal name. The best known person named 'Bantu' was ironically one of the most prominent anti-apartheid intellectuals and activists against the divisive use of the term 'Bantu'. The use of 'Bantu' as a personal name was completely separated from the ethnic or racial meaning that the term acquired generally in the South African society and actually evoked the original and literally most human meaning: 'bantu' = people. He was born in 1946 in Tarkastad, in the Eastern Cape. His father, 'Mzingaye' chose to name him Bantu

<sup>7</sup> N.J. Van Warmelo, *A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa*. Pretoria: Government Printer 1935.

<sup>8</sup> S.M. Molema, *The Bantu: Past and Present. An Ethnographical and Historical Study of the Native Races of South Africa*. Cape Town: Struik, 1963 (1920), 302-3.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Federale Sendingraad, *Die Naturellevraagstuk: Referate Gelewer op die Kerklike Kongres van die Gefedereerde Ned. Geref. Kerke in Suid-Afrika*. Bloemfontein: N. G. Sendingspers 1950, 140.

Stephen Biko. 'Bantu' literally means 'people'. Later Biko called himself 'son of man'. Although this was done often with tongue in cheek, Malusi Mpumlwana interprets Biko as understanding his name to mean that he was a person for other people, or more precisely, *umntu ngumtu ngabanye abantu*, 'a person is a person by means of other people'.<sup>10</sup> Biko's black power philosophy, the struggle against the enforced use of Afrikaans in 'Bantu education' and the Soweto youth revolt of 1976 prepared the country for the freedom struggle of the 1980s, the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 and the democratic transition of 1994 in which the official use of the term 'Bantu' was virtually erased.

### The transference of 'bantu' from language classification to political discrimination

In place of the term 'kaffir' that was in general and even in official use until the start of the 20th century, the term 'native' and later 'Bantu' became the more politically correct terms. 'Kaffir' still has a diminishing meaning and is used by white and coloured racists in private to refer to black people. In the 1970s the notion of 'black people' was introduced and more recently also 'Africans'. These terms indicated the nature of the terminological genealogy related to the contested use of labels for social categories by a hegemonic group referring to a suppressed one. Derogatory references to black people in association with any of the successive terms was common, also in the literature of the time. The report of the Carnegie commission into 'the poor white problem' expressed itself in the following terms in 1932: 'Vulgar, dirty and clumsy ways of expression are often learnt from the native. Especially the kaffir custom to use lies, or to evade the truth, is imprinted on the white child. Because a kaffir seldom reveals the truth, he likes to use a detour.'<sup>11</sup> And a bit further: 'Uncivilised barbaric lifeways influence the white family and destroy the efforts of school, church and home. In the native there is generally, according to European views, no finesse of feeling and taste, no culture or civilisation, but rudeness and barbarism that involuntarily affects white family life.'<sup>12</sup>

It is striking that the use of '*Bantoe*' in Afrikaans was mostly derogatory or from a position of superiority. Minimally it referred to a category that was seen as totally different and that was usually referred to as a 'race' or a 'people'. Ironically, the meaning of a shared humanity that the term originally had was usually absent in the use of the term and the associated behaviour among Afrikaans-speakers. The term was not about people in the first instance, but about units: 'peoples' or 'tribes' ('primitive peoples') as a projection from within Afrikaner nationalism. '*Bantoe*' in its exclusive and divisive semantic reference in Afrikaans was, like the category 'English', apparently needed to depict an opponent, counterpart and contrasting image. The '*Bantoe*' were needed for the process of ethnic mobilisation and the creation of a separate state for Afrikaners. In Afrikaans the term '*Bantoe*' attained the meaning of people that were culturally totally different to Western people and that were seen as inferior, people that should be politically and economically subjected. Over time, the

<sup>10</sup> L. Wilson, Bantu Stephen Biko: A Life. In: N.B. Pityana, M. Ramphele, M. Mpumlwana and L. Wilson (eds.). *Bounds of Possibility: the Legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness* 1991, 15-77.

<sup>11</sup> J.R. Albertyn and M.E. Rothmann, *Die Armblanke-vraagstuk in Suid-Afrika. Verslag van die Carnegie-Kommissie. Deel V: Sociologiese Verslag*. Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia 1932, 37 (my translation).

<sup>12</sup> J.R. Albertyn and M.E. Rothmann, *Die Armblanke-vraagstuk in Suid-Afrika. Verslag van die Carnegie-Kommissie. Deel V: Sociologiese Verslag*. Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia 1932, 38 (my translation).

term became gradually an ascribed social label from outside and less of a term of self-identification from within.

In the paper trail of the development of apartheid, the summary of the congress of the Dutch Reformed Churches on the 'native problem' gives further indications of the meaning of the term in Afrikaans.<sup>13</sup> 'Volkekundiges' and other social scientists advised the clergy at this congress. Alternatingly, the terms 'native', 'kaffir', 'non-white', 'Bantu', 'Bantu people' and 'Bantu race' were used, as if these problematic categories had self-evident and identical meanings, merely because they were all referring to black people.<sup>14</sup> Government policy that aimed to realise apartheid between black and white and to create separate 'Bantu homelands' was developed in that period. Nice words were used about development and guardianship, but the bottomline was self-preservation, in order to let whites as an identifiable social entity survive in a position of power, with their own languages and their 'divine calling'.

In the large bureaucratic apparatus that was deployed since the 1950s, parallel to the public sector for whites, a variety of terms and associated practices emerged that were intended to order and control the life of 'the Bantu'. Legislation, commissions of investigation and numerous other initiatives had to implement this racial separation that was presented as the political consequence of normal cultural difference. The report of the Tomlinson Commission<sup>15</sup> was the basis for the 'consolidation' and 'development' of the 'Bantu homelands' from the 1960s onwards. 'The Bantu' were presented as a threat to the whites unless radical separation was implemented geographically, politically and economically. In the discussion of 'the Bantu' in this report, traditional culture was essentialised, serving the objective to emphasise radical cultural differences that were supposedly justification for the harsh logic of apartheid. Inequality and disdain were inherent in apartheid thinking: 'The white man [sic] brought civilisation to this country and everything that the Bantu now inherits with us, was brought about by the knowledge and diligence of the white man', said dr. Hendrik Verwoerd in 1960.<sup>16</sup>

In this context of disdain about black culture and justification of white control over 'the Bantu', often compared to the role of guardians towards minors, a series of terms were affixed to the root term 'Bantu' in order to manage the seamless bureaucratic system of structural discrimination:

'Bantu labour' was everywhere regulated by permits while it was officially prevented in the Western Cape in order to protect so-called white and coloured areas from the permanent urbanisation of black people.

The 'Bantu Investment Corporation' was given the task to promote black entrepreneurship in the 'Bantu homelands' for the promotion of 'Bantu development', but few people benefited from this.

'Bantu authorities' were installed under the authority of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development in the 'Bantu areas', based on traditional authority systems in order to lead each 'Bantu ethnic unit' to development and independence.

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<sup>13</sup> Federale Sendingraad, *Die Naturellevraagstuk: Referate Gelewer op die Kerklike Kongres van die Gefedereerde Ned. Geref. Kerke in Suid-Afrika*. Bloemfontein: N.G. Sendingspers 1950.

<sup>14</sup> Federale Sendingraad, *Die Naturellevraagstuk: Referate Gelewer op die Kerklike Kongres van die Gefedereerde Ned. Geref. Kerke in Suid-Afrika*. Bloemfontein: N.G. Sendingspers 1950, 21, 54, 170.

<sup>15</sup> Union of South Africa, *Summary of the Report of the Commission for the Socio-economic Development of the Bantu Areas within the Union of South Africa*. Pretoria: Government Printer 1955.

<sup>16</sup> A.N. Pelzer, *Verwoerd aan die Woord: Toesprake 1948-1966*. Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers 1966, 354 (my translation).

Only for these authorities a limited 'Bantu franchise' was realised, but meanwhile the white 'Bantu affairs commissioner' continued to control these areas.

'Bantu education' was offered to black people, under the management of Verwoerd and Eiselen, to replace the church-managed schools that had been available previously, but this occurred at a much lower funding level than in white education. This education was generally regarded as inferior by black people.

The government used 'Bantu beer' as a potent source of income for the local authorities for 'Bantu' in the urban areas. The beer halls were later targeted by black scholars in the Soweto revolt as places where the older generation was enslaved.

The government promoted its policy and its 'successes' in its magazine *Bantu* and also founded Radio Bantu to provide black people with propaganda in their own languages.

The term 'Bantu' in this way became completely entangled with apartheid in South Africa. Due to the fact that the term was used by a white minority regime for its oppressive racial policy, it became increasingly a term of offence. Resistance against the term was for instance expressed in the notion of 'Bantustan' that was used in a derogatory way by foreign and domestic critics of the policy of separate development to refer to the balkanisation of South Africa's homelands.

### A politically incorrect term

By the late 1970s the resistance against apartheid became overwhelmingly strong and even the governments of Vorster and Botha had to make major adjustments. Since the black power activism of Steve Biko and the Soweto revolt, Black people had become much more politically conscious and began using 'black' or 'African' proudly as terms of self-reference, in resistance to the ethnic division associated with the term 'Bantu'. This resistance found its resonance even within Afrikaans literature with the publication of the highly praised book of Elsa Joubert in 1978: *Die Swerfjare van Poppie Nongena*.<sup>17</sup> The influence of this book on the thinking of socially sensitive Afrikaans-speakers was probably enormous. This book enabled them to question the policy that attempted to create 'Bantu homelands' at great human cost. From then on the use of the term 'Bantu' became increasingly unacceptable everywhere in South Africa. The name change of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development to the Department of Plural Relations was an example of the extent to which the term 'Bantu' had become useless, even for the government that had made it central to the execution of its policy of separation between black and white. It is remarkable that the term 'Bantu', in contrast to 'swart' (black) and 'Zulu', as far as I could ascertain, has not been used in Afrikaans poems. Poets, therefore, seemed to have been unwilling or unable to use the term, despite its public prominence, to express something profound or to celebrate intuitive poetical associations. This emphasises once again the artificiality of the term and its political use as an unpoetic construction.

Today the term 'Bantu' is only used by conservative or uninformed Afrikaners and coloureds to refer in a distanced way to black people as a generalised category. The neo-

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<sup>17</sup> E. Joubert, *Die Swerfjare van Poppie Nongena*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1978 (English translation: *Poppie Nongena: One Woman's Struggle Against Apartheid*).

conservatist Dan Roodt uses the term intentionally on Litnet.<sup>18</sup> He claims that the ‘Bantu’ of South Africa did not have their own civilisation, while whites did bring the technology of the wheel and hinge to Africa. He emphasises that ‘Bantu cultures’ did not have their own form of writing, did not know how to build multi-storey houses, were not associated with scientific thinking, but with cannibalism and war. This line of thinking is a direct continuation of the ideas of the *volkekundiges* and Verwoerd, but in a totally different context, more than a generation later, in which this type of thinking is more anachronistic than ever. Claims to civilisation were of course often made in history, e.g. by the Romans in their comparisons to the Teutons that were at that time regarded as uncivilised. It is, however, not only Roodt’s use of ‘Bantu’ that is a continuation of white racism. One can very often hear callers to the Afrikaans radio station *Radio Sonder Grense* referring to black people in terms of the so-called unsurmountable cultural distance that they experience between black people and whites. The basic idea about the huge boundary between black and white continues to flourish. It feeds on inequality, prejudice, historical negation and self-justification. The underlying racism does not need a term such as ‘Bantu’ to survive in the new South Africa.

While before 1994 the emphasis was on the difference between groups in the country, the need for national unity and nation-building has become very strong subsequently. Metaphors such as ‘the rainbow nation’ are expressions of this imagined unity. A shift away from the notion of ‘Bantu’ to the notion of ‘*Ubuntu*’ (humaneness) is an indication of the new spirit of the age.

### *Ubuntu*: Unity and humanity in Africa

*Ubuntu* is a notion that was promoted by former Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It refers to the unity between people based on their common humanity. The term appeared at the start of the new democracy in South Africa in the early 1990s. *Ubuntu* and the idea of ‘the rainbow nation’ were used together to express the political need for nation-building in the new South Africa. A further characteristic of *ubuntu* is that it refers in the first place to the positive contribution to this unity made by black people in South Africa. Their supposed collective consciousness strengthens the search for unity, forgiveness, healing and other positive characteristics that will enable the former white rulers to be accepted and respected as co-citizens. In this context *ubuntu* has already served its purpose in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and in the Constitutional Court. Another context where the idea was grabbed for instrumental use was in the consultation industry around management change and diversity management. In that context *ubuntu* is a metaphor for everything regarded as good in black culture and social life. The problem is, of course, that this term easily presents an idealistic image of a reality that was also marred by conflict and jealousy (e.g. witch-hunts, raids and oppression of women). Underplaying ethnic and other divisions among black people in the new context is, similar to apartheid and neo-conservatism, an ideological phenomenon.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> D. Roodt, *Sangomas of Newton*. Grasperk, Litnet. Accessed on 6 September 2007 <http://www.oulitnet.co.za/gras/vigs.asp>, circa 2005.

<sup>19</sup> C. Marx, Ubu and Ubuntu: on the dialectics of apartheid and nation building. *Politikon* 29(1) 2002, 49-692.

### Essentialism in both bantu and *ubuntu*

People need terms to order and classify complex realities and to communicate about them, but the underlying problem with social terms that classify people, such as ‘Bantu’ and *ubuntu*, is that they create boundaries and allocate content to them that do not reflect those complex realities sufficiently. Very often those classifications are too homogeneous and one-sided where complexity and diversity are involved. Social classification evokes strong emotions related to the identification and collective survival of people. Social boundaries are indeed used to differentiate the ‘us’-group from ‘them’. When the ‘them’-group is seen as inferior, oppression can be justified, as happened during the apex of the apartheid policy regarding ‘the Bantu’. In reality, the use of the term ‘group’, when speaking about large social entities such as ‘the Bantu’, does not reflect the complex social reality. The term ‘Bantu’ is therefore rather a social category, a form of classification and not a reference to a group with recognisable members and interaction (such as a family or a political party). ‘Bantu’ and *ubuntu* share the fact that they are variations of the word denoting humans. The first term refers to the plurality of people, specifically in Afrikaans the plurality of *Bantoe-volke* (‘Bantu’ peoples) that had to fit into the idea of a white state. *Ubuntu* refers to humanity, the sociability of people, black and white, that can form a unity in South Africa on the basis of a new constitution and values that derive especially from the African tradition. Both notions usually acquire an essentialist meaning in South Africa, as only some specific characteristics are taken as a point of departure and the assumption is then made that these terms tell the whole story about society. In the case of ‘Bantu’ that black people are traditionalists who want to live in tribes and ethnic groups and who want to be treated as minors by their guardians, the whites. In the case of *ubuntu* the assumption is that everyone in the country will develop a desire for unity and that this humaneness contains only a positive character based on African traditions. Assumptions about social boundaries linked to tradition and with an eye on a fabricated future are present in both cases. The remarkable change in the use of these terms reflects the recent South African political history. Classification and subjugation of black people has been replaced by liberation and self-identification. ‘The Bantu’ do no longer exist, *ubuntu* is the new ideal. The harsh reality of xenophobia towards other Africans in South Africa is an indication of the limitation of an ideological notion such as *ubuntu*.

The history of the notion of ‘Bantu’ indicates that words are a means to control reality, but this reality is fluid and reacts historically to the terms that are our cognitive instruments. Knowledge is power, as the French philosopher Foucault indicated: knowledge is never neutral, but it is formed and kept in place by those who possess power. Large historical changes in South Africa led to the replacement of ‘Bantu’ and the domination over black people with *ubuntu* and a search for a new national unity. The continued existence of the notion of ‘Bantu’ in the context of African languages is remarkable – there power relations may be less directly at stake than in organised politics. But how many Afrikaans-speakers, relatively protected by their economic power, have found it necessary to learn an African language? Is the term ‘Afrikaner’ going to follow the route of the term ‘Bantu’? Although ‘Afrikaner’ is a term of self-reference and not only of ascription, it may well show shifts in its meaning, especially due to the negative external perception of the term. As long as white Afrikaans-speakers identify with a racial feeling and become emotional about it, the term will have a place in everyday speech. May there be a day on which the socially negative meanings of ‘Afrikaner’ and ‘Bantu’ find each other in oblivion.

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## Thandi, Katrina, Meisie, Maria, ou-Johanna, Christina, ou-Lina, Jane and Cecilia

*Ena Jansen*

Dit was dus ons gesin; maar daar was ook nog ou Dulsie, van wie ek amper vergeet het, soos mens maar geneig is om van die bediendes te vergeet, alhoewel sy by ons was so lank soos wat ek kan onthou. [...] daardie gedurige aanwesigheid waaraan ek skaars nog name of gesigte kan koppel. Dulsie in die huis [...] so onthou ek my kinderjare.

[That was our family; but then there was also old Dulcie, whom I almost forgot to mention, as people tend to do with servants, although she was with us for as long as I can remember. [...] that pervasive presence to which I can hardly put a name or a face. Dulcie in the house [...] that is how I remember my childhood years.]<sup>1</sup>

### I

Many women's names were never used in the *contact zones* of South African kitchens. Together with their small caps and aprons, black women working in white South African households were often given new names that were easier for white people to pronounce than, for example, Noluvyo, Nokubonga or Nomahobe. These ama-Xhosa names mean Joy, Thank you God and Dove. Sometimes black parents took the initiative and named their children Beauty, Patience or Perseverance, in the hope that their daughters would meet with success in the white working environment. Sometimes employers themselves gave "well-known" names to their servants, and I suspect that most of the names in the title of this chapter belonged to this category. All of these women, from Thandi to Cecilia Magadla are women who have been important in my life for no other reason than that I was fortunate enough to belong to the class which employed these women as servants.

As Richard Elphick writes in *Kraal and castle: Khoikoi and the founding of white South Africa*,<sup>2</sup> it was customary, right from the start, for young indigenous women to be trained to work as serving maids in white households at the Dutch settlement of the Cape. Once slavery began, they were increasingly replaced by women from East India who had greater culinary and household skills. The real name of one of the first South African women to work in a white household in the Cape was Krotoa (approximately 1642-1674). This Khoi-woman of the Goringhaiqua group was called Eva by Jan van Riebeeck and his wife. Thanks to the novels of Dalene Matthee and Dan Sleigh, among

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<sup>1</sup> K. Schoeman, *Hierdie lewe*. Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau 1994, 26-28.

<sup>2</sup> R. Elphick, *Kraal and Castle. Khoikoi and the founding of white South Africa*. Londen: New Haven 1977, 177, 205.

others, many post-apartheid South Africans know that, aside from being a maid servant, she was also Van Riebeeck's most important interpreter who, through her marriage to a Danish ship's doctor, also became the ancestor of quite a number of white families.

No one could have anticipated that, three hundred and fifty years later, a maid bearing the same name would become a much loved cartoon character. However, this Eve would no longer be referred to as a childminder or 'maid', but as a 'domestic maintenance assistant' and would be given a 'western' first name – probably because of its combination with *Madam*, a play on Adam – but *also* a surname: Sisulu. In most of these sharp, witty *Madam & Eve* cartoons, she has the last word. All the characters in this cartoon have become icons in a changing South Africa where, although equality is still a distant dream, the way Eve triumphs is transformative despite the stereotypical roles that are played out.

The concept of Eve and her Madam was born when the American Stephen Francis went to visit his mother-in-law in Alberton, Gauteng, with his South African wife whom he had met in New York in 1988. The dynamic between this housewife and her servant Grace fascinated him: 'the yelling and complaining of both parties sparked an idea in my mind', he was to recount later.<sup>3</sup> Shortly after this, he joined two South African pioneers of satire, the historian Harry Dugmore and the artist Rico Schacherl. A few years later the million-dollar title of *Madam & Eve* was launched and it has appeared every day since 1992 in *The Weekly Mail* (now the *Mail & Guardian*). On the Internet, Eve is introduced as 'a sassy individual':

She has lived and suffered under the harsh rule of Apartheid and as a result has faced the many difficulties of having to be a live-in maid to a bored and affluent white woman. Pitiful wages and indifference towards her are just two of the many injustices Eve faces. Yet she tackles her employer and the world with a sassy fervour.<sup>4</sup>

She is not afraid of lying on the ironing board and, when asked indignantly by her 'Madam' whether she thinks this is a holiday, of saying that she has joined 'M.A.D.A.M.': 'Maids Against Doing Anything On Monday'. She is constantly devising entrepreneurial schemes with her friend, the 'Mealie Lady', who can be seen every day walking through Johannesburg's suburbs with a bag of mealies (corn) on her head to sell to the locals. In April 2004, Eve and her friend organised the 'Secret Domestic House Party' and 'The Mealie Lady Party' to celebrate the tenth anniversary of their acquiring the right to vote – which finally marked the access of these black working-class women to political democracy. Eve is still a housemaid, but the way in which she stands up for her rights and always has the last word makes her a symbol of freedom and hope. To use the words of Achille Mbembe in an interview on his book *On the postcolony* (2001): 'As far as Africa is concerned, colonialism is over. Apartheid is over too. Africans are now the free masters of their own destiny'. This naturally does not mean, as he adds, that freedom is easy. 'The work of freedom is very risky [...] because it involves a transformative relation with our past as a condition sine qua non of our control over our own future'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.megweb.uct.ac.za/www/students/madameve.co.za>

<sup>4</sup> Derived from <http://www.megweb.uct.ac.za/www/students/madameve/evcart1.htm> (downloaded April 2004).

<sup>5</sup> C. Hoeller, 'Interview with Achille Mbembe', 2002, <http://www.stanford.edu/~mayadodd/-mbembe.htm> (1 April 2004).

II



Figure 6.1 With Thandi on the stoep of my grandparents' farm Vlakwater, 1951

I, a white child, was born three years after the National Party came to power. In my childhood photo albums there are few, but nonetheless some, pictures of black women. Some are wearing white caps, others *kopdoeke*, headscarves. Most of them are wearing white aprons. The first photo is on the twelfth page of the first of two photo albums which I inherited from my Boland (Western Cape) grandmother Tibbie Myburgh-Broeksma (1901-1988). She and my Oupa lived in Darling. The photo was taken in October 1951 at 'Vlakwater', my father's family farm near Viljoenskroon. My sister and I were seven months old. We are sitting on the edge of either side of our twin-pram on a wide veranda. Next to us sits a young black woman with cap and apron, looking friendly and happy. Whether she was a Free State *ousie* (maid) or whether she rode with us and the pram on the back seat of my parent's first motorcar, Jan Groentjie, from Colenso in Natal, my father's first parish, I don't know.

The small black and white photo is, like all the others, attached with little silver corners to the black pages of the album with its green cover and lacing along the spine. On almost every page there are captions in white ink. I still remember the crown pens which my grandmother and my mother used to write in the albums. Between each page there is a light cellophane sheet of paper (did we used to refer to them as tracing paper?). Now that I look more closely at the album, I notice for the first time that these see-through pages must have been added by my *ouma*: neatly cut by hand and each one attached with a thin line of glue to the fold in between the pages. With each page my sister and I grow bigger. Captions say 'Proud mother', 'Too lovely', 'Proud father', 'Look at the two of us!', 'We start to crawl', 'Ena and her tooth', 'We see our 6 a.m. bottles', 'Christine standing'. We gnaw chicken bones, clamber over my father on the sitting room carpet, sit on either knee of Ouma Darling and then again on Ouma Plaas's lap. 'What Father Christmas brought us' shows us with wide, toothy smiles, sitting once again in our pram. Set out for the camera, surely by my father who always wanted everything tidily in a row: two little elephants, two balls, two wooden wheelbarrows each with a Father Christmas, and, the best kept for last, two gigantic teddy bears. I



Figure 6.2 Holiday at the Strand, 1952

remember – I suspect the bears lasted a long time – just how soft those large ears were, but if you continued to stroke and probe them you could feel the unmistakable wire frame inside. These soft bears were a present from Oupa and Ouma Darling.

It was they who, shortly before we were born, gave our lovely young mother a Kodak camera for her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday so that they, more than a thousand miles away, could follow her and their only grandchildren growing up in faraway Natal. In one of the photos ‘mevroutjie’ (little Mrs), as the parish called her, sits in a real coach with the words ‘Durban. Jan van Riebeeck Festival 1952’ painted on it. In preparation for the countrywide folk festival, the coach also travelled through our small Natal midlands town. We crawl, laugh, bathe and begin to walk. We spend our first birthday at the Strand (‘How wonderful it is by the sea!’). On the same page that the words ‘1st Birthday’ and ‘Ena’s first steps’ are written is a photo with the caption ‘Mon Desir 6 April 1952’. We are sitting on our grandparents’ laps. On the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the settlement of the whites at the Cape, the oldest and youngest members of our family are captured on camera. The day was therefore consciously experienced as a ‘Kodak moment’, worthy of being remembered and documented. In two of the other holiday photos three unfamiliar children are with us on the beach. Also two young brown girls with white caps and aprons, hardly ten years old I would think. They also have buckets and spades within easy reach, but they sit upright, slightly vigilant, watching us sitting at the edge of the dry white sand close to the darker line of wet sand.

Some pages further on, at the age of 16 months, we are involved in other kinds of activities. We are being trundled around the bare rectory garden by my father (beyond the garden is just open veld), in another photo we are laughing happily with a young black man pushing us, we sit on wicker chairs wearing our mother’s hats on our heads with our arms folded and, then with sun hats back in our pram. The caption of the pram photo is ‘Goodbye Thandi’.

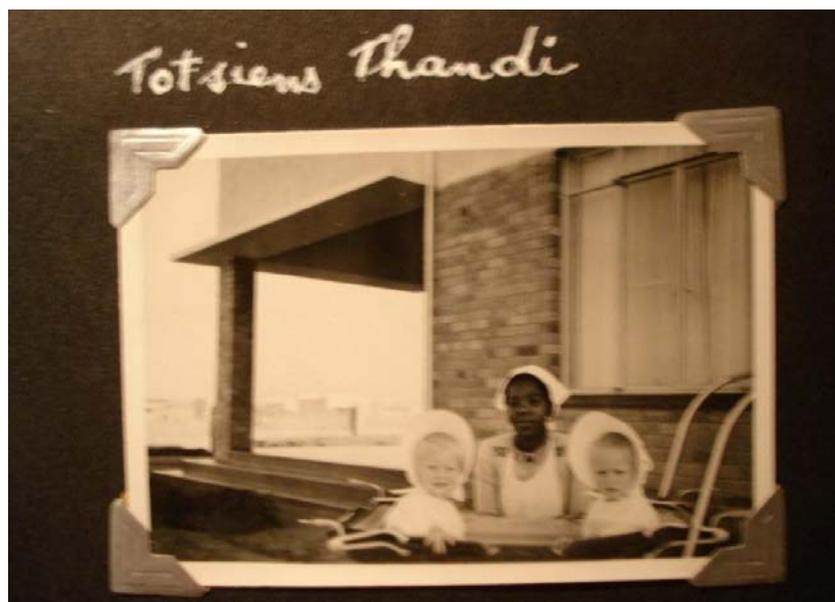


Figure 6.3 Goodbye Thandi, 1952



Figure 6.4 Katrina and us, 1953

It is without doubt the same pram, and the same woman we saw sitting on the farm photo alongside us. She was our own Natal Thandi who had come to the Free State with us. Now she is squatting behind us and looking into the camera lens with the same lovely, happy gaze. What she is going to do and why we have to say goodbye to her is not clear from this cryptic caption.

Our life without Thandi continues in album number two. There is a hailstorm, my father's first ever rose bush in his first ever garden is in flower ('Phew it smells good!'), we are picnicking at Cathedral Peak, sitting with mugs, rolls and meat balls on rocks at the source of the Tugela River. My father is building us a swing and a dovecote for himself, we are again visiting Vlakwater, sitting on a horse together with our Uncle Hendrik, visiting the 'Zoo' in Pretoria.

On the same page as 'Christmas 1954' there is a photo of 'Katrina and us Nov. 1953'.

Another young black woman is kneeling next to us as we stack wooden play blocks into a box on the ground near the corner of our house. She is wearing a headscarf and 'ordinary' clothes. In March 1954 Katrina is standing with us together with another black woman, perhaps a friend from 'next door' (she is wearing a cap and a white apron on which is embroidered a basket of flowers). Above our heads young, green creepers climb over a pergola. My sister and I are both trying to get a small black child (the daughter of Katrina or her friend?), who does not even reach our three-year old shoulders, to hold our hands. On another photo on this page, it is two weeks later and our birthday. There is a group photo of about fifteen children at our party (in a row, naturally). The small black child is not there.

A number of photos of Katrina were stuck in the album in June 1954. She is with us as we 'drive' the upside down wheelbarrow with my sister steering the large wheel between her knees. On another photo we sit leaning up against Katrina on a low wall; we are looking up at her, all three laughing happily.

Do my clearest childhood memories date back to this period? I remember one afternoon seeing Katrina running out of the long grass next to our house – from the path cutting diagonally across the open plot of land from the town side. I see what I think are thick streaks of reddish-brown polish on her arms. Suddenly I realise that it is blood. What could have happened to her? I don't know. At around the same time I remember that there was some travelling salesman who turned up at our doorstep and that he shot dead an iguana which appeared out of nowhere, probably also from the long grass.

A number of pages further on, September 1955, we are again visiting our grandparents in Darling. Their house was on the furthest edge of the town. Mon Desir, the house in which my grandpa lived as Manager of Standard Bank, still stands today; in Nerina Street – unrestored and apparently forgotten and therefore precisely as it was in those days with its high round veranda, old-fashioned outbuildings and garden gates on three sides. A desirable place once again. It was there that my sister and I had 'our tree stump', in the open, sandy veld full of Namaqualand daisies, some twenty metres from the garden. We always played there. It was an enormous sawn-off blue gum tree, with slender offshoot branches on the one side which we put to enthusiastic use as reins. Our whole family was able to sit on it for the photo: my ouma (then 55 years old), my mother (who was to turn 25 three days later) and us (2 x 4 years of age). My oupa (with his high Myburgh forehead, jacket and tie – having certainly just returned home from the bank) stands behind all of us. The photo was taken on 10 September, the same day that I sit writing this, 52 years later, older than my Ouma was then. Alongside us stands a coloured woman with a happy laugh.

Meisie was her name, dressed in ordinary clothes, wearing an apron. One day later, on 11 September, we are running along the Strand holding Meisie's hands. She is wearing black shoes and white socks. So are we. On the photo you can see Hangklip and Gordons Bay in the background, with the curved line of the mountain road. On another photo, my mother is posing with her youthful body in her bathing suit with our hands in hers, the Melkbaai Private Hotel with its light art deco curves behind us: a two-storey building with a wide veranda on the ground floor and a broad balcony on the first floor, and on the right-hand side yet another extra storey. The Melkbaai double storey standing high with *melkbos* (Euphorbia), holiday homes and False Bay all around it.



Figure 6.5 With Meisie at Darling, 1955



Figure 6.6 With Meisie at the Strand, 1955

In February 1956, we are back in the Cape. Meisie is with us on another outing – laughing like us, without an apron – on the ‘Allison’, a sailing boat which takes holiday makers a little way out of Gordons Bay harbour towards Steenbras.



Figure 6.7 With Meisie - trip on the Allison

That is where the albums I inherited from my grandmother end. Included among the family photos are those without any family members – a parade of horse riders, some carriages, flag bearers on a show ground with the inscription ‘Day of the Covenant 16 Dec. 1955 P.M.B’. Perhaps this was the inauguration of the Church of the Covenant in Pietermaritzburg where my father went to? I do not have any other albums with me in Amsterdam. I have to rely on my memory. Is it less ‘true’ than the album? If nothing else, an archive, even in the form of a family photo album, always creates the illusion that it is possible to retrace ‘the truth about the past’. Just how selective the photo album as archive can be is clear, especially when we consider how expensive analogue films and the printing of photos were in those times. First Thandi, then Katrina, even Meisie during our Cape holidays, probably spent hours with us during the day, but you would never suspect this as you page through the albums. *That* there are in fact so many traces of them in our family archive is quite unusual – also that they went on so many outings with us.

### III

Michel Foucault radically changed our ideas about the archive in 1970 and 1972 when he pointed out that the archive was not simply the sum of texts which a particular culture wished to remember and deemed worth their while to record and protect. Nor does it represent in any simplistic way the institutions which gave instructions for their recording and protection. Archives in the sense used by Foucault and postcolonial theorists, such as Anne Stoler, speak to the imagination because they continue to call for interpretation, for translating configurations of power. The archive is a metaphor for the desire and longing which characterise the search for a hypothetical ‘truth’ and for an imaginary ‘origin’. To understand this you only have to read *Reconfiguring the Archive*.<sup>6</sup> The archive is a *system* of inclusion and exclusion, of laws and rules which give shape to what may and may not be said and heard. So-called factual accounts make

<sup>6</sup> C. Hamilton et al, *Reconfiguring the archive*. Kaapstad: David Philip 2002.

it possible for a nation to maintain its fictions; the range of philanthropic missions can be worked out in moralistic tales, but selection and manipulation always play a part. There is no trace in our photo albums of what my South African Party grandfather and grandmother may have thought about the terrible injustice done to Meisie and other brown people when they were removed from the voters' roll. In one way or another, they too, in those albums, helped to build a history of our growing up, which at that time became irretrievably more nationalistic, more exclusive and structurally increasingly white.

What Thandi and Katrina actually did to help us as we grew up, I don't know. I wish that I could remember if they bathed us. Like old Melitie bathed Alie. But at the same time I also know that we did not grow up on a farm and that neither of them was old Melitie. How I harbour such after-the-event wishful thinking has everything to do with Alba Bouwer's *Stories van Rivierplaas* (Stories of a River Farm); a book we grew up with, partly because Aunt Alba was my father's second cousin and partly because this so-called River Farm was one of Vlakwater's neighbouring farms. Many children grew up with an idealised but ambivalent image of Old Melitie with her 'blue chintz dress which swirled around her' and her bracelets which jangled 'tring-a-ling' in the friendly Free State farm kitchen, where she was portrayed as Alie's rock and anchor. Despite the fact that Alie's father believed she was old enough to wash her own feet at night, no white (child) reader would, until quite recently, have found it odd for Old Melitie, who had two children of her own at home, to be asked to continue to wash Alie's feet when Aunt Lenie says: 'Oh, Father, if Old Melitie does it, we can all finish up more quickly at night'.<sup>7</sup> 'All' of course refers only to the white people on the farm. Throughout the four pages of wonderful narration of the interaction between Alie the dawdler and the caring old servant, the reader is never once tempted to give a passing thought to the fact that Old Melitie herself needs to get home. Only once Alie's entire body has been washed and Old Melitie says: 'Pakisa, nonwe Alie. Now you must take care to wash your face', can Old Melitie leave. Then Old Melitie wraps her black shawl with its long fringe around her shoulders, takes the small flat box of snuff from where she keeps it tucked away in her headscarf and says: 'goodnight, baas Jaan, goodnight, nonwe Alie,' and with the swaying of her blue chintz dress casting shadows in the firelight, crosses the threshold into the night. 'She passes through the squeaking farmyard gate towards the huts in the valley on the other side of the dam.'<sup>8</sup> Twice it is emphasised that she is 'swallowed up by the dark night'<sup>9</sup> – naturally to re-appear the next day before daybreak. The portrayal of this feudal labour relationship is never questioned from Old Melitie's perspective. What could be more wonderful than a white child's memory of the solicitude described by Alba Bouwer?

In yet another family archive, my father's autobiography *Weerklank van tagtig jaar 1924-2004* (Reflections on eighty years, 1924-2004)<sup>10</sup>, he describes our family's four-year stay in the Northern Natal town of Utrecht, from 1957 to 1961 – a period of my childhood which I remember well and with great happiness. In the book there is a photo of 'Our loyal helpers in Utrecht: Johanna, Jim en Maria.' We 'inherited' them from the

<sup>7</sup> A. Bouwer, *Alba Bouwer-Omnibus*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1995, 15.

<sup>8</sup> A. Bouwer, *Alba Bouwer-Omnibus*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1995, 4.

<sup>9</sup> A. Bouwer, *Alba Bouwer-Omnibus*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1995, 20.

<sup>10</sup> J.C. Jansen, *Weerklank van tagtig jaar 1924-2004*. 'n *Outobiografie*. Published by the author 2004. From this chronicle it is clear that, despite my father's own small salary, our servants were paid well compared to the average amounts for servant salaries mentioned by T.W. Scott (1964).

family of the previous pastor, and everyone lived in the yard in their own outside rooms in various parts of the enormous town plot. Old Johanna was a stout, silent woman who always wore a headscarf and did most of the ironing. I remember her getting cross with us once when we wanted to throw grasshoppers into the Aga stove on which her black iron stood sizzling. Old Jim was the gardener who in his day had killed a vulture with his knopkierie when he was lying in the veld sleeping off a dagga binge and was thought to be a potential prey. Maria was young and pretty, with her white cap and apron. Without anyone realising that she was pregnant, she gave birth to her first baby one night. I well remember how we stormed into her room in great excitement, somewhere to the left of the large garage, her bed raised on bricks, and a strange little string tied around the baby's waist.

#### IV

In 1961, we were ten years old and our family moved to the city. My father was often out of town. In the days of the Mau-Mau, Uhuru and rumours about Mandela, Rivonia and internal uprisings, it was considered safer for us not to live in a house. My mother taught her speech and drama classes in a hall near our school. We caught the bus and, for the first time in our lives, often came home to a mother-less house. Fortunately Christina, a cheerful vision in pink uniform and cap, waited for us at home. Somewhere behind the row of garages of the apartment building were rooms in which some of the servants stayed. I never saw any of these rooms. I am also not sure whether our city Zulu maid Christina also stayed there and only disappeared into Kwa-Mashu township on week-ends after which she sometimes returned too late on a Monday morning to help with breakfast. Exactly why she left, I don't know. I remember only one successor, Margaret, and after that no-one specific. We never had a full-time maid after her. We went to high school, washed our own school shirts and polished our shoes. Not for us the pampered and trusting relationship between child and servant as that which emerges from the following dialogue between Alie and Old Melitie when she has to go to Ruyswyck School:

'Jo, nonwetjie Alie,' Old Melitie said, 'your little dress will be de prettiest one at dat school, and de shirt too, they're alles new. Who gonna iron your little shirt when you far away? Will you tink about me?'

'Old Melitie,' said Alie, 'I'll think of you every day when I put on a new shirt, and everyday I will wish for winter so that I can come back home and tell you about everything.'<sup>11</sup>

Rather moving to be sure, but naturally this depiction of a paternalistic 'loving' relation does not necessarily produce a 'progressive' text, but has more the effect of entrenching social roles.

As our family embarked on its 'servantless' life in Durban in the sixties, an interesting article appeared in the *Lantern*, a bilingual Afrikaans/English journal, called the *Journal of Knowledge and Culture*, published by the Institute for Education, Science and Technology in Pretoria: 'The Servantless House'.<sup>12</sup> It was seven pages long, richly illustrated with line drawings of functional open-plan kitchens and clean work surfaces.

<sup>11</sup> A. Bouwer, *Alba Bouwer-Omnibus*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1995, 203.

<sup>12</sup> T.W. Scott, 'The servantless house', in: *Lantern. Tydskrif vir kennis en kultuur*, Desember 1964, 59-65.

T.W. Scott, who was, according to a footnote, a research officer of the 'National Building Research Institute' of the 'Council for Scientific and Industrial Research' in Pretoria, illustrated by means of tables and statistics that 'influx-control'-legislation, industrial expansion, the decreasing gap between wages for skilled and unskilled labour and the minimum industrial wage would lead to fewer and fewer white households being able to afford servants. 'The influx-control of Bantu women will only become effective now that the carrying of reference books has become compulsory. As the majority of domestic servants are Bantu women, it is likely that the influence of influx-control is now to be experienced properly for the first time.'<sup>13</sup>

In the fifties, despite pass laws, it was still relatively easy for black women to live illegally in cities. This also meant that they were easy to exploit. From the sixties onwards, people employing these illegals were fined R500 and were obviously less willing to employ black women 'without papers'. The fact that *Lantern* published an article on the servantless household in 1964 was surely not coincidental. According to Scott, 'an overview of household expenditure in November 1955 showed that an average of 0.83 full-time black servants worked for white families and received an average monthly salary of R9.62'. 1955 was also the year in which Minnie Postma's collection of stories *Ek en my bediende* [My Maid and I], illustrated by Katrine Harries,<sup>14</sup> was published. Further 'entertaining sketches' followed in *Alweer my bediende* [More about My Maid].<sup>15</sup> Scott adds that the average maid's salary in 1964 had increased by approximately 38 per cent, which meant that the 0,83 full-time maid per household who may have continued to work would by then have earned R11.00 per month. Salaries in Cape Town were always the highest in the country. In 1955 a Cape maid (0.54 per household – interestingly enough this figure was lower in 1941: 0.48) received an average of R14.10 (in 1941 R5.26), whereas Durban maids (1,08 per household – in 1941 this figure was 0.98) only earned R7.26 (in 1941 monthly R3.73). Food and lodging were often also provided. Scott cites as the main reasons for white households having to do with fewer maids after 1955 and certainly after 1964, even though he does not provide any statistics, the westernisation of the 'Bantu' and 'the growing tendency for Bantu servants to live in their own townships'.

As proper family housing is being made available in the townships the tendency is a natural one. The process may be further hastened by legislation to limit the number of domestic servants housed in the White residential areas. Sociologically, this development is probably desirable, but its immediate effect will be to increase wages if they are to cover travelling expenses. At the same time the number of hours worked is likely to decrease and this will in effect increase the wage rate from the employer's point of view.<sup>16</sup>

He showed that the size of stands in South Africa had, until then, been largely determined by history and the tradition of black domestic workers. 'They have an out-building section separated from the main structure, usually comprising a garage, servant's room, and servant's toilet-cum-shower'.<sup>17</sup> The disappearance of full-time 'sleep-in' servants was to have massive consequences for house design after 1964.

<sup>13</sup> T.W. Scott, 'The servantless house', in: *Lantern. Tydskrif vir kennis en kultuur*, Desember 1964, 62.

<sup>14</sup> M. Postma, *Ek en my bediende*. Kaapstad: A.A. Balkema 1955.

<sup>15</sup> M. Postma, *Alweer my bediende*. Pretoria: Van Schaik 1959.

<sup>16</sup> T.W. Scott, 'The servantless house', in: *Lantern. Tydskrif vir kennis en kultuur*, Desember 1964, 61.

<sup>17</sup> T.W. Scott, 'The servantless house', in: *Lantern. Tydskrif vir kennis en kultuur*, Desember 1964, 62.

With no servant in the house, some of the need for internal separation of the areas for the sake of privacy will be reduced. This will make possible more informal and open planning with more direct communication between rooms. For example, there need be no strong demarcation between the living area, dining area, and kitchen. [...] In South Africa kitchens are usually unnecessarily large because the housewife does not like being in a very confined space with a servant. [...] When the servant goes, we shall need surface finishes in the house that are easily cleaned and maintained. Floor finishes are by far the most important. [...] Wall-to-wall carpeting will no doubt become very popular because of the ease with which it can be maintained.<sup>18</sup>

He urged whites to buy expensive but labour-saving electrical goods; the servantless house would, he estimated, save the owners the monthly sum of R21.80. The modern age could be met head on. At the same time *braaivleis* [barbecue] became an increasingly South African 'tradition' – every man was now boss of his backyard. The servant's room became part of the double garage.

## V

Many people of my generation knew as we were growing up that the adult black people on the periphery of our lives were often humiliated, unhappy and 'long-faced'. We saw their nervousness when they came to the back door with their passbooks. We saw the impatient powerlessness of our parents, the extension of a demonic regulating power from who knows where; noted how they had to check and sign those creased little books. Anne McClintock, in her sharp analysis of *The Long Journey of Poppie Nongena* (1978)<sup>19</sup>, described the legislation as follows:

In 1964, in an act of inexpressible cruelty, amendments were made to the Urban Areas and Bantu Labor Act, which made it virtually impossible for a woman to qualify for the right to remain in an urban area. Wives and daughters of male residents were now no longer permitted to stay unless they too were legally working. F.S. Steyn, member for Kempton Park, put the matter bluntly: 'We do not want the Bantu woman here simply as an adjunct to the procreative capacity of the Bantu population.' It became a life of running to hide. Nongena and other women hide under beds or in lavatories and wardrobes, or take cover in the bushes until the police have gone.<sup>20</sup>

How little was actually known about these women. Poppie was the exception: she is one of the most articulate voices of black women in Afrikaans literature. In a moving orchestration of 'oral history'-interviews by Elsa Joubert, Poppie is given a highly audible voice through the novelist's sophisticated and unmistakable mediation. Because *Poppie Nongena* is such an important book in South Africa's social and literary apartheid context, Poppie's powerlessness and dependence on the power of the passbook administrators, but also on white women, is still remembered by many readers even today.

If one is to believe Minnie Postma's light-hearted maids stories, there was a lot of interaction in South Africa's large kitchens, and far more life histories could have been recorded. Few white women, who had this amazing opportunity to record and narrate

<sup>18</sup> T.W. Scott, 'The servantless house', in: *Lantern. Tydskrif vir kennis en kultuur*, Desember 1964, 62.

<sup>19</sup> E. Joubert, *Die swerfjare van Poppie Nongena*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1978.

<sup>20</sup> A. McClintock, *Imperial leather. Race, gender and sexuality in the colonial context*. New York: Routledge 1995, 325.

the ‘unstoried’ experiences of black women, actually did so. Everyday the domestic worker contributed to maintaining the culture of the clean house and the myth of civilisation that went with it, but every evening she would have to return to her room in the back garden, often without lights or hot water. The ambivalent role of servants lay in the fact that there was both an intimate relation between the housewife and the domestic worker, sometimes even a secret attraction between *baas* or son and the servant, but this intimacy was always located in an extremely dangerous and prohibited sphere. In the end, politics and the physical distance between the house and the servant’s room were maintained not only out of a conviction of family morality but above all through the iron laws administered from Pretoria. No other being was as involved in the private spaces of the white family, but there were countless written and unwritten rules which governed this interaction. Her mug and plate were always underneath the sink, she was always alone or with the children on the back seat, even if there was place for her next to the driver, especially if it was the ‘baas’ who was driving who might have had to drop her off at the station or in town.

The same ambivalence governed the representation of servants in South African literature: despite their constant presence over decades, servants were almost invisible and inaudible. In the incomplete, fragmented and even ghostliness of the archives, many women disappeared down the passages or out of the back door. Like Dulcie in Karel Schoeman’s novel. This is not a uniquely South African experience. Maid servants play a generally subordinate role in all literature, as slave, sometimes even as sex symbol, as in Simon Vestdijk’s Dutch novels where the young Anton Wachter associates the smell of beeswax floor polish with bunched up skirts and erotic impulses. Antoinette Burton shows that Indian novelists who belonged to the elite and had servants, wrote almost nothing about them:

(W)e can see, if only by glimpsing, what their architectural imagination lost down the corridor of years as well as what it captured – with servants’ lives the most dramatic and perhaps paradigmatic example of what can never be fully recovered.<sup>21</sup>

Their presence was so obvious that nothing was said about it. Like the household furniture, they are presented as part of the family’s possessions. Burton quite rightly observes that the textual silence around servants is proof of the silence and violence of *all* archives.

In novel after novel one has to go in search of these women, investigate what this silence means. What is the history of the representation of women who are triply repressed? How did writers, like Postma and Bouwer, make the identity formation of white families possible and unconsciously convey to generations of white children that they were the bearers of a dominant order of whiteness; how did they instil them with the notion that they had the *right* to service and authority? Alison Light, in her brilliant book *Mrs Woolf & the Servants: The Hidden Heart of Domestic Service*,<sup>22</sup> recently wrote the kind of book that needs to be written in South Africa. The one I would like to write. I would like to read all South African novels in search of women with maid’s caps and *doeke* who stood in the hearts of the kitchens, who walked down the passages and who are fast disappearing out of the back door of our memories.

<sup>21</sup> A. Burton, *Dwelling in the archive. Women writing house, home and history in late colonial India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003, 144.

<sup>22</sup> A. Light, *Mrs Woolf & the servants: The hidden heart of domestic service*. London: Fig tree 2007.

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## Acknowledgement

The photos originate from two photo albums (34 x 26 cm). The dark green album contains photos from 1951 to March 1953 and the dark red album dates from June 1953 to March, 11<sup>th</sup> 1956. The Cape photographs were probably mostly taken by my grandfather P.G. Myburgh (1900-1973) and those made in Natal and the Free State by my father J.C. Jansen (born 1924).

# Rugby

*Albert Grundlingh*

## I

### Potent nostalgia

Only very few Afrikaner males have not been confronted with rugby at school, in some way or another. Interest in this sport is often carried over from father to son and it is particularly in this intimate process of transfer that commonalities are shared and that the game acquires one of its remembrance characteristics. This, however, is only one aspect of a much more dynamic and broader process that some commentators describe with a degree of irony as an elevated transcendental experience. Johann Symington, director of communication in the Dutch Reformed Church, describes rugby as far more than merely a national sport:

It is rather more like a religion with its own pantheon of gods and sacred traditions. It is true that players do not kneel or pray in the passageways of the stadiums, but the absolute dedication to the game and the team, the symbolic changing of clothing and the face painted to look like totem figures reveals something of the immanent religious status of the sport.<sup>1</sup>

In an extreme identification in 1970, Gert Yssel, a teacher and lay preacher in the then Western Transvaal, made the bizarre statement that God made the Springboks lose a test because young women in South Africa, according to him, wore indecent mini-dresses.<sup>2</sup> Yssel's logic with regard to cause and effect may have been suspect, but there can be no doubt about the central place that rugby occupied in his world as well as in his philosophy of life.

In the greater Afrikaner circles, the genealogy of the game goes beyond one or two generations and has a bearing on the identification of particular historical emotional values. At the time of the 75th anniversary of the South African Rugby Board, the renowned rugby administrator Danie Craven revealed something of the depth and intensity of the game's remembrance matter in his official message. It was a 'festive occasion' of the game that 'belonged to everyone' and although there had been troubled times through the years, these had only strengthened rugby supporters so that they could enjoy the good times together. It had 'bound them together historically' as nothing else had ever done, and had created a feeling of 'belonging' that few people had the good fortune to enjoy.<sup>3</sup>

To understand the remembrance dimensions of this sport, one needs to take note of the way in which rugby became popular with Afrikaners. The role of the University of

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<sup>1</sup> *Die Burger*, 23 May 2007.

<sup>2</sup> *Sunday Times*, 14 June 1970.

<sup>3</sup> Suid-Afrikaanse Rugbyraad, *Rugby in Suid-Afrika*. Cape Town: Johnston & Neville 1964, i.

Stellenbosch is in this regard one of the keys to understanding the connection. Since the late nineteenth century generations of young Afrikaner males turned to the 'people's university' and it was within the context of the 'people' that the sons of the elite could revel in the game. When a number of young men in a state of hormonal aggression gathered within a demarcated space, the ideal breeding ground was created for a game such as rugby. But the game also formed part of the broader Afrikaner culture. According to one observer, the manner in which 'students could convert their games and fun to a resounding cultural deed' was the outstanding characteristic of student life in Stellenbosch in the 1930s and 1940s. At the time of the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism, rugby was just as much part of Afrikaner culture as *boeremusiek*, *volkspele* and the 1938 commemoration of the Groot Trek.<sup>4</sup> The sport became part of a grouping of symbols that were closely interwoven with the emergence of Afrikanerdom.

During this time the game became firmly established and, as more students graduated from Stellenbosch, the pool of memory associated with rugby became greater. It formed a vibrant subculture of robust masculinity that was often intent on warding off more threatening world views. Van Zyl Slabbert, himself a rugby player, and parliamentary leader of the white opposition in the mid-1980s, graphically described his aversion to the kind of subculture that came to the fore, particularly during rugby tours in the 1960s:

... the post-mortems after the game with pot-bellied, beer-drinking 'experts' from way back; the sight of players continually ingratiating themselves with sporting correspondents for some coverage; the pseudo-patriotic ethos that pervaded discussions on the importance of rugby in our national life; seeing successful farmers grovelling at the feet of arrogant second year students simply because we were 'Maties' on tour in their vicinity. Mentally it was not only escapist; it was a social narcotic to anything else going on in our society.<sup>5</sup>

The annual rugby tour of the university contributed to the memories associated with the game. It did not only bring the countryside into contact with the university and in so doing strengthened the bonds, but it also provided the tour groups with remembrance matter (mainly student antics) that would remain part of them for many more years.

Tours abroad undertaken by national teams were similarly the source of future memories. For instance, during the much talked-of Springbok tour of New Zealand in 1956, many a father and son sat anxiously huddled together amid the static crackling of the radio, trying hard to hear how South Africa was faring on the muddy rugby fields of New Zealand. In the era before television, rugby tests were covered in detail in the press and the background and qualities of each player were fully spelled out. During the 1970 tour of the All Blacks, Chris Laidlaw, a member of the team, summed it up in the following way:

[T]he All Blacks were pictured, pestered, pondered, prodded and praised until every man, woman and child knew that this player ate eggs for breakfast, that one ate spinach, this lock-forward visited the toilet twice a day and that one twenty times.<sup>6</sup>

Some of the players became household names and would still conjure up associations many years after the tour. A local player who stands out in this regard is Mannetjies

<sup>4</sup> B. Booyens, 'Studentelewe – die jongste tydperk', in: H.B. Thom (ed.), *Stellenbosch, 1866-1966: Honderd jaar hoër onderwys*. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel Beperk 1966, 394.

<sup>5</sup> F. van Zyl Slabbert, *The Last White Parliament*. Johannesburg: Ball 1985, 20.

<sup>6</sup> C. Laidlaw, *Mud in your Eye: A Worm's Eye View of the Changing World of Rugby*. Cape Town: Timmins 1974, 97-98.



Figure 7.1 Marnetjies Roux – An Afrikaner icon

Roux. A Springbok centre forward in the 1962 series against the British Lions, he scored a remarkable solo try in one of the tests. It was a try that was to become engraved into the collective memory as an iconic moment. In a certain sense, this deed echoed further than the stadium insofar as this moment reflected a greater dimension of supposed successful Afrikanerdom in the sixties in its full, triumphant glory: the economy showed unprecedented growth, the African National Congress and other organisations had been banned, the National Party was firmly in power and to crown it all the British came off second best on the rugby field because of a brilliant try by a player called Marnetjies. The press of the day described the try in almost euphoric terms: ‘While a host of defenders laid scattered in his wake or stood about with lowered heads, Roux – without a finger being laid on him – soared over the goal-line’.<sup>7</sup> Years later the singer Laurika Rauch immortalised this moment through her nostalgic song in which she asks, ‘Do you still remember the try of Marnetjies Roux?’ (*‘Onthou jy nog die drie van Marnetjies Roux?’*)

It was not only with his performance on the rugby field that Roux etched himself deeply into the Afrikaner memory. During the 1969-1970 tour to Great Britain, which was characterised by unremitting anti-apartheid demonstrations, Roux unceremoniously kicked a demonstrator in the pants when he ran onto the field. In South Africa, uninformed and politically insensitive white rugby supporters, incited by the utterances of the well-known Afrikaans rugby commentator Gerhard Viviers (the ‘voice of rugby’) that the demonstrators were nothing less than ‘pink sewer rats’, welcomed the impulsive deed vociferously as appropriate behaviour against demonstrators.<sup>8</sup> Marnetjies’s status rose by quite a few notches. In the long run, his remembrance capital has reached so far that a museum has even been devoted to him in Victoria West, where he earns a farm. Moreover, his fame helped him to gain financial assistance from the rugby fraternity when he ran into financial difficulties.

<sup>7</sup> H. le Roux, *Sportpourri: ervarings van ’n joernalis*. Pretoria: Van Schaik 1998, 42.

<sup>8</sup> A. Grundlingh, S.B. Spies & A. Odendaal, *Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society*. Johannesburg: Ravan 1995, 91, 125



Figure 7.2 Stellenbosch first team 1934

Rugby as a place of remembrance carries a mainly masculine dimension. Women are inclined to feature within a stereotypical form. In this regard, Danie Craven for instance held the viewpoint that women ‘should be gentle, gentle by nature, and also of gentle speech. If they are not gentle, they have no influence over men.’<sup>9</sup> Otherwise women are merely the objects of male jokes at the braai after rugby.<sup>10</sup> Although women were undoubtedly heartily welcomed at rugby games, and while some of them are / were enthusiastic supporters, as far as remembrance matter is concerned, they are mainly accepted on male terms and it would certainly be unusual if a woman were to come forward in a prominent and positive role in the general discourse.

## II

Important rugby matches provided the stimulus for people to recall highlights from the past. Three years before the 1995 World Cup, rugby was associated more pertinently to nostalgia that reached out openly to a former dispensation. On 15 August 1992, after years of isolation, South Africa played against their rugby arch-enemy New Zealand once more. The game took place in a politically laden atmosphere in the wake of the Boipataung incident on the Witwatersrand in which various members of the ANC lost their lives. The ANC agreed to the game after deliberations with the Rugby Union, but expected that there would be a minute of silence for the victims before the kick-off and that the existing orange, white and blue flag would not be hoisted. The spectators, however, had other ideas and waved their flags while in a moment of disrespectful opposition they heartily sang *Die Stem* instead of observing the moment of silence.<sup>11</sup> For them, it was not the time to embrace the ‘new’, but to recall to memory their rapidly fading political power.

<sup>9</sup> Grundlingh, Spies & Odendaal, 126 (Translated)

<sup>10</sup> SA Rugby, December 1997, 62.

<sup>11</sup> Grundlingh, Spies & Odendaal, 1995, 10-12.

However, three years later, with the African National Congress in power after the epoch-making elections of 1994, a remarkable change came about as well as a seemingly greater willingness to accept change. With the rugby world cup on their doorstep in 1995, after years of isolation, it began to look like if Afrikaners had exchanged politics for rugby and considered this as a very beneficial transaction. Very few rugby-related events have ever generated as many memories as the World Cup victory on 24 June 1995. The ‘new’ South Africa was officially not even a year old. When President Nelson Mandela appeared on the field in a replica number six jersey of the captain, Francois Pienaar, it appeared as if a divided country could at least symbolically be united – around a ball – on the rugby field. Exuberant celebrations followed and one of the characteristics of this situation was the reciprocal benevolence between white and black. ‘It was one of those days of which you could tell your grandchildren’, a journalist still remembered twelve years after the event, ‘how two warriors in their number six jerseys held the world cup aloft in view of 43 million South Africans. It will always give you goose-flesh.’<sup>12</sup> The reasons for this ecstasy were complex and had more to do with the context of the time than with real nation building,<sup>13</sup> but the basis for a lasting memory had nonetheless been laid. Although rugby issues have since become more complicated and in some cases increasingly distasteful, the events of 24 June 1995 still remain a nostalgic marker. ‘I will never forget it,’ the singer Amanda Strydom said in 2007. ‘That moment when Madiba held the cup and the crowds went wild, we had hope for our country once more.’<sup>14</sup>

### III

Part of the remembrance potential of rugby is situated in the identification of the spectators with the players through ‘honouring’ them with nicknames. In this manner a deepening of the association takes place and the possibility of remembering the player or players increases. For instance, a great number of the players who played for the Northern Transvaal from 1938 to 1988 had nicknames.<sup>15</sup> Many of these nicknames also had a rural connotation: ‘Jakkals’ (‘Fox’) Keevy, ‘Hasie’ (‘Little Rabbit’) Versfeldt, ‘Koei’ (‘Cow’) Brink, ‘Padda’ (‘Frog’) Melville, ‘Wa’ (‘Wagon’) Lamprecht, ‘Boon’ (‘Bean’) Rautenbach and ‘Appels’ (‘Apples’) Odendaal, to name a few.<sup>16</sup> The nature of these nicknames reflects many Afrikaners’ rural background that is tied to the past in a particular rugby culture through a memory-related reference. Rugby stadiums also contribute to the process of remembrance creation. Johan Symington is of the opinion that rugby stadiums could possibly replace ‘ecclesiastical shrines’ as the dominant arena of momentous experiences: ‘[T]he stadium becomes the symbolically indomitable universe where titanic battles are fought, according to agreement and ritual’.<sup>17</sup> Particularly Loftus Versfeld in Pretoria and Newlands in Cape Town have such an almost mythical status. The stadium provides the externally visible concrete structures within which the mental structures regarding the game, together with the role of the

<sup>12</sup> *Die Burger*, 8 September 2007.

<sup>13</sup> This matter is discussed comprehensively in A. Grundlingh, ‘From redemption to recidivism? Rugby and change during the 1995 Rugby World Cup and its aftermath’, in: *Sporting Traditions*, 14, 2 May 1998.

<sup>14</sup> *Die Burger*, 8 September 2007.

<sup>15</sup> M.C. van Zyl (ed.), *Northern Transvaal rugby: 50*. Pretoria: Perskor, 1988, 385-396.

<sup>16</sup> A. Grundlingh, S.B. Spies & A. Odendaal, *Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society*. Johannesburg: Ravan 1995, 120.

<sup>17</sup> *Die Burger*, 23 Mayi 2007.

media and peer groups, find a final expression and are strengthened in a ritualistic manner Saturday upon Saturday. The identification with the team also entails identification with the place where the team accomplishes its great deeds. It is argued that by playing a game at home in a familiar stadium, the home team is already given a certain advantage. With regard to Loftus Versfeld, there is also in the popular rugby culture the myth of a 'Loftus Ghost', which supposedly makes things more difficult for visiting teams.<sup>18</sup> When such transcendental qualities are linked to a stadium, the association with the game is enhanced, and the association with the game and the place is therefore established in the remembrance banks of the devotees.

It would be incorrect to link rugby memories only to the way in which whites experienced the game. In their resistance to apartheid, the activists created their own rugby culture, with amongst others the slogan 'No normal sport in an abnormal society.' Among such groups, a lasting tradition of 'struggle' rugby came into being. Although they did not have the luxury of immense and comfortable stadiums with green playing-fields, their more modest sport facilities did not necessarily dampen their interest in the game. Today, in a professional era in which matters are conducted more clinically, signs of nostalgia can be detected among earlier anti-apartheid sport activists for the camaraderie that was forged in difficult circumstances.<sup>19</sup>

Since the presidency of Thabo Mbeki in particular there has been increasing pressure for South African rugby to conform to the guidelines of the African National Congress for change in sport. 'Transformation' appears to be a drawn-out process, especially because it essentially centres on the ownership of the game. Ownership naturally has many dimensions, but one of them is the issue of cultural capital in the form of remembrance matter. Given the intensity and emotional depth of remembrance of rugby it is not surprising that the spiritual ownership of the game will probably be contested over a longer period of time.

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<sup>18</sup> M.C. van Zyl (ed.), *Northern Transvaal Rugby: 50*. Pretoria: Perskor, 1988, 97.

<sup>19</sup> See Grundlingh, Spies & Odendaal, 24-63; *Die Burger*, 28 August 2007.

## The Eating Afrikaner: Notes for a Concise Typology

*Marlene van Niekerk*

... eating is one of the principal forms of commerce between ourselves and the world, and one of the principal factors in constituting our relations with other people.<sup>1</sup>

### On the glamorous and the mundane

Of course the mouth is the entrance to an exit, about which, as Dean Swift would tell you, one might also be concerned; but for the moment we can sit on that subject, leaving the phenomenology of its outbreathings to make the reputation of some Sehr Gelehrter Prof. Dr. Krapphauser, or Swami Poepananda. Om!<sup>2</sup>

Versfeld's joke resonates with Wilma Stockenström's somewhat grim image of a human being: 'behaarde buis van glorie en smet' [hairy tube of glory and smut].<sup>3</sup> At one end of the tube, one could say, a human being ingests less or more elaborately prepared earthly sustenance, as the everyday patty or as *paté de foie gras*, in a ritualised or ceremonial manner, only to return it to the earth at the other end in a humbler form and mostly in an unceremonious fashion. Indeed, it is a trajectory 'van glans én van vergetelheid' [of the glamorous and the mundane].<sup>4</sup>

This thought alone should be sufficient to put into perspective the quest for an original and essential Afrikaner kitchen. Curiously enough, this line of thinking is pursued to absurd lengths in current fascistoid confabulations about Afrikaner ethnic identity: the 'smut' and the 'glory', the abject and the heroic, are regarded as elements comprising a self-sustaining feedback loop of ethnic preparedness. The violence of colonialism, the road-kill of history, so to speak, should not be rejected or forgotten by the Afrikaner volk, but ritualistically embraced and imbibed in order to build up strength for what is envisaged as a renewed struggle for self-preservation, under a perceived threat of future ethnic violence.

Inasmuch as these bizarre fantasies are motivated by self-preservation, they constitute, paradoxically, an example of a general weakness in the Afrikaner culture, including the food culture. This debilitating weakness is the result of a misconception of what might command attention and respect: only the glorious struggle and shining surface of nationalist preparedness. In perceptions of this nature the 'smut' aspect is fully subsumed under the 'glory' aspect. The humble, the abject is not valued in its own right, but only embraced if it can serve a higher, more heroic purpose.

<sup>1</sup> M. Versfeld, *Pots and poetry*. Cape Town: Tafelberg 1985, 6.

<sup>2</sup> M. Versfeld, *Pots and poetry*. Cape Town: Tafelberg 1985, 2.

<sup>3</sup> W. Stockenström, *Monsterverse*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1984, 12.

<sup>4</sup> W. Stockenström, *Van vergetelheid en van glans*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1976, 41.

The gist of my speculations in this essay is that it is precisely the inflated attention and respect for the ‘glamour’ and for the moment of permanence, a narcissistic moment, which undermines the Afrikaner culinary tradition from the inside. To illustrate this, I wish to present for consideration a number of notions and practices within specific sections of the Afrikaner community; consideration not by just anyone, but particularly by the purgative and imaginative spirit of the late Martin Versfeld. It was he, who, in his wise, humorous and mischievous essays, presented his calvinistic fellow-Afrikaners with a sensual ethic of eating and cooking, an ethic where the splendour and the simplicity, the glamorous and the mundane of eating and cooking are poetically intertwined. Moreover, it is an ethic which contains both the permanence and the transcendence, of the kitchen and of the table, within a horizon of attention and respect. One could object that Versfeld lights up this whole horizon with the glory of god. Nonetheless, my answer would be that the glory of the kind of god Versfeld believes in seems to me a far more appealing option than the glory of an ethnically exclusive tribe. One reason for this appeal, is that he can easily recognize his god in the gods of other cultures and enrich and modulate his faith with wisdom from a variety of sources.<sup>5</sup>

## The big eat

We can never be festive if we wish each day to be a feast. Where everything is festive nothing is festive. ... It is gluttonous, perhaps deadly to want that every day.<sup>6</sup>

In the daily round of contemporary consumer madness it is precisely the rhythm of festivity and everyday domesticity, of indulgence and staple that is corrupted. This corruption is fostered by the images of bedecked tables and plated food presented in popular lifestyle magazines. The culinary festive and glamorous occasion is celebrated ad nauseum. Should one contend that the contemporary Afrikaner’s way with food has to a great extent become absorbed by the extravagant consumer culture, then one could claim that this could only have happened because, apart from a tradition of domestic simplicity, modesty, even frugality, another tradition, one of over-indulgence and lavish ostentation, is also associated with the Afrikaner culinary tradition. Moreover, this tradition has been an important instrument of social ranking ever since the early days of the Cape Colony.

Memories of the simplicity and frugality at the one end of the traditional Afrikaner table are preserved in the whimsical names of simple dishes. In the mealie-growing region of the Free State, ‘pap-en-tik’ [porridge-and-tap] is the common name of the dish consisting of a piece of sausage in the middle of the table against which everyone taps their lump of dry porridge before putting it in their mouth. ‘Stadige intrap’ [treading slowly] is a Strandveld name for thick bean soup. To the same category belongs the idea of a ‘lang sous’ [long gravy], made by adding liquid to a dish and thickening it with flour to ‘stretch’ the meat and give everyone a taste. Another name that originated in the frugal kitchen is ‘wurgpatat’ [choke-down sweet potato], which obviously refers to the lack of lubricating accompaniment. ‘Slinger-om-die-smoel’ [sling-around-the-trap] is an old folk name for ‘melksnyfels’ [home-made noodles cooked in milk, served with cinnamon and sugar]. ‘Skop’ is ‘skaap se kop’ [sheep’s head]. ‘Konsentrasiekamppoeding’ [concentration camp pudding] is the name of the brown

<sup>5</sup> M. Versfeld, *Pots and poetry*. Cape Town: Tafelberg 1985, 1-13.

<sup>6</sup> M. Versfeld, *Food for thought*. Cape Town: The Carrefour Press [1983] 1991<sup>a</sup>, 22.

pudding my godmother in the Karoo used to bake. A ‘poek vet en ‘n homp brood’ [a lump of fat and a chunk of bread] was staple food for people in the Swartland wheatlands in the 1930’s. The ‘poek’ and the ‘homp’ was enjoyed with a dried ‘bokkom’, which was selected from the bunch of ‘omkykers’ [backward lookers] in the small, dark, corrugated iron garage under the bluegum trees at Koperfontein; ‘omkykers’ because once they have been strung together through the gills, the springers [a type of mullet] all seem to look backwards in the same direction – improbable, faintly shimmering cherubs from a forgotten ocean.

It is precisely this simplicity, the meagre table, and even the bare cupboard, which seems to give rise to humorous names. This type of humour is also found in institutions with a tradition of questionable fare, such as hostels and the defence force. Apparently, in these circumstances a certain kind of mutually sympathetic and intimate relationship thrives among people; the shared memories of questionable culinary offerings seem to bind them together in a community, the members of which can still laugh together knowingly, long after the ‘varkslaai’ [pig salad, a green pineapple jam] and ‘Loch Nessbredie’ [Loch Ness stew, a runny stew in which lumps of meat would ominously raise their heads] have disappeared from their diet.

Besides the mundane aspect of the Afrikaner table – the ‘stretched’ stew, the ‘choked-down’ sweet potato and the ‘tapped’ sausage – there is the other end of the table, the glory aspect. ‘Man, dit was vir jou ‘n grootteet’ [Now, that was a big eat for you] you still hear older people say, after attending a wedding or a funeral. The eyes grow a bit rounder when they say that, and the smile is somewhat abashed, the local equivalent of ‘the embarrassment of riches’ referred to by Simon Schama in his book of the same title about the prosperity of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, ‘the big eat’ may be the primary rubric for discussing the food tradition of the Afrikaners, a people characterised in its rural origins by stout ‘tantes’ [aunties] and portly ‘ooms’ [uncles]. The anorexic ‘Boerenooi’ [Boer girl] is a product of the second half of the twentieth century. In Jan F.E. Cilliers’s rural idyll of 1911, *Martje* (later *Martjie*), Roelof, the suitor, comes calling on a Sunday afternoon, not wishing to disturb oom Koot and tant Mieta, who, after the heavy Sunday lunch, are probably dozing side by side in the half-light of their bedroom, just like the pig Adam, ‘stilbrommend van innig genot’ [softly grunting with profound satisfaction]. Then Martjie appears around the corner, ‘‘n mooi slanke meisiesgestalte/in haelwit Sondagse klere’ [the pretty, slender figure of a girl/in a snow-white Sunday dress].<sup>8</sup> In keeping with my image of the period, she would rather have been what the Dutch call ‘volslank’ [well-rounded] and Roelof would appropriately have been ‘‘n fris Boerseun’ [a strapping farm boy]. Being slim was not in fashion in those days, as is clearly illustrated by the old patriarchal Afrikaans expressions referring to the female behind, such as ‘boude soos mosbolle’ [buttocks round as buns] or ‘sy stap een-vir-jou-eeen-vir-my’ [she walks one-for-you-one-for-me].

‘The big eat’ on the farm has an equivalent in town and city life, in the elevated anglicised expression ‘om ‘n goeie tafel te hou’ [keeping a good table]. Of course, the *raison d’être* of such a table is to be regularly inspected by peers with equally endowed tables. After all, what is a good table without equally admired admirers? The big eat and showing off the big eat are inseparable. This thought is expressed in the work of Karel Schoeman. I am reminded of passages in *Verkenning* [Reconnaissance] where he describes the phenomenon of ‘the big eat’ in great detail. In the chapter on Stellenbosch

<sup>7</sup> S. Schama, *The embarrassment of riches: an interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age*. New York: Knopf 1987.

<sup>8</sup> F.E. Celliers, *Martjie*. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel [1911], 1958<sup>22</sup>, 1-3.

he writes about the lifestyle of the townspeople from the perspective of the Dutch traveller. '(D)ie groot huise in hul tuine, verskole agter bome, waar die vertrekke altyd koel en skaduagtig is, die voetval van die slawe, die kwistige vertoon. Die protserigheid en opsigtigheid, die oordadige maaltye ...' [the big houses in their gardens, hidden behind trees, where the rooms are always cool and shaded, the tread of the slaves' feet, the ostentation. The affectation and showiness, the excessive meals ...].<sup>9</sup> During the wedding feast the young man is astounded by the dishes of food brought out by the slaves and the way people '(uit)reik om te sny en te skep en hulle borde vol te laai: kerries en pasteie en gebraaide vleis en hoenders, en 'n hele gebraaide vark wat onder algemene toejuiging opgedis en van tafel na tafel rondgedra word' [stretch across the table to cut and dish up food and heap it onto their plates: curries and pies and roasted meat and chicken, and a whole roasted pig which is served amid general cheering and carried from table to table].<sup>10</sup>

It would seem that this depiction by Schoeman is no mere authorial fantasy about the early life in the Cape Colony. In her book *Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806* [The history of Boerekos 1652-1806], Hettie Claassens provides ample support for Schoeman's portrayal. In the chapter about the Cape community between 1707 and 1806, Claassens quotes from a letter written in 1710 by the husband of Jan van Riebeeck's granddaughter, where he writes: "'t is of de Caab van vretten en suypen aan malkander hangt' [the people at the Cape seem to do nothing else but guzzle and gorge themselves].<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Cornelis de Jongh writes about the Cape colonists in his travel journal of 1791-1797: 'Over het geheel ken ik geen menschen, die sterker eten, sterker drinken en meer slapen' [In general, I know no other people who can eat more, drink more or sleep more].<sup>12</sup> Lady Anne Barnard gives an account of the meal she enjoyed in 1797 in Wellington, at the house of one Benjamin Weigt, which included rice, a Cape ham, a well-larded leg of venison, two ducks, chicken curry, beans, cabbage, a salad garnished with two dozen hard-boiled eggs, as well as a baked custard, various pastries and strawberries for dessert.<sup>13</sup>

According to Claassens the ostentation and class consciousness at the Cape can to some degree be attributed to the example set by the hierarchical structure of the VOC [Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, the Dutch East India Company]. The table was regarded as the place where the host could demonstrate his position and wealth as an independent and authoritative person in his own right. As was typical of seventeenth century Europeans, the excessive use of spices would initially have served as a status symbol. On the other hand, the culture of culinary display at the Cape can be seen as a reaction to the privation suffered by the early settlers during the first decade of the supply station. It could also have been an imitation of the opulent tables in eighteenth century Europe, where the number of dishes allowed to be served during a meal had to be restricted by law.<sup>14</sup>

## Sweet, sour and savory: The old-Dutch palate at the Cape

I am unable to be too ethnic about [a pukka South indian curry]. My French forebears prod me. I remember Moitjie's insistence on tamarind, and our Cape

<sup>9</sup> K. Schoeman, *Verkenning*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1996, 113.

<sup>10</sup> K. Schoeman, *Verkenning*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1996, 129.

<sup>11</sup> H.W. Claassens, *Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806*. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis 2006, 115.

<sup>12</sup> H.W. Claassens, *Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806*. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis 2006, 115.

<sup>13</sup> H.W. Claassens, *Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806*. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis 2006, 116.

<sup>14</sup> H.W. Claassens, *Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806*. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis 2006, 116.

custom of putting fruit into things. Most curry recipes I know make little use of fruit, whereas I prefer fruity curries. A handful of dates is good, and so is apple, quince, banana or pawpaw.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from the habitual excess and great variety of dishes on the wealthy tables of the Cape Colony, there are, according to Claassens, further historical signs of a European food culture that migrated to the Cape with the Dutch settlers and could already be discerned by 1725. She concludes that the typical 'boerekos' dishes developed from this culinary culture. The Dutch, according to her, already had a fully developed spice cuisine. Boerekos dishes such as smoorsmoek [braised snoek, a firm, fatty sea fish which is abundant during the winter months], fish soup, bokkoms, stews, sosaties [cubed lamb, onions and apricots threaded on a skewer and marinated in a curry sauce], curries, yellow rice with raisins, atjar, sambal and blatjang [various spicy condiments] are, as the result of a widely accepted historical misunderstanding, erroneously attributed to the influence of slaves from the East.<sup>16</sup> Leipoldt, the Afrikaans poet, writer and gourmet, whose work is referred to by most contemporary experts on boerekos, describes the use of certain combinations of Eastern spices in curries and stews, and the combination of sweet-sour and sweet-savoury in the cookery of the Cape Moslem community.<sup>17</sup> According to Claassens it would have been unthinkable for people from a higher social class to copy the food culture of the lower classes. She maintains that it would have been those on the lowest rung of the social ladder, the slaves, who would have adopted the dominant culinary style of the Dutch and, through the ages, would have conserved it even better than the original rulers. Furthermore, according to Claassens, there were before 1725 too few slaves at the Cape, who were too widely distributed and ethnically heterogeneous to have had an influence on the cuisine.<sup>18</sup> This argument proposed by Claassens, which can be contested at every turn, already betrays an ideological agenda to ascribe an authentic European-rooted kitchen to the Afrikaner, a matter I will return to later in this essay.

The present-day custom of rural Afrikaners to serve stewed peaches, quinces, sweet potatoes stewed in sugar or pumpkin fritters with lamb, or grape jam with snoek, and to prepare mild curries, stews and pickles with a fruity sweet-sour base can be traced back to this early Dutch cookery. According to Claassens these sweet-sour and sweet-savoury combinations reached the Dutch food culture via Italy and later France. The French and Italians originally acquired these combinations from the Persian and Arabic cookery traditions. The Chinese and Indonesian food cultures can also trace their cookery traditions back to the influential Persian culinary style. Furthermore, she avers that the sophistication of the Dutch culinary customs disappeared during the British occupation, when the culinary tradition of the ruling culture was adopted by the locals. Herbs and spices completely disappeared from the Afrikaner food culture. The privations of the Great Trek and the Anglo-Boer War further impoverished the Afrikaner food culture.

The continuation of this impoverishment into the twentieth century can easily be detected in the difference between Leipoldt's *tamatiebredie* [tomato stew] and the version in S.J.A. de Villiers's standard handbook for Afrikaans kitchens, *Kook en Geniet* [Cook and enjoy it]. Leipoldt includes ginger, cardamom, coriander, peppercorns, fennel seeds, thyme, chilli, marjoram, garlic leaves, chutney, sugar and a

<sup>15</sup> M. Versfeld, *Food for thought*. Cape Town: The Carrefour Press [1983] 1991<sup>a</sup>, 86.

<sup>16</sup> H.W. Claassens, *Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806*. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis 2006, 12-13.

<sup>17</sup> C.L. Leipoldt, *Cape cookery*. Cape Town: W. J. Fleisch & Partners [1976] 1989, 17-18.

<sup>18</sup> H.W. Claassens, *Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806*. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis 2006, 370 e.v.

glass of wine,<sup>19</sup> while De Villiers suggests only salt, peppercorns and sugar as flavouring.<sup>20</sup> It was only in the last quarter of the twentieth century, Claassens states, that Afrikaners started rediscovering their old Dutch traditions, influenced by leading chefs such as Peter Veldsman.<sup>21</sup>

Although one may disagree with Claassens about the assumption that the lower classes imitate the cookery of the rich and mighty (where would they obtain the means?), her book however reminds one of the historical origins of everyday phenomena. Nowadays, in the upmarket supermarkets like Spar, in a town like Stellenbosch, a wide assortment of labelled, prepacked, precooked meals, including ‘Traditional bobotie’, ‘Karoo lamb pie’ and ‘Cape tomato bredie’, is available for Afrikaners who do not have time to cook. These dishes are mostly pale imitations, not only of the tradition, but also with regard to the care and attention, the time and talent that went into these dishes. For someone from a traditional Afrikaner food background, what is missing here is precisely the desired intense balance and combination of sweet, sour and savoury. The panacea for this problem is, of course, Mrs Ball’s Chutney, the bottled commercial version of the old Cape sweet-sour tradition.

For the outsider, this tradition is inconceivable. At the buffet counter of the supermarket, tourists from the Low Countries will be found staring incredulously when local clients dish up sweet pumpkin mash with slices of roasted lamb in squeaky Styrofoam containers. They linger before the dish of syrupy sweet potato: ‘Wat raar,’ they say to each other, ‘het schijnt erg zoet te zijn, misschien is het een toetje.’ [How strange, it looks quite sweet, perhaps it’s a dessert.] And yet, the Dutch today still enjoy sweet applesauce with their pork, and the Flemish gourmands cook their rabbit with prunes.

### The *rondebord*, the *braai* and the *potjie*: Three eating habits of the Afrikaner of the ‘old sort’

Eating is not only a physical process; it is also a spiritual process. Your food could not enter your mouth if it did not first enter your mind. You are what you eat, but you also eat what you are.<sup>22</sup>

This could be the appropriate moment to present the first type in the classification of The Eating Afrikaner: The Old Sort (I mostly limit my observations to the Afrikaner man, who is generally at the receiving end of the culinary efforts of the Afrikaner woman). The Old Sort is the counterpart of his ideal black employee, whom he would refer to as ‘one of the old sort’. For this type of Afrikaner, and probably for his employee as well, the index of a satisfying meal would be the ‘Rondebordkos’ [the round plate of food].

The round plate of food should essentially include the following: a variety of meats and vegetables, one or more kinds of starch, plus something sweet, such as pumpkin or sweet potato, and something sour, such as tomato salad or beet salad with raw onions and vinegar. Without meat, the plate is definitely not round enough. Meat is absolutely essential. On Sundays the plate must be especially round. That is the splendour and glory day of round plates.

<sup>19</sup> C.L. Leipoldt, *Cape cookery*. Cape Town: W. J. Fleisch & Partners [1976] 1989, 76-77.

<sup>20</sup> S.J.A. de Villiers, *Kook en geniet. Suid-Afrikaanse kook- en resepteboek*. Bloemfontein: Uitgeee deur die skryfster [1951] 1956, 170.

<sup>21</sup> H.W. Claassens, *Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806*. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis 2006, 417-421.

<sup>22</sup> M. Versfeld, *Food for thought*. Cape Town: The Carrefour Press [1983] 1991<sup>a</sup>, 54.

For the Old Sort of Afrikaner (the Consumer of the Round Plate who would be quite at a loss if he had to prepare any of the round plate dishes) the food on the round plate should be prepared and served by his own wife. Fragrantly steaming in porcelain serving dishes, the food is commended to the Heavenly Father ('For what we are about to receive ...') by the Patriarch of the Round Plate, flanked by reverent offspring and their spouses, whose children – these days probably preferring Steers burgers as their favourite fare – may be seen at the table but not heard.

For the Patriarch of the Round Plate (but no longer for his children) pasta, quiche and green salad is food for gays. Vegetarians are even more alternative than gays, they must be lesbian. Sushi is quite beyond the pale. The Afrikaner of the Round Plate believes in the scrum. He believes in the one-and-only back line movement culminating when the fly-half dives across the try line and plants the ball under the corner flag. He abhors professional rugby. He curses the quota system. He misses Frik du Preez, the legendary Springbok lock, sometimes flank, mostly dashing all-rounder from the glory days of rugby heroics.

After the rugby he does not necessarily expect the Round Plate. Then it is time for the Braai, time to bond with the men and with Castle Lager. The fire and the good cheer provide the splendour, supplemented by generous quantities of lamb chops, marinated pork sosaties and spiced boerewors. In the kitchen, the women make banana salad with a dressing of condensed milk and mayonnaise, if it is in the Boland [winter rainfall area of the Western Cape], or 'stywepap' [firm maize-meal porridge] with a spicy tomato sauce, if it is up North. The Braai, please note, also requires a sweet-sour accompaniment.

The third best meal for the Afrikaner of the Old Sort is something between the Braai and the Round Plate, called the Potjie [a small pot]. The Potjie is usually prepared according to a recipe attributed to some retired politician or pop singer or long-distance-runner who did not become a pastor after the demise of apartheid. Apart from a potpourri of ingredients, ample quantities of good red wine is traditionally required for the glory of the Potjie. The wine is mostly poured into the Preparers of the Potjie, rather than into the Potjie. By the time the Potjie is ready, no-one is sober enough to realise that the contents is partly tough, partly cooked to a mush and mostly burnt. Add salt and a dash of Mrs Ball's and all is well. As Versfeld says: 'Cooking and (the burnt) offering have always gone together'.<sup>23</sup>

## The culinary guild

The conditions for good cooking are something like the conditions for good writing. You must know, in some fecund and global manner, what you want to say, but the result should have some surprises for you. You must love what you are doing, but you cannot love what holds no surprises for you ...

Hence a good dish is like a good moral action – something has popped up into it from that mysterious being, the person. One must avoid cooking by canon law. You should be able to recognise a good cook by his dish, as you can recognise a great writer by any of his paragraphs. They express his essential liberty ... One must be

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<sup>23</sup> M. Versfeld, *Food for thought*. Cape Town: The Carrefour Press [1983] 1991<sup>a</sup>, 16.

careful about copying even oneself, since the self one is copying is dead, and repetition would be spiritual suicide.<sup>24</sup>

An interesting phase in the metamorphosis of the Afrikaner of the Old Sort, is that of the suburban connoisseur, flourishing in select residential areas such as Waterkloof and Oranjezicht. Their emergence is associated with the Afrikaner's establishment as a member of the upper middle class and with the political power of his Party. The connoisseur is a glamorous persona of the volk and their food is a glorious manifestation of their identity. In the example I would like to present, they are further endowed with a glistening layer of *belles-lettres* fat, the product of the abundant inspiration to be found in the wine-producing university town of Stellenbosch. They belong to a self-conscious group of cooks and tasters harbouring a formal mutual respect. The group calls itself a guild, and the guild represents the will to preserve that which is authentic and unique. In all probability not many of the members of this congregation would agree with Versfeld that tradition is nothing more than a constant capacity for change.

The book with the significant title *So eet ons in Stellenbosch* (SEO), also translated into English as *The way we eat in Stellenbosch* (WWE),<sup>25</sup> was published in 1979 by the Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde (Culinary Guild) to commemorate the founding of their town three hundred years before. It serves as an example of the culinary suicide Versfeld refers to, not only because of the unimaginative recipes and the prosaic style in which it is written, but also because of the idea that tradition is eternally worthy of repetition. Apart from 'eternalising' an essential Stellenbosch food tradition, the book fulfils all the functions of ideology: concealment, distortion and reification.

To start with, the recipes are classified according to the seasons. The food tradition of Stellenbosch is thus presented as being deeply attuned to the rhythms of nature. Nature's blessing is poetically bestowed by local Poet Laureate D.J. Opperman, the 'scriba van die carbonari' [scribe of the carbonari]<sup>26</sup> and appropriately translated for the English edition by C.J.D. Harvey. The poetry of canonised poets, as we know, is only a hair's breadth removed from Holy Scripture. If, indeed, you are also a canonising poet (one who collects and selects Afrikaans poetry for the prescribing market) then your figurative pronouncements on the topic of quinces and snoek are nothing less than Blooms of the Stewing Pot that impart a rich, domestic lustre to your Blooms of Chaos and Blooms of Evil.

Subsequent to N.P. Van Wyk Louw's 'Vier Gebede by Jaargetye in die Boland' [Four Prayers for Seasons in the Boland],<sup>27</sup> the 'naturalising' of spiritual growth in terms of the seasons was nothing new in Afrikaans poetry. Although one would not compare the 'witty' occasional poems by Opperman with the lilting, pathos-steeped sonnets by Louw, both series of poems have something in common, even if the one depicts the supplications of the wanderer through the Boland and the other reflects the glow of the ample Boland hearth. Louw and Opperman both respectively imply that our well-being is maintained, not by our politically guaranteed class position, but by the irrefutable example, measure and mood of the seasons.

According to Opperman, during autumn you are inevitably 'ontspanne' ['at your ease'] and you feel 'ie eerste snoek (wat) in jou loop' ['dream of snoek'];<sup>28</sup> during

<sup>24</sup> M. Versfeld, *Food for thought*. Cape Town: The Carrefour Press [1983] 1991<sup>a</sup>, 39.

<sup>25</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *So eet ons in Stellenbosch/The way we eat in Stellenbosch*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979.

<sup>26</sup> D.J. Opperman, *Engel uit die klip*. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel Limited 1950, 9.

<sup>27</sup> N.P. van Wyk Louw, *Die halwe kring*. Cape Town: Nasionale Pers 1937, 61-66.

<sup>28</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *SEO/WWE*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 5.

winter you speak ‘met intiemer tongval’ [‘in tones more intimate’] while within you the stones of the Eerste River are ‘ronder omgerol’ [‘rolled (...) smooth and round’].<sup>29</sup> Then in summer, ‘gloei jy van welbehae teenoor bure en besoekers’ [‘One feels for friends and neighbours new good will’].<sup>30</sup> For spring, the poet fashions something suggestive to titillate the pious Calvinists: a bit of springtime frivolity with sexual overtones and medieval troubadour nuances – so delightful that even the reverend can appreciate it [paraphrased below].<sup>31</sup>

### Spring

The Peaks leaf through different moods, blue or green  
 but you are at peace with all around you:  
 the budding oak and plane, the marshes  
 pricked with pondweed, beds of leeks,  
 young carrots and asparagus – sticky gum  
 on early peaches, the sickle cut in wet barley,  
 and fragrant ploughed furrows. The monotonous call,  
 among the pines, of the red-chested cuckoo.  
 You carve [roasted] goose, guinea fowl and rabbit;  
 sing along to old refrains, drink young wines,  
 pick babiana and sparaxis ... the modest  
 first peck at the red tips of strawberries.

The elevated nature-inspired rhetoric that Louw uses to express self-realisation is modulated by Opperman to a more earthy tone. The gracious living of the well-to-do, white Boland townfolk is generalised to represent an indisputable natural standard of humanity. In keeping with this sentiment, the Fynproewers of Stellenbosch dedicate their book to ‘everyone who is interested in good food, which has always been closely associated with our traditional hospitality.’<sup>32</sup>

The misconception underlying this ‘royal plural’ can be established quite easily by considering the book *Vir ‘n stukkie brood* [For a piece of bread], published six years later by the alternative Afrikaans publishing house Taurus. Here Sandra Kriel investigates the living conditions of coloured farmworkers in the Stellenbosch area. During her interviews with women, their cooking and eating habits are discussed. This book was one of the first documentations of this nature ever carried out in this area. It is an enduring reminder for everyone caught up in a middle class comfort zone that there is a moat of dirt poor coloured households, of alcohol abuse and suffering, surrounding the whitewashed fine dining culture. One could with a keen eye discern a historical continuity, leading from the strict social hierarchy of the early Cape colonial society under the V.O.C. to the Stellenbosch community of white gentleman farmers and later gentleman professors and even later gentleman directors and senators.

The following extract from Kriel’s interview with Rousie September [translated] not only illustrates something of the poor coloured family kitchen, but also of a language usage that is far removed from the poetic musings of the Poets Laureate of Stellenbosch.

I also scrape my own offal. Cook the offal. In water, strong hot water. Cowsheel, scrape it. Spotless clean. And when I scrape it in hot water ... some people scald it in the fire, but not me, it turns pitch black, then it’s bitter, you see, but I scrape it clean

<sup>29</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *SEO/WWE*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 19.

<sup>30</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *SEO/WWE*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 45.

<sup>31</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *SOE/WWE*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 33.

<sup>32</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *WWE*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, colophon page.

in strong hot water ... Water has to cook under the hoof to loosen it. Not too much. About ten minutes you should cook it. Then you should remove the hoof. If you cook it too much, then the hoof sticks. The hoof, I remove it and then I rinse the cowsheel. Wash it until it is clean and white. When it's washed, then I cook that one cowsheel of mine. I make brawn. If I have offal, then I clean my offal. The head and trotters. I make curry offal.

Scald it clean the head. The tripe, I cook the same day. I scrape it in strong hot water. It's ... how do they say? membranes inside. Pull out the membrane, while it is still in the hot water, still strong hot. Inside membrane, the yellow membrane that's inside. Pull off the outside membrane. Wash it and cut it into pieces. And then I cook it. With beans, or plain, the way I want it. Curry plain, the way I want it, and potatoes in small cubes. Rice on the side.<sup>33</sup>

Having read this account, one feels that the culinary connoisseurs could have chosen a somewhat more modest title for their book, for example: *The way some of us eat in Stellenbosch*.

Although an outspoken or thematic awareness of discontinuities, alterity and contradictions is not generally found in cookbooks, the absentees and outsiders in this gourmet book are made all the more conspicuous by the illustrations. On the cover we find, in keeping with the graciously civilised festive atmosphere of Opperman's poems, drawings of the family crystal, dishes and candelabra against the background of the Peaks [mountain peaks in the Jonkershoek valley]. On the title page is a drawing of fruit and vegetables arranged on a wooden board in the classic style of the informally arranged cornucopia. But then follows a series of drawings that do not, as one would expect, depict professors in suit and tie and farmers in sports jackets and hostesses bedecked with fresh water pearls in chintzy dining rooms. The drawings are sentimental pastoral representations of a generalised yesteryear, where against the cliché of a Cape Dutch architectural background, coloured people, recognisable thanks to clear ethnical physiognomic markers, are represented as a securely nurtured and fully reconciled lower class. Quaintly they sell their fish from a cart,<sup>34</sup> contentedly they bend down in the vineyards to harvest the grapes.<sup>35</sup> Apart from the reification of the food culture as a natural phenomenon, we are here confronted with the two other functions of ideology: distortion and concealment of the preconditions for the material possibilities of the life of the Stellenbosch connoisseur and the political and class formations of the period.

Taking into account these signs of the 'misunderstanding' under which the Culinary Guild laboured in the kitchen, one wonders how well developed their culinary taste buds really were. Aromat,<sup>36</sup> (commercial) curry powder,<sup>37</sup> margarine,<sup>38</sup> stock cubes,<sup>39</sup> food colouring,<sup>40</sup> custard powder,<sup>41</sup> not to mention a packet of oxtail soup,<sup>42</sup> in the bobotie, surprisingly – these ingredients are all an indication of the lack of sophistication of these connoisseurs' palates. One is compelled to take this book with a pinch of Aromat. It is an example of culinary amateurism, which in itself is not shameful – the kitchen is the

<sup>33</sup> S. Kriel, *Vir 'n stukkie brood*. Emmarentia: Taurus 1983, 85.

<sup>34</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *SEO/WWE*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 6.

<sup>35</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *SEO/WWE*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 46.

<sup>36</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *WWE*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 9.

<sup>37</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *WWE*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 24.

<sup>38</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *WWE*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 31.

<sup>39</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *WWE*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 38.

<sup>40</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *WWE*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 28.

<sup>41</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *WWE*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 31.

<sup>42</sup> Stellenbosch Fynproewersgilde, *WWE*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1979, 24.

playground of the amateur – but if amateurism is coupled with so much self-congratulation and self-regard, something more than empathy with human nature is evoked. As counterfoil for the complacency in Opperman’s locally inspired decorative art in *The way we eat in Stellenbosch*, one is inadvertently reminded of Peter Blum’s criticism of the ‘unreality’ of the sentiment prevalent in the typical Boland town [paraphrased below]:

Sometimes in winter – when the rain sifts softly  
 on lawns, thick and deep as carpet pile –  
 when it conceals the rocky mountain range  
 behind a curtain of mist – when at the window pane  
 poplars, oaks and chestnut trees melt into each other,  
 and we sink into leaf green dreams  
 while we read about ancient civilisations –  
 then the unreality transports us with the flow  
 of calming waters, and in our mind’s eye  
 the county of Surrey appears, grey and spent.<sup>43</sup>

### The *haute cuisine* of the new Afrikaners

In the search for security, in the preservation of the ego, whether individual or collective, there is no peace.<sup>44</sup>

From the rural Round Plate eater it is but a small step across the railway line (with a hand-up from Sanlam, our corporate back-up) to the oak-lined uptown avenues, but from the Culinary Guild it is a giant leap to the *coterie* of the New Afrikaner and the international gourmet scene. The table is decorated in red and black, the big, round plate has made way for the big square plate, but that which is on the plate is small and is presented with artistic garnishing with Miro-esque precision and in Kokoschka-esque tones. The sweet-savoury and sweet-sour is still recognisable, but the quince is now whisked into a champagne mousse and served with the blue springbok filet, and the fig is reduced to a chestnut brown syrup in a pretty puddle under the pink kingklip. Well-done meat is the ultimate sin. The glamour and glory is complete, the purse of the Afrikaner Big Man and the Glam Femme by his side is bulging, well-connected to the international stock market.

This tendency seems to create some discomfort for the philosophers among the New Afrikaners. These philosophers, I gather, call themselves Die Vrye Afrikane [The Free ‘Afrikane’ as opposed to ‘Afrikaners’]. They cannot quite reconcile this extravagance and ostentation with their ‘re-imagination’ of the Afrikaner. As of late they have been particularly inclined to making pronouncements about the kind of novel they deem to be conducive to the development of a self-image for the newer, freer Afrikaner, the one who has cast aside the burden of guilt from the past. These novels include *Oemkontoe vir die nasie* [Umkontu for the nation] by Piet Haasbroek, *Die Buiteveld* [The Outfield] by John Miles<sup>45</sup> and *Moltrein* [Underground Train] by Dan Roodt.<sup>46</sup> The philosophers

<sup>43</sup> P. Blum, *Steenbok tot poolsee*. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel 1955, 7.

<sup>44</sup> M. Versfeld, *Pots and poetry*. Cape Town: Tafelberg 1985, 40.

<sup>45</sup> J. Rossouw, ‘‘O moenie huil nie, o moenie treur nie, die jollie bobbejaan kom weer’’: Oor Marlene van Niekerk se *Agaat*’ 2005, (real-time) Available: <http://www.vryeafrikaan.co.za/lees.php?id=105> (29 August 2007).

<sup>46</sup> D. Goosen, ‘Moltrein – Enkele notas’ 2004, (real-time) Available: [http://www.oulitnet.co.za/seminaar/goosen\\_moltrein.asp](http://www.oulitnet.co.za/seminaar/goosen_moltrein.asp) (29 August 2007).

mainly consider the content of the novels on the basis of their exemplariness, because, as all propagandists, these assorted *Brüderlein* have a very slight regard for the value and significance of literary form. Any form is acceptable as long as the message is pro-Afrikaner.

Where, one wonders, do these custodians of culture stand with regard to traditional boerekos? *Die geskiedenis van Boerekos* with its compelling argument supported by extensive historical research, could be appropriated by these circles as a call to return to the Source. In the introduction and concluding chapters, in particular, it would seem that Claassens attempts to attribute a unique and inalienable authentic food tradition to the Afrikaner volk. At the same time she wants to ascribe a rich and deep integrity to this food tradition, as well as an ancient, identifiable ‘Eurasian’ source.

In this regard, it might be of significance to quote the concluding cadence of *Die geskiedenis van Boerekos* [translated below]:

The erroneous assumption about the origin of Boerekos which, for more than a century, has been regarded as valid, also by Afrikaners, shows how essential it is to take care when recording history. The culinary culture of a nation cannot be chopped into pieces and served out of context, but should be approached holistically. To fully understand the food culture of a people, it is necessary to throw its total human existence, its faith, political history, habitat, language and language evolution into one pot.<sup>47</sup>

This drumbeat is waiting to be discovered by the cultural gatekeepers of the new generation. They could use it well to redeploy the tried and tested mobilising instrument of Afrikaner Nationalism, the idea of a cultural group with inalienable traditions, of an unshakeable nation, the only true ‘volk’ that has survived in the ‘vaal, gladde brei’ [smooth, grey porridge], (to quote Louw out of context),<sup>48</sup> a ‘volk’ at present afflicted by the shallowness and corruption engendered by neo-liberalist capitalism and the manipulative Afrikaner imperialists. For the philosophically-minded anti-globalisation lobby, Claassens’s book could certainly provide the beat for an Afrikaner version of the slow food movement. Making such a slow food movement acceptable for the mascot and *enfant terrible* of the group is the question to be faced by the torch bearers, for he has been known to call himself ‘The Last Westerner’ and is mad about Italian sports cars and French food.

In the novel *Moltrein*, The Last Westerner gives free rein to his politically transparent fantasies about the downfall of the Afrikaner. This is achieved through his alter ego, Anton du Pré (actually Du Preez), a failed pianist in ‘exile’ in Paris. Anton is the type who is repelled by the foreigners with whom he has to share public transport. He meets another Afrikaner, Erika de Ruiters, who, like him, lays claim to French Huguenot descent. She is from a Boland Afrikaner family with business connections. With her, Anton enjoys a brief interlude in his miserable existence. Besides sex, they enjoy with abandon all the diversions offered by Western civilisation: they race on the German autobahn in her black Ferrari, they get carried away by music from the classical canon, they pamper themselves with Louis Roederer Cristal champagne and meals in expensive restaurants. They enjoy starters such as, for her, potato salad with fresh truffles and, for him, pig trotters stuffed with foie gras and served with pink lentils from the Champagne region and a truffle vinaigrette,<sup>49</sup> main courses such as roasted tarbot on the bone, garnished with a gateau of soft leeks and caviar in a champagne sauce, pan-

<sup>47</sup> H.W. Claassens, *Die geskiedenis van Boerekos 1652-1806*. Pretoria: Protea 2006, 421.

<sup>48</sup> N.P. van Wyk Louw, *Germanicus*. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel 1956, 55.

<sup>49</sup> D. Roodt, *Moltrein*. Pretoria: Praag 2004, 108.

fried scallops on a vanilla skewer, and as accompaniment a sweet potato puree and an apple and citron chutney, not to mention desserts such as spicy pear crust and mango with a sweet chilli sorbet.<sup>50</sup> Throughout the novel, the dishes of Du Pré's far-removed country of origin resound: '*filet de sandre farci aux escargots et sabayon de crémant*, preceded by an *andouillettes-salad*',<sup>51</sup> '*spécialité[s] de la maison*' such as sea bass in olive oil and '*feuillant caramellisé [sic] aux fruits de la saison*';<sup>52</sup> and '*pigeonneau et foie gras de canard à la braise*' and '*poulette jaune des Landes truffée puis rôtie au feu de bois*', and as accompaniment '*légumes, mijotés à la truffe noire écrasée*'.<sup>53</sup>

The climax of Anton de Pré's retro-grafting onto his culture of origin occurs after Erika rejects him. He then finds (after a meal of *rôti* and *tarte Tatin*) an elderly lady to take to bed in a castle in Nantes. He sees this as 'an appropriate act for me as Afrikaner ... to copulate with a post-menopausal woman because my volk cannot procreate in the midst of the enveloping fecundity of the African uterus ... while we uselessly gave birth to piano playing and literature ...' [translated].<sup>54</sup> 'And the art of fine cuisine' one could certainly add to this list, on behalf of the author. Poor Anton undergoes a knee operation and is run over by a truck, dying an unheroic death, after which the manuscript of his musings and tribulations is found by his brother, who hands it over to Dr Dan Roodt for publication as *Moltrein*.<sup>55</sup>

The simultaneously self-pitying and self-promoting literary fantasy in *Moltrein* is an example of the extreme nihilism that can result from the tendency of Afrikaners to essentialise and hark back to the origins when dealing with their tradition, including their food tradition. The book expresses something of what I recognise as a self-destructive mechanism inherent in the food tradition of the Afrikaner. The name of this mechanism is the narcissism of the good table and it is lubricated with snobbishness, exclusivity, contempt of the other, ostentation, gluttony, selfishness, arrogance, chauvinism and solipsism. This mechanism is recognisable in the class consciousness of the first Afrikaners in the early Cape Colony, and later in the smug self-satisfaction of a politically dominant patriarchal Afrikaner middleclass and ultimately in the petulant, pretentious self-love of the sophisticated upper class urban Euro-Afrikaner. In my opinion, the insatiable narcissistic hunger for glamour and glory has caused the food culture of the Afrikaner to consume itself practically down to the bone.

### *Versfeld's pumpkin*

Aanskou hierdie pampoen. 'n Mooi vaalblou boerpampoen. Die helder klewerige diamantdruppeltjies sit nog aan die stengel waar jy hom gesny het ... Hef hom in jou hande ... Dik vaste geelrooi vleis sal dit wees, soet en effens droog. Dis 'n landgoed-pampoen ... Dis 'n mensgemaakte pampoen. In hom sit persoonlikheid, ook die kranse en bosse en water waar hy tot rypheid gekom het. Hy skep 'n verband ... Hierdie pampoen is 'n wêreld, en wanneer jy hom eet, eet jy die wêreld. Hy voer ook my siel wanneer ek hom saam met my gesin sit en eet ... Hoe sal ons hom gaarmaak? Die klei-oond is aan die warm word, en ons kan dit saam met die brood

<sup>50</sup> D. Roodt, *Moltrein*. Pretoria: Praag 2004, 109.

<sup>51</sup> D. Roodt, *Moltrein*. Pretoria: Praag 2004, 189.

<sup>52</sup> D. Roodt, *Moltrein*. Pretoria: Praag 2004, 210.

<sup>53</sup> D. Roodt, *Moltrein*. Pretoria: Praag 2004, 217-218.

<sup>54</sup> D. Roodt, *Moltrein*. Pretoria: Praag 2004, 293.

<sup>55</sup> D. Roodt, *Moltrein*. Pretoria: Praag 2004, 302.

insit, in die halwe paraffienblik, met 'n bietjie skaapvet ... Ek gesels lekker met 'n pampoer. Hy praat omgewingspolitiek.<sup>56</sup>

[Regard this pumpkin. A beautiful, blue-grey boerpampoer. The clear sticky diamond-shaped drops still cling to the stem where you cut it ... Lift it up in your hands ... Thick, firm yellow-red meat is what you will find, sweet and slightly dry. This is an estate pumpkin ... It's a man-made pumpkin. It is infused with personality, and with the rocks and shrubs and water where it slowly ripened. It creates a connection ... This pumpkin is a world in itself, and when you eat it, you eat the world. It also feeds my soul when I sit and eat it with my family ... How will we cook it? The clay oven is heating up, we can bake it with the bread, in the cut-off paraffin tin, with a bit of sheep's fat ... I enjoy conversing with a pumpkin. It talks environment politics.]

Anything of a local food culture worth conserving is salvaged in Versfeld's essays on eating and cooking. From the quotation above, it is abundantly clear which values in cookery should be cherished. Together they represent an alternative and a corrective for the narcissistic table with its glamour and glory, its excess, its snobbery, exclusivity, contempt for the other, ostentation, greed, selfishness, superiority, arrogance, self-indulgence, chauvinism and solipsism. Here the values of consideration, respectfulness, simplicity, sensuality, the aesthetic, and the connectedness with the context of community and environment are restored. Glamour, according to Versfeld, is to be found not in the plated, garnished end product, but rather produced in the process: to start with, the appreciation of the such-ness of the unique ingredient, the pumpkin, the potato, the quince; furthermore in the attentive actions of the cook; and ultimately in the attentive spirit of the eater. Being fully present in the moment and paying attention are the prerequisites for experiencing the kind of glamour that belongs not to itself, but to oblivion. The art of cooking and eating is to invest the fleeting moments during which these most vulnerable human activities take place with attentiveness and respect. It is a difficult task of humanising time, maintained from one moment to the next, a conscious attention, a bulwark not only against the diminishment of tradition, but also against tumbling into the void. It is this awareness that abates the glory and exalts the abject.

To conclude and to restore the opening theme of this small scherzo, a poem by Sheila Cussons (in her own translation) where the abject moment of oblivion regarding eating and enjoyment, in other words, the stool, is poetically 'ceremonialised'. With the necessary respect and attention, according to Cussons, even the 'ligte eierdop van wit kalk' [the light eggshell of white calcimine], the old station latrine, where we 'nederig skyt' [shit humbly], can result in a shining knowledge of god.<sup>57</sup> In 'Eenvoudige vrae van 'n vroeë Christen' [Simple questions of an early Christian]<sup>58</sup> she develops this idea. From the peculiar glow attributed here to robust human excrement, I deduce that Cussons is undoubtedly intellectually related to the contrary Afrikaner philosopher of Rondebosch – especially with regard to his uplifting and wayward sense of humour.

Spiritualized matter: my body  
finer than it was?  
A new earth again for the seeing,  
hearing, smelling, tasting, touching?

<sup>56</sup> M. Versfeld, 'Die pampoer', in: M. Scholtz (red.). *Vertellers 2: die tweede groot verhaalboek*. Cape Town: Tafelberg/Human & Rousseau 1991<sup>9</sup>, 404-406.

<sup>57</sup> S. Cussons, *Omtoorvuur*. Cape Town: Tafelberg 1982, 45.

<sup>58</sup> S. Cussons, *Poems*. Cape Town: Tafelberg 1985, 39.

Or will I flash transparent as a flame  
 through jasper and emerald,  
 without the hungrily eating, thirstily drinking  
 and softly voiding  
 after toil and the warm sleep:  
 yes, even not remembering any more  
 how contented I was  
 with bread and oil and salt, and after  
 the pleasurable effort  
 releasing a rich brown glistening turd  
 on springing little grasses.

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## The Windpump

*Lizette Grobler*

### I

Elbie Immelman<sup>1</sup> tells the story of Piet Olivier and his treacherous windpump in the South African newspaper *Die Burger* of 9 September 2000. His family had been farming on the Karoo farm Kweekwa in the vicinity of Victoria-West since 1853. Because the farm of 29 000 morgen (about 60 000 acres) was situated on the route between Victoria-West, Pampoenpoort, Carnarvon, Williston and Calvinia, it served as a point of call for the British patrols who had to feed their horses and take in fresh water supplies. Piet's wife, Chrissie, managed to turn these stopovers to account, however. Whenever she saw dust rising from the transport road, she started to bake bread with the flour she kept hidden in an old well near their house.

When windpumps were introduced into South Africa, Piet Olivier was one of the two farmers in the Victoria-West district who acquired one. He was quite prosperous – he had 204 horses, which the British all commandeered, down to the last cart and saddle horse. To demonstrate their benevolence they allowed him to keep all of four donkeys for his own use, of course with the stipulation that he was not to tend to them or stable them.

But that was not the end of the British soldiers' generous treatment of the farmer. One day the British raised the dust on the transport road to serve a summons on Oom Piet. The charge: spying. He had been sending secret messages with a heliograph. Although he was taken aback (he did not own a heliograph), he was not going to take this lying down. When a deputation of the Mounted Troopers arrived to escort him to town, he put his foot down and refused to go with these South Africans who had joined the British forces. The British and none but the British were to escort him. The Troopers returned to town tail between the legs, and delivered Oom Piet's message to the Sixth Inniskillin Dragoons, who had been stationed on the edge of the mountain to the south of Victoria-West since the Northern Cape farmers had rebelled. Eleven Dragoons duly set off to Kweekwa and ordered Oom Piet to walk to the town. It being beneath his dignity to walk for 40 km while the hated British soldiers were on horseback, Oom Piet once again refused: the Troopers had to organise transport for him. They had not reckoned with Oom Piet's obstinacy, of course, and so they had to stay the night on the farm, Tant Chrissie having to serve them. The second day on the farm came and went, and on the third day an obdurate Oom Piet suggested they fetch his foreman Hugh Wilson's cart from Witkranz. If two Troopers were to put their horses before the cart, they could ride in it to town, together with Oom Piet... What the tight-lipped Englishmen had to say to each other and to Oom Piet while they were together in the cart is best left to the imagination; it is enough to say that they took Oom Piet's advice and temporarily locked him up in town. Later, he was freed on parole but had to while

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<sup>1</sup> *Die Burger*, 9 September 2000.

away the time in his *tuishuis* (a small house in which farmers stayed during infrequent visits to town) in Pastorie Street with his family, reporting to the British twice a day. After the war Oom Piet went back to his farm. One evening he was standing on the porch when he noticed a flashing light. When he and Tant Chrissie investigated, they found out that it was caused by the windpump's steel blades reflecting the moonlight. And so they discovered a possible source of the so-called heliograph messages. Or so the story goes.

There is irony hidden in this story: the windpump, iconographically drawn on the Afrikaner landscape of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as the source of a steady water supply and hence of survival, as passport to expansion, is here the treacherous element leading to the internment of the Boer and his restriction to a *tuishuis* in Pastorie Street.

In this essay, I intend to throw some light on the ironies inherent to the establishment of the windpump as site of collective memories, to trace the way in which these memories are embodied in the form of a museum initiated and managed by the community, and lastly to ask how this embodiment should be interpreted within the current discourse on sites of shared memory.

## II

The irony in this story about the Anglo-Boer War proves to be a recurring motif in the establishing of technological innovations in the Western Cape landscape. Sean Archer<sup>2</sup> points out that there is evidence in both the *Descriptive Handbook of the Cape Colony* and the *Blue Book 1875* (respectively published in 1875 and 1876) indicating that windpumps were a part of the Karoo landscape by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The first windpumps were not, however, truly South African. Archer points out that the origin of these windpumps is not clear, but that an imported American Halliday Standard had been erected in Hopetown by 1874.<sup>3</sup> The South African landscape soon had quite a cosmopolitan population of techno-immigrants: besides the wooden Halliday Standard and Manvel there were the Aermotor, Atlas, Atlas Ace, Baker Run-in-Oil, Dandy, Defiance Oilomatic, Dempster Annu-oiled, the Steel Eclipse, Eclipse Model 45, Gypsy Wonder, Mogul, Perkins Triple Gear, Samson, Star and Star Zephyr from the USA; the Adler (later Conquest) and Holler from Germany; the Massey Harris, Beaty Pumper and Imperial from Canada; the Climax and Hercules from England and the Southern Cross from Australia.<sup>4</sup> Nearly as colourful as the melting pot from which the owners of the farms originated...

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<sup>2</sup> S. Archer, 'Technology and ecology in the Karoo: a century of windmills, wire and changing farm practice', in: *Journal of South African Studies*, 26 (4), 2000, 681.

<sup>3</sup> S. Archer, 'Technology and ecology in the Karoo: a century of windmills, wire and changing farm practice', in: *Journal of South African Studies*, 26 (4), 2000, 681-682.

<sup>4</sup> J. Walton & A. Pretorius, *Windpumps in South Africa. Wherever you go, you see them: whenever you see them, they go*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1998.

## THE WINDPUMP



Figure 9.1 Aeromotor Colesberg R57 (Photo: Daniel Nel).

The first windpumps were made in South Africa at the beginning of the Second World War when it was proving impossible to import them.<sup>5</sup> Up to that date the South African market had been dominated by the American manufacturers who supplied as much as 80% of all windpumps in the country. By 1942, however, Stewarts and Lloyds were manufacturing Climax windpumps in Vereeniging. South African production was getting in stride.<sup>6</sup>

Although the British windpump was manufactured under licence from Thomas and Son in South Africa, its design was adapted several times and even changed because of information gleaned from the Weather Bureau's 1956 publication *Surface Winds of South Africa*.<sup>7</sup> The average wind speed in South Africa was calculated at 7,3 miles per hour and in 1957 the construction of the wheel and tail was adapted for maximum effectiveness at a lower as well as initial wind speed of seven miles per hour.<sup>8</sup> This windpump, the first truly South African one, sold well. Walton quotes Frank Mangold who, in 1957, claimed that about 12 000 windpumps were sold annually and that probably 97,5% of these were manufactured in South Africa. The most popular windpump was the Climax, the South African version of the British windpump. Besides the Climax there were Gearing, M&S Rotor, Malcomess-Buffalo Double Geared Oil Bath, President, Southern Cross and Springbok windpumps – some with patriotically resonating names.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> J. Walton & A. Pretorius, *Windpumps in South Africa. Wherever you go, you see them: whenever you see them, they go*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1998, 58.

<sup>6</sup> S. Archer, 'Technology and ecology in the Karoo: a century of windmills, wire and changing farm practice', in: *Journal of South African Studies*, 26 (4), 2000, 683.

<sup>7</sup> J. Walton & A. Pretorius, *Windpumps in South Africa. Wherever you go, you see them: whenever you see them, they go*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1998, 58.

<sup>8</sup> J. Walton & A. Pretorius, *Windpumps in South Africa. Wherever you go, you see them: whenever you see them, they go*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1998, 58-59.

<sup>9</sup> J. Walton & A. Pretorius, *Windpumps in South Africa. Wherever you go, you see them: whenever you see them, they go*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1998, 62, 66, 68, 69, 71, 72.

One of these, the Malcomess, gained tongue-in-cheek parliamentary recognition when the then Minister of Agriculture, Hendrik Schoeman, christened Mr John Malcomess, Progressive Federal Party MP for Central Port Elizabeth, ‘Windpump’.<sup>10</sup> The Springbok was advertised with pseudo-ecologic appeal as ‘Friends of the Veldt’<sup>11</sup>, with seven small springbuck grazing on open, rather barren Karoo veldt dwarfed by a gigantic steel windpump, inadvertently emphasising the reality of overgrazing that was one of the unforeseen results of the advent of the windpump.

The windpump as site of Afrikaner memories came to life in one of only two windpump museums in the world: the Fred Turner Museum in Loeriesfontein (the other being in Batavia, Illinois).

The impetus for establishing a windpump museum on the site of the Fred Turner Museum<sup>12</sup> in Loeriesfontein is another exotic thread in the story of the windpump. The windpump museum was the culmination of the 1996 interaction between readers of the *Woongids* (later *WoonBurger*) supplement to *Die Burger* and James Walton, a migrant from Yorkshire who had emigrated to Lesotho in 1947 where he had been appointed Deputy Director of Education.<sup>13</sup> After his retirement in 1960, he became the managing director of the publishing company Longmans South Africa in Cape Town, and also kept himself busy with one of his lifelong interests, vernacular architecture.<sup>14</sup> According to Van Bart, Walton was a scholar of world renown in this field. Most of his publications about vernacular architecture in Africa, Europe and the Far East were pioneering works. The University of Natal awarded him an honorary degree in Architecture for his contribution to South African vernacular architecture, and he received a medal of honour from the Genootskap vir Afrikaanse Volkskunde (Society of Afrikaans Folklore) of the University of Stellenbosch. Walton was a founding member and lifelong honorary president of the South African Vernacular Architecture Society and, in July 1999, its *VASSA Journal* devoted its entire first edition to his culture-historical contribution.<sup>15</sup>

Walton’s interest in windpumps began when he commented on *Woongids* articles about the restoration of three windmills in Cape Town: De Nieuwe Molen, Mostert se Meul and Onze Molen (The New Mill, Mostert’s Mill and Our Mill).<sup>16</sup> André Pretorius remembers the eighty-five year old cultural historian saying that large parts of the interior of South Africa would never have been amenable to agriculture were it not for the contribution of the windpump, and that the history of the development of these regions should be documented. Although he had no first-hand knowledge of it, he immediately began to do research on the subject, corresponding with local and American windpump manufacturers about technical information. Pretorius assisted by taking photos.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Die Burger* 26 April 1986, 11.

<sup>11</sup> J. Walton & A. Pretorius, *Windpumps in South Africa. Wherever you go, you see them: whenever you see them, they go*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1998, 73.

<sup>12</sup> In the 1970’s the site of the Fred Turner Museum and the erstwhile school were donated to the Municipality of Loeriesfontein so that an agricultural museum could be established. The site was later also used to house the windpump museum.

<sup>13</sup> P. Oberholster, ‘Reminiscences of the early days in the study of South African vernacular architecture’, in: *VASSA Journal*, 1 July 1999, 5.

<sup>14</sup> M. van Bart, ‘Yorkshireman het Suid-Afrikaners geleer hoe om te bewaar’, *VASSA Journal*, 1 July 1999, 9-12.

<sup>15</sup> Editor’s foreword, *VASSA Journal*, 1 July 1999, 3.

<sup>16</sup> M. van Bart, ‘Yorkshireman het Suid-Afrikaners geleer hoe om te bewaar’, *VASSA Journal*, 1 July 1999, 11.

<sup>17</sup> A. Pretorius, ‘A belated friendship’, in: *VASSA Journal*, 1 July 1999, 17.

Walton then decided to write a series of articles about windpumps for the *WoonBurger*. The unprecedented reactions from readers led to some more articles, culminating in the publication of the first book on the subject, *Windpumps in South Africa*.<sup>18</sup> The enthusiastic participation by readers of the newspaper shows that South Africans took an active part in creating memories, and memories as ‘memory experiences’, a term coined by Mary Warnock.<sup>19</sup> This was a democratisation of both history content and history practice that was not orchestrated by academics [and was for that very reason successful – see for instance the attempt to democratise history in the USA in the seventies and eighties that did not always succeed because it was hijacked by academics who could not get rid of their ‘habits of professionalization’].<sup>20</sup> According to Van Bart, the entire edition of 500 copies of *Windpumps in South Africa* was sold, and he stresses that Walton wanted the book to be translated into Afrikaans for the rural Afrikaans people, something that unfortunately did not happen.<sup>21</sup> There is food for thought here: it was a native of Yorkshire who committed this Afrikaner memory site to paper, and the resulting book was available only in English.

The people of Loeriesfontein, who established the museum, did so in reaction to Walton’s appeal in the *WoonBurger* to the farming community to establish a windpump museum.<sup>22</sup> For the community of Loeriesfontein, which in 2000 had about 2.000 inhabitants, the museum was an opportunity to bring their town to the attention of tourists. The inhabitants, and specifically the Board of Trustees of the museum and the participants in the project *Aksie Windpompe* (a group of enthusiastic community members), had as goal the preservation of some of the more interesting windpumps.<sup>23</sup> *Aksie Windpompe* turned the museum into a space where the idea of ‘shared authority’ could be realised. It is an example of the ‘dialogue driven’ museum to which Rosenzweig and Thelen refer in their work.<sup>24</sup> In the context of a dialogue driven museum the ‘neglected history’ is reclaimed ‘in tandem with the people the history is about’ so that ‘personal memory and testimony inform and are informed by historical context and scholarship’.<sup>25</sup> The museum project was also enthusiastically supported by farmers and townspeople who helped to find and even to transport windpumps. Donors’ and sponsors’ names were put on plaques at the windpumps.<sup>26</sup>

According to the *WoonBurger*<sup>27</sup> six restored windpumps had been erected by September 1997 – and all had been donated. By 1998 there were twelve,<sup>28</sup> and a year later seventeen.<sup>29</sup> When Attie Gerber made a television programme for the South

<sup>18</sup> J. Walton & A. Pretorius, *Windpumps in South Africa*. Wherever you go, you see them: whenever you see them, they go. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1998.

<sup>19</sup> S. Crane, ‘Introduction *Museums and memory*’, in: S. Crane (ed.). *Museums and memory*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press 2000, 2.

<sup>20</sup> R. Rosenzweig & D. Thelen, *The presence of the past. Popular uses of history in American life*. New York: Columbia University Press 1998, 4.

<sup>21</sup> M. van Bart, ‘Yorkshireman het Suid-Afrikaners geleer hoe om te bewaar’, *VASSA Journal*, 1 July 1999, 11.

<sup>22</sup> M. van Bart, ‘Yorkshireman het Suid-Afrikaners geleer hoe om te bewaar’, *VASSA Journal*, 1 July 1999, 12.

<sup>23</sup> *Die Burger*, 22 July 2000, 4.

<sup>24</sup> R. Rosenzweig & D. Thelen, *The presence of the past. Popular uses of history in American life*. New York: Columbia University Press 1998, 182.

<sup>25</sup> Kuo Wei Tchen, quoted in R. Rosenzweig & D. Thelen, *The presence of the past. Popular uses of history in American life*. New York: Columbia University Press 1998, 182.

<sup>26</sup> *Die Burger*, 22 July 2000, 4.

<sup>27</sup> *Die Burger*, 22 July 2000, 4.

<sup>28</sup> A. Pretorius, ‘Skaars windpomp van Rûens na Boesmanland’, in: *Die Burger*, 8 Augustus 1998, 2.

<sup>29</sup> A. Pretorius, ‘A belated friendship’, in: *VASSA Journal*, 1 July 1999, 17-18.

African Broadcasting Company (SABC) about the museum in 2000, the number of windpumps had grown to twenty. By 2001 even overseas specialist magazines such as the *Windmillers Gazette*, published in Rio Vista, Texas, praised the museum for its 21 acquisitions.<sup>30</sup>

The significant role of the windpump museum is highlighted in the text of the television production: ‘When you visit the twenty windpumps currently in the Fred Turner Museum in Loeriesfontein, the anonymous pump standing in lonely splendour in the veldt gains new meaning.’<sup>31</sup> Each windpump’s small history of ‘prosperity and progress, of hardship and decay’ is laden with nostalgia and/or pathos.<sup>32</sup> For instance, George Farmer, a veteran windpump specialist who erects the windpumps at the museum, told the television production team how he had lost a finger while servicing the head of a windpump. Nevertheless he had continued with this trade – at the time when the programme was filmed for more than thirty years – for servicing and repairing windpumps is the trade he learnt from his father and teaches his sons, regardless of the dangers it may involve.

The collection of windpumps should, however, not be seen in isolation. Visitors to the museum can also look at a display illustrating the lifestyle of the *trekboer* (nomadic grazier) of yore. There are artefacts from that era, including a horse mill, a trek wagon and a handmade tent used by sheep farmers, while the peddler and Bible distribution wagon owned by the pioneer Fred Turner also forms part of the collection. Visitors can even order typical Bushmanland dishes such as freshly baked salt-rising bread and juicy mutton to be prepared in the traditional *asbosskerm* (shelter made with lye bushes) with its clay ovens<sup>33</sup> and in this way participate in the cultural legacy of the *trekboere*. The windpump is presented within the context of the museum collection in its entirety as technology which made further colonial expansion and settlement possible and also supported it.

The windpump is not, however, the only technology that gave access to water commemorated by the museum. In due course the drilling machine, inevitably a part of the windpump industry, also made its appearance at the museum. My personal bond with water technology comes via the borehole culture, as my grandfather on my mother’s side, his son and grandson were all involved in it (even to the extent of having an inherited metal spring divining stick). Some of my earliest memories are about my mother telling me stories about her childhood, stories that were imbedded in a nomadic existence in caravans, moving from borehole to borehole as my grandfather paved the way for ever more windpumps, at first with a percussion drill and later with a combination drill. I remember being impressed by my grandmother’s resourcefulness in maintaining a neat, clean and hospitable home despite restricted means and facilities. In addition to being a driller, my grandfather Chris was also a water diviner. When a drilling project was not successful he would exempt farmers from financial obligations for boreholes he had guaranteed would produce water. According to my mother, he was quite successful with his metal spring divining stick in drilling projects in the Northern Cape, but she also remembers that he was less successful in Namibia as he did not know

<sup>30</sup> *Die Burger*, 3 March 2001.

<sup>31</sup> A. Gerber (director), *As die wind waai*. Television production for SABC2 broadcast on Sunday, 6 August 2000.

<sup>32</sup> I use Reinhold Niebuhr’s definition of pathos: ‘Pathos is that element in an historic situation which elicits pity, but neither deserves admiration nor warrants contrition. Pathos arises from fortuitous cross-purposes and confusions in life for which no reason can be given, or guilt ascribed. Suffering caused by purely natural evil is the clearest instance of the purely pathetic’. R. Niebuhr, ‘Preface’, in: R. Niebuhr. *The irony of American history*. London: Nisbet & Co. 1952, ix.

<sup>33</sup> *Die Burger*, 22 July 2000, 4.

that area very well.<sup>34</sup> He continued with this pastime even after his retirement from drilling boreholes.

Boreholes as reference point for emotional landmarks, or ‘distinctive emotional life-events that associate external landmarks with autobiography, thereby forming internal reference points’,<sup>35</sup> are not, however, as imposing as the iconic windpump and as far as I know no written account of the South African borehole / percussion drill culture exists. The only storage and conservation space which commemorates it is the Fred Turner Museum. In 2001, the museum received a valuable donation from ‘a son of Loeriesfontein’, Bertie Hoon: an old-fashioned percussion drill machine mounted on a truck of similar age. It is a remarkable donation when one considers the trouble that was taken to transport the machine from the farm Paddaputs, 35 km from Aus in the district of Karasburg in Namibia, to Loeriesfontein, a distance of 800 km. Fifty years before this event the Keystone drill and Chevrolet truck, at that time the property of Mr De Mann, had become stuck in the sand dunes where it had stayed half buried in the sand until it could be towed to a loading area. The goodwill with which one Mr Koos Kearney made his truck available, the way the chairman of the agricultural co-op, Floors Brand, co-ordinated the process and organised volunteers, and the determination of the said volunteers attest the importance for the community of preserving water technology as collective memory site.<sup>36</sup>

### III

The motivation of the Afrikaner to take so much trouble to establish and preserve a locus of Afrikaner memory will bear reflection; however, I would like to pose the question whether this intentional ‘participating creation of history’ is part of a broader discourse on memory experiences occurring after 1994.

An increasing awareness that the rainbow nation was not being realised brought the question of restitution more and more to the foreground. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), especially, emphasised the idea of various forms of restitution. Land reform and financial reparation are the most relevant but by no means the only mechanisms of restitution suggested and implemented after 1994. Symbolic reparation occurred in the arts and in the rewriting of history. According to the TRC symbolic reparation refers to the mechanisms facilitating the communal process of remembering and commemorating the pain and triumphs of the past. The aim of symbolic reparation is to restore the honour of victims and survivors and includes excavations, gravestones, memorials, monuments and name changes of streets and public facilities. According to the TRC, reparations should also be seen as a national project and multifaceted process.<sup>37</sup> After the institutionalisation of the democratic government, symbolic reparation was made possible by the redistribution of resources as part of the transformation of institutions such as museums. This transformation also occurred under pressure from the state and previously marginalised communities.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> S.E.J. Bakker and A. Bakker, Personal interview, Somerset-West, September 2007.

<sup>35</sup> Oakley quoted in G. Gartner, *PowerPoint presentation about emotional landmarks*. Presented at GeoGeras, Vienna, 2005.

<sup>36</sup> *Die Burger*, 3 March 2001.

<sup>37</sup> Z. Minty, ‘Post-apartheid public art in Cape Town: Symbolic reparations and public space’, in: *Urban Studies*, 43 (2) 2006, 423.

<sup>38</sup> Z. Minty, ‘Post-apartheid public art in Cape Town: Symbolic reparations and public space’, in: *Urban Studies*, 43 (2) 2006, 425.

In 'Post-*apartheid* public art in Cape Town: symbolic reparations and public space' Zayd Minty highlights various symbolic reparation projects such as the District Six Museum, which has become a successful model of a community museum since 1994. The museum examines the history, heritage, changed landscape and socio-economic changes of District Six in Cape Town through the memories of its former residents. These elements are all brought to play in the healing and transformation of the city.<sup>39</sup> The methodology that Minty attributes to the District Six Museum is typical of participatory history writing: oral histories, creating spaces where dialogue can take place, interactiveness, community participation, co-authorship and the use of tangible forms. Another symbolic reparation project, Please Turn Over (PTO), undertaken in 1999 by Public Eye (a non-profit collective of artist-curators creating public art projects), appropriated monuments via 'interventions' which could be removed quickly. For instance, on 23 September 1999 Beezy Baily transformed a statue of Louis Botha into an *abakhweta* or Xhosa initiate coming home after his circumcision.<sup>40</sup> Project Y350 was launched in 2002 and is based on research by Leslie Witz on the way racial identity was constructed in South Africa and the way white supremacy was strengthened by the Van Riebeeck celebrations in 1952. The project took the form of a conference on commemorative practices, displays about the Van Riebeeck celebrations and a public art intervention commemorating resistance to the celebrations.

Symbolic reparation included a wide spectrum of interventions which documented marginalised histories and re-contextualised existing areas of memory. It especially challenged fossilised and established memories and memory sites. Within this context of questioning, rewriting and documenting together with a redeployment of resources to archiving bodies, the conceptualisation of the windpump museum and its implementation as part of a colonial installation come as a surprise. It does have points of contact with the District Six Museum – as documentation facility and culmination of community directed methodologies – but where does the museum as memory site position itself vis-à-vis symbolic reparation? A more inclusive approach that gives recognition to other historical perspectives on the windpump and does not focus exclusively on the pioneer and his descendants would be more in keeping with the present discourse on symbolic reparation.

Memories are often the method of presentation in Afrikaans literature, and a good example of symbolic reparation of space as theme of a novel is Etienne van Heerden's *Toorberg*.<sup>41</sup> A decision has to be made around the borehole about Druppeltjie du Pisanie's fate. The Moolmans make a unanimous decision, and Druppeltjie's tragic death is the first family decision in which the Skaamfamilie (family of shame) and the other Moolmans participate together. Framed within Kaatjie Danster's memories this story, in which water is an obvious theme, is illuminated from more than one perspective.

Water technology as memory site seems to be multifaceted in Afrikaner memory – sometimes an area marked by exclusivity and pioneer narrative, and sometimes marked by irony. By the end of the twentieth century water technology in literature has become an area of symbolic reparation and inclusivity, but the question remains whether the museum as institute of memory will follow in the footsteps of authors.

<sup>39</sup> Z. Minty, 'Post-*apartheid* public art in Cape Town: Symbolic reparations and public space', in: *Urban Studies*, 43 (2) 2006, 427-428.

<sup>40</sup> Z. Minty, 'Post-*apartheid* public art in Cape Town: Symbolic reparations and public space', in: *Urban Studies*, 43 (2) 2006, 432.

<sup>41</sup> E. van Heerden, *Toorberg*. Cape Town: Tafelberg 1986.

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## Glorious Gables

*Hans Franssen*

### Introduction

The correctness of the term ‘Cape Dutch architecture’ has often been questioned, but a better and clearer one has never been agreed upon. Museum director Dr. Jan van der Meulen, in a doctoral thesis at a German university in the sixties, tried to prove that it should rather be called Cape German. As a result he was often referred to as ‘dokter Von der Moilen’.

The ‘Dutch’ of the term was probably introduced by English speakers and must have referred to ‘the architecture of the Dutch period’ rather than suggesting a ‘Dutch’ stylistic origin. Such an origin – apart from a certain German influence, if you wish – can certainly be detected in certain details, like gable design and door and window types, but is not at issue in our context. The Cape was Dutch, and not German.

And if there are two things that characterize early Cape colonial architecture (if we must use an alternative term), it must be its highly recognizable quality and its strong homogeneity. Within a few decades the little settlement at the Cape developed a domestic architecture that has an unmistakably local character, of which the highly uniform elements persisted for over a century and a half – well into the British period, in places well into the second half of the nineteenth century. There may well be similarities with domestic architecture in parts of Europe, but no Cape farmstead or townhouse can be mistaken for anything similar over there, not even in the Netherlands or its other former colonies.

Due to this high degree of uniformity (the causes of which are discussed further on) it is comparatively easy to describe the main elements of this style.

These are, first of all, its standardized plan forms and, secondly, the decorative ‘overlay’, notably the gable. The gable is often regarded as the outstanding feature of Cape Dutch architecture. But this is not entirely correct. A Cape farmhouse without a centre gable (and there are hundreds of them) is still undeniably Cape Dutch. But without what we call the ‘letter-of-the-alphabet’ plan it certainly is not. But granted: where ‘places of memory’ – iconic features – are discussed, the chances are we are referring to the Cape gable. Let us therefore first get the development of the unique wing-type plan formation out of the way, while being aware that, while it is this that makes a building ‘Cape Dutch’, in itself it never became a ‘place of memory’.



Figure 10.1 The real thing. The homestead of Navarre between Somerset West and Stellenbosch, built in 1814. The real ‘place of memory’: the face of the house is its gable, not the thatch roof, the casement windows and the H-plan, which are standardized. (Photo: author)

## Standardization

Right across North-Western Europe – Jutland, Schleswig-Holstein, Holland, Flanders, but elsewhere, too – it is not unusual for farmhouses to show an elongated, shed-like form, sometimes with living and working areas under one and the same roof. But these can be of varying width and roof height. In the Cape colony, on the other hand, farmsteads but also village dwellings from an early stage developed a standardized form with a uniform width and roof span of just over six metres. Initially they were simple rows of rooms, that could be extended as more rooms were required. In order for such a ‘train’ – as one or two of such long rows of rooms are in fact known locally – ‘letter-of-the-alphabet’ (also called ‘dominoes’) plans were developed. The T-plan had a kitchen wing extending from the front room towards the back. When even this plan did not provide enough space, two more wings could be added sideways to the ‘tail’, yielding the celebrated H-shaped plan – for all intents a classy double-deep, block-shaped house, with two façades but covered by two parallel roofs with narrow open side courts. In 1825, the traveller Marten Douwes Teenstra saw near Caledon what was clearly an H-house being built, and expressed his surprise at what he thought were ‘two separate houses’ that the farmers built for themselves.<sup>1</sup> There were also U-shaped farmhouses with two ‘tails’ (particularly in the Cape Peninsula), and houses shaped like a small ‘h’ or the letter ‘pi’.

As we saw, all these plan forms, and also the elongated outbuildings (sheds, wine ‘cellars’ etc.), had a width and a roof span of about six metres in common, about five metres inside width allowing for spacious, multi-purpose rooms. Such standardization

<sup>1</sup> M.D. Teenstra, *De vruchten mijner werkzaamheden, gedurende mijne reize over de Kaap de Goede Hoop naar Java*. Van Riebeeck-Vereniging 1943.

of ground-plans is unknown anywhere else in the Western world or the colonies. How did it originate? There is something undeniably deliberate and rational about this aspect of what in other respects is a true vernacular building mode, an ‘architecture without architects’, as Bernard Rudofsky called it in his epochmaking exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1964.

It is tempting to ascribe this standardization to an advice or perhaps even an instruction from the side of the East India Company, early during the existence of the little colony. Could it have been issued by commissioner-general Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Drakestein, who called at the Cape in 1685 in order to inspect and regulate the settlement in several areas? Van Reede had acquired a great deal of administrative and practical experience in other colonies, and was a widely respected scientist. At the Cape, he played an important role in the foundation of the town of Stellenbosch, intended to impose some secular and religious control in the outlying districts, and it is known that he felt strongly about proper accommodation of the colonists.

It is likely that it was Van Reede who advised to apply standardization, with uniform roof trusses and standard lengths of beams and floor-boards. The resulting way of building – apart from the pleasing proportions of wall-to-roof and of fenestration it produced – enabled simple village builders to erect sturdy and dignified abodes without the help of skilled architects, and it survived for a full century and a half or more. It could even be used in the erection of churches (Tulbagh) and drostdy buildings (Swellendam). In the small towns that started to emerge the style also produced a highly harmonious streetscape

Indeed, it is this plan-form that became the essential feature of Cape Dutch architecture. But this unique way of building never produced ‘places of memory’. Nobody in later years would erect a building with thatched-roof wings of six metres width in order to serve an iconic function, as status symbol or to inspire national pride. For one thing, it would look far too modest to impress!

## The gable

Although it may not be the essential feature of Cape architecture, its ‘face’ is characterized by what is in fact no more than an addition, as a cherry on the top: the gable. From the beginning, it must have been meant as a sort of icon, as a feature that distinguished the homestead of a proud farmer from that of his neighbour, and in more recent times, too, was used to revive some of that identity, even if mostly out of context. Politically correct cultural historians have interpreted the six gables of an H-shaped homestead radiating their presence to the front, the sides and the back, as a symbol of the ‘conquest of the land’. All the more so, then, for the Rhodes-remake of Groote Schuur, which boasts double that number of (‘revival’) gables!

In essence, a gable is a very common and simple architectural detail. The word gable or ‘gewel’ is probably related to the Dutch word ‘gaffel’ which refers to the forked pole that supports the roof ridge of a primitive Medieval house. It denotes the upper part of an end wall that contains the roof-end and rises above it slightly. In the towns and cities of North-Western Europe, where houses usually face the street with their narrow ends, there are literally thousands of gables. (In the Netherlands, the word ‘gevel’ now refers to the entire façade, and the upper part is a ‘topgevel’.) These triangular, sloping features lend themselves perfectly for decorative enrichment: bell-gables, ‘neck’ gables, etc., which in their design closely mirror the current art-historical styles.



Figure 10.2 To hell with all these places of memory! Here the loss of the gables is somewhat compensated by the Victorian veranda with imported cast-iron work. Nabygelegen is situated in the Bovlei, near Wellington, not far from where the Afrikaans ‘language movements’ took place at around the same time. (Photo: author)

But these are all ‘end gables’. What distinguishes our Cape farmsteads and townhouses – which without exception face sideways – are not their end-gables but their centre gables. Strictly speaking centre gables are not gables at all, but could be called ‘full-height flush dormers’. In North-Western Europe such gables are not unknown but, like the domino plan, they are nowhere – not even in former colonial areas – the general feature they became at the Cape. Our Cape houses, in rural areas, in towns, and even in the streets of Cape Town before the advent of double-storey houses in the late eighteenth century, always faced the approach or the street with their long side. Such long and perhaps slightly monotonous façades with their rows of sash or casement windows called out for an accent in its centre, above the entrance. Precisely when this became common practice is not certain. It is unlikely that frivolities like gables were part of Van Reede’s instructions. The oldest dated gable that has been preserved is that of Joostenberg, dated 1756, and although this is already a fully fledged ‘Baroque’ concave-convex gable, there cannot have been many such gables from before that date, or else at least a few of them would have been preserved.

Joostenberg was indeed the beginning of the ‘golden age’ of gable building as a feature, but it was preceded by simpler, part-height dormers, as Stade’s panoramas of Cape Town and Stellenbosch show as early as 1710. European stylistic trends were not immediately followed, but show a delay of a few decades, exactly as could be expected. The Baroque and Rococo styles produced more and more curvilinear shapes, from Meerlust (1776) to the elaborate design of Vredenburg (1789). After that, Neo-classicism made its appearance, with its more rectilinear designs, pilasters and pediments, yielding masterpieces such as Nektar (1819) and Navarre (1815, fig. 1). The gable of Lanzerac (1830) shows that the gable style had lost none of its beauty and dignity by that time. After that, however, it started to lose its vigour, although in towns such as Worcester, Robertson and Montagu it remained in use until the late 1880s.

It was the advent of a new industrially produced building material, corrugated iron, that spelled the end of the gable style. It is striking that the descendants of the people of the Cape who developed the style as part of their architectural identity, displayed so little respect for the gables as that heritage.

Travelling salesmen talked owner after owner into replacing their thatch roofs with the new material. It is true that corrugated iron presents less of a fire hazard and is more durable, needs a lesser slope and therefore allows for higher walls and loft spaces with small windows. But it also required the clipping of gables in order for the roofing sheets to rest on the walls. This did not unduly worry many owners and hundreds of the finest gables unceremoniously bit the dust.

### The gable revival

It is ironic that, while descendants of the gable builders were busy destroying their heritage, the style experienced a large-scale revival at the hands of English-speaking people. This could partly be ascribed to the fact that in England the upheavals of the industrial revolution had taken place half a century earlier and had given rise to a culture of veneration for pre-industrial monuments, also in the colonies. At the initiative of aesthetes like William Morris and John Ruskin, the Arts and Crafts Movement was founded, and the Society for the Preservation of Historic Buildings and the National Trust all endeavoured to study and protect what was perceived as the simple beauty and honest craftsmanship of pre-industrial architecture.

The Cape Afrikaners, on the other hand, welcomed with open arms the first, belated signs of the industrial era. The Cape had to wait for the restoration of Groot Constantias after the fire of 1925 (by the architect F.K. Kendall) for a preservation ethic to be established. Even among the Afrikaans language activists of the late nineteenth century, the ‘taalbewegings’ (language movements), the ‘Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners’ (Brotherhood of True Afrikaners), and in *Die Patriot* and early editions of *Die Brandwag* and *Die Huisgenoot*, there is little evidence of an interest in traditional architecture. There is an interesting parallel here with the way in which the Brown people of the Cape show so little interest in their old mission towns like Mamre or Genadendal, so much admired by tourists for their ‘picturesqueness’ – presumably because it reminds the villagers of a time from which they want to move away.

But while the actual conservation of the Cape Dutch heritage itself had hardly been contemplated at the beginning of the twentieth century, its ‘revival’ had already begun in earnest. Its great ‘pioneer’, the architect Herbert Baker, was well acquainted with the British Arts and Crafts Movement and particularly with the highly eclectic Queen Anne style, and therefore had a predilection for historic architectural styles. This does not mean, however, that he had a sound understanding of the Cape vernacular and could do justice to it in his own designs. Baker did have a sympathetic patron in the person of Cecil Rhodes, who in 1893 commissioned him to remodel his own property Groot Schuur and in doing so to make abundant use of ‘Old Dutch’ elements to satisfy his own romantic ‘Arts and Craft’ ideals – for which Rhodes had initially shown more understanding than Baker. The end result shows little similarity to any of the earlier appearances of the ‘Barn’, not even the attractive, dignified late-Georgian form prior to Baker’s remodelling. Gables there are in great numbers, of the most elaborate design of course, as well as details like small-pane windows with shutters that are not really meant to shut, barley-sugar chimneys, semicircular upper-storey windows as well as the large relief on the centre gable, none of which really succeeded in recalling the folk style. It was also far from ‘Barbaric’, as Rhodes said Baker could make it.



Figure 10.3 ‘Anything the Boers can do, we can do better’. A forest of gables crown Kelvin Grove in Newlands, designed in 1897-99 by Herbert Baker for J.C. Brimer. (Photo: author)

Baker expressed his intentions as follows:

The charm of the Cape Dutch homesteads lies much more in their larger qualities than in their picturesque detail. The fact cannot be too much emphasized as a warning to imitators that unless they understand and work in the spirit of the old builders, they will assuredly fail to advance and establish this or any other style in South Africa. We hear much nowadays of an original South African style. It will never be achieved through copying and imitating borrowed detail, but only through impersonal subordination to the larger ideals and conception of architecture.<sup>2</sup>

Although it took Baker sixteen years to demonstrate any true understanding of the ideals expressed here, and during that time very little evidence can be found of the ‘spirit of the old builders’ in his work, one can only agree with the fine sentiments he expressed.

Apart from the (badly understood) admiration for the ‘larger qualities’ of Cape architecture, what was exactly the real intention of its (flawed) use at the hands of Rhodes and Baker and of all the dozens of prominent fellow English-speakers? After Unification in 1910, there was a noticeable tendency towards the creation and protection of a South African cultural heritage that was to encourage the development of a national pride. A kind of patronage of old Cape architecture was part of this, even to the point of becoming a status symbol among the English patriciate, including among the mining ‘Randlords’ up North. It was one of the latter, Sir Lionel Phillips, encouraged by his wife Florrie, a Colesberg girl, who in 1917 bought the old farm Vergelegen and had it restored. Rhodes himself bought up fruit farms here and there, preferably with old homesteads on them.

The application, seldom very successful, of Cape Dutch stylistic elements, long remained the work of English patrons and architects.

<sup>2</sup> H. Baker, ‘The architectural needs of South Africa’, in: *The State*, 1909.

Kelvin Grove in Newlands was built by Herbert Baker for one J.C. Rimer and was so richly provided with revival elements – not all typical of the Cape: wainscoting, decorative fireplaces – that the end result could hardly be called a tribute to the local vernacular. In 1905, Baker built the imposing villa Rust-en-Vrede in Muizenberg, this time for Rhodes's friend Abe Bailey. Despite an excess of gables, the architect here managed to remain somewhat closer to the folk style. It was perhaps only at Welgelegen in Mowbray that he really succeeded in capturing some of the old style they all admired so much – perhaps only because much had remained of the original building.

It may count in Baker's favour that his best architectural creation in this country, the Union Buildings in Pretoria, owes in its general design little to the traditional style. But it is also significant that the main initiators of this building were the Afrikaner leaders Louis Botha and Jannie Smuts, who clearly saw no need to use mock gables for the purpose of nation building.

However, the eclectic Cape Dutch revival style long remained in use by English-speakers, perhaps also as a sign of goodwill towards their Afrikaans compatriots – especially after the end of the Anglo-Boer War. For several decades there is little evidence of a genuine interest by Afrikaners themselves. Even the first serious studies published on the subject had to come from English authors: Alys Fane Trotter,<sup>3</sup> Dorothea Fairbridge,<sup>4</sup> F.K. Kendall, G.E. Pearse.<sup>5</sup> Their work was continued by De Bosdari, Mary Cook and James Walton.

### Inspiration for national pride

The most absurd use of the gable style as 'places of memory' is that which occurred in Kwazulu-Natal during the 'thirties, when the painter Gwelo Goodman was commissioned to embellish the headquarters of the Tongaat sugar plant with bad copies of well-known Cape Dutch buildings, or new designs in the old style, both for their offices and workers dwellings. It was much appreciated by members of the Natal 'sugarocracy', and used with gusto – and obviously out of context. Perhaps its use there can be seen as a case of cultural appropriation more than of real admiration.

The first signs of an awareness of the potential of the Cape Dutch style to inspire a national pride appeared in the thirties and are undoubtedly related to the advent of Afrikaner nationalism. The official residences of both the Transvaal administrator and the prime minister simply had to reflect the Cape style. It is true that for Overvaal (1937) the design had to be entrusted to one V.S. Rees-Poole: a neat building with good copies of Cape windows and a curvilinear gable over the centre of its two-storey façade – something unknown in the Cape vernacular.

But for the design of Libertas (1940) at last an Afrikaans architect was found when Gerard Moerdijk (admittedly the son of a Dutch immigrant!) won a competition out of fifty participants, and produced a well-proportioned flat-roofed double-storey. A similar recipe was used for the Stellenbosch city hall (1941, the work of 'captain' Elsworth and Walgate), perhaps slightly more 'correct' than Libertas, but frankly boring and hardly inspiring.

<sup>3</sup> A.F. Trotter, *Old colonial houses of the Cape of Good Hope*. London: Batsford 1900.

<sup>4</sup> D. Fairbridge, *Historic houses of South Africa*. London: Oxford University Press 1922.

<sup>5</sup> G.F. Pearse, *Eighteenth century architecture in South Africa*. London: Batsford 1933.



Figure 10.4 Cape Dutch ‘Revival’? Thousands of houses like this are found in our towns, with various phantasy gables rising above their roofs like so many flags on broomsticks. (Photo: author)

Were Overvaal and Libertas successful as ‘places of memory’? The most powerful such icon in the country is surely the Voortrekker Monument (1938-49), the work of the same Gerard Moerdijk. Here, the architect managed to create a contemporary sort of Art Deco design of near-fascist dimensions and symbolism that surely succeeds much better, without resorting to thematic references to the old Cape such as little gables or small-paned windows – thanks also to ample funding!

## Conclusion

Literally thousands of little gables can be found gracing the end walls of projecting *stoepkamers* of town houses from the 1920sand 1930s, with decoratively shaped parapets along the sloping roof line.

They might be very remote descendants of Meerlust or Joostenberg, but they are hardly ‘symbols of national pride’. The ‘Cape’ centre gable remains a popular motif in our more affluent suburbs, often monstrosities on structures that owe little or nothing to traditional plan forms, often featuring sash windows with shutters that are screwed to the wall.

Today it is generally accepted that the Cape Dutch heritage, or what survives of it, should qualify for preservation and where necessary for careful restoration. Authoritative studies have been undertaken, inventories compiled, books written. Expert architects are available. Finances often present a problem, which can result in the creation of modern wine-tasting facilities and even Disneyland features where entire farmyards are turned into hotels and entertainment facilities. The existing conservation agencies do not always have the power to control this sort of development.

But that the traditional Cape Dutch homestead, and more in particular the Cape gable, was and still is a significant icon, a ‘place of memory’, is certain. It was always intended in the first place, perhaps not to fulfil an iconic role a quarter millennium later, but certainly to lend a recognizable identity to an authentic rural style of architecture peculiar to a settlement in a far-flung corner of the world, and to individual dwellings in

their own right. That the style, and its gables, managed to do this so well is a tribute to these pieces of masonry and plasterwork by nameless plasterers. Who they were exactly may never be known. It is often maintained, politically correctly, that they were slaves, or coloured craftsmen, and this may well be the case. It cannot be denied however that the designs are genuinely European, and not Oriental in origin.

It is all the more striking, therefore, that the very communities who created them, later cared so little for them and left it to another nation to give them an iconic status.

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## Memories of Heroines: Bitter Cups and Sourdough

*Lou-Marié Kruger*

### Introduction

To write about concentration camps as places of remembrance is an exercise that any curious psychologist will find interesting. While the task of the psychologist is to listen to every memory with earnest compassion, she also has to regard what she is told with suspicion. The psychological undertaking starts with a focus on the conscious memory, but attention is then diverted to those things that are not yet remembered. The project about places of remembrance becomes the project of forgotten places – the holes, the cracks, the gaps, the pauses, the hidden, and, especially, the silences.<sup>1</sup>

When concentration camps are spoken about in this project of forgotten places, it is eventually less about the concentration camps themselves than about the way in which such places become places of remembrance – or not. The question is not so much about WHAT you remember – that is merely the beginning of the process. Other questions become more significant: Who is doing the remembering? When do they remember? Why do they remember? For whom do they remember? And, of course: what are they forgetting?

### Waves of memory and forgetting

With these questions in mind, and with regard to memories of concentration camps in the South African War (1899-1902), the first question is when, and under what circumstances, are these camps remembered? Historians and social commentators<sup>2</sup> give a clear indication of how memories – and forgetting – of the camps come and go in waves.

In the first wave of remembrance (1902-1905) it is immediately apparent how self-conscious the remembering was, and how purposeful the attempts not to forget. E.N. Neethling, in her 1902 account of the war significantly called *Should we forget?* gives the following reasons for writing the book:

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<sup>1</sup> L-M. Kruger, 'A tribute to 150 years of Sigmund Freud. Not mastering the mind: Freud and the "forgotten material" of Psychology', in: *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in South Africa* 14, 2006, 1-12.

<sup>2</sup> A. Grundlingh, 'War, wordsmiths and the "volk": Afrikaans historical writing on the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 and the war in Afrikaans consciousness, 1902-1990', in: E. Lehmann & E. Reckwitz (eds.), *Mfecane to Boer War: Versions of South African history*. Essen: Blane Eule 1992; L-M. Kruger, 'Gender, community and identity: Women and Afrikaner nationalism in the "Volksmoeder" discourse of Die Boerevrou (1919-1931)', MA thesis, University of Cape Town 1991; L. Stanley, *Mourning becomes. Post/ memory, commemoration and the concentration camps of the South African War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press 2006; E. van Heyningen, *The creation of a mythology, historiography and the concentration camps of the South African War, 1899-1902*, 2007.

... to induce all good men and women to see and acknowledge the horror, the wickedness of war ... so that we realise that we, Afrikanders of the republics and the colonies from the Cape to the Zambesi, are today, more than we ever were before, ONE PEOPLE.<sup>3</sup>

Neethling's plea not to forget, even in the early stages, seems to be part of a nationalist project. In the far more emotional Dutch edition of her book, published in 1917 and aimed at Afrikaans readers, there is a bitter command on the title page:

NB: This book is not for those who want to forget.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the many books and pamphlets about the war were either written or compiled by white middle class South African women.<sup>5</sup> Van Heyningen observed that women's writings in the form of memoirs, diaries and reports play an unusually prominent part in camp historiography.<sup>6</sup> In these books, the language of remembrance, even in the titles, is mostly intimate, emotional and dramatic: 'brunt of the war and where it fell', 'life and suffering', 'wanderings and trials', 'women's sorrow', 'the grief of mothers and the pain of children', 'war without glamour', 'aunt Alie's diary'.

It seems to be no coincidence that women were the ones documenting memories. In Totius's 1915 ballad about an old farmer and his life before and after the Boer War<sup>7</sup> there is a description of the farmer's bride (or could it be an instruction for her?).

I am just a farmer's bride  
All else I have set aside  
No young man should have a doubt  
I am what I am inside and out.  
But I have two arms, plump and strong  
Ready to labour all day long.

I am just a farmer's bride  
Schoolwork I have set aside  
When they start politicking  
I just listen but say nothing.  
But one day I will tell the tale  
Of what took place in the Transvaal.

Totius's farmer's bride promises innocence, sincerity, naivety, and hard work, and undertakes not to be too clever or politically outspoken. But at the same time she promises to be the keeper of memories.

That they as women *will* be remembered is a theme that runs through many women's depictions of themselves. Johanna Brandt, one of the chief custodians of memory, writes in her 1905 account of the Irene concentration camp:

<sup>3</sup> E.N. Neethling, *Should we forget?* Cape Town: H.A.U.M. 1902, 127-128.

<sup>4</sup> E.N. Neethling, *Vergeten?* Cape Town: Nasionale Pers 1917.

<sup>5</sup> Examples of titles are as follows: E.N. Neethling, *Should we forget?* Cape Town: H. A.U.M. 1902.; W. Riem Vis, *Tien maanden in een vrouwenkamp. Het leven en lijden van een boerengezin in Transvaal tijdens den laatsten oorlog met Engeland*, 1902; J.A. de la Rey, *Mijne omzwervingen en beproevingen gedurende den oorlog*, 1903; J. Brandt, *Het concentratie-kamp van Irene*, 1905; J. Van Helsdingen, *Vrouweleed. Persoonlijke ondervindingen in de boeroorlog*, 1918; L. Boshoff-Liebenberg, *Moedersmart en kinderleed of 18 maande in die konsentrasiekampe*, 1921.

<sup>6</sup> E. van Heyningen, *The creation of a mythology, historiography and the concentration camps of the South African War, 1899-1902*, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Totius, *Trekkerswee*. Potchefstroom: A.H. Koomans 1915.

... and these things must be preserved with all the others, good as well as bad, that worked together to make the Afrikaner tribe a nation. Oh, women of South Africa, write up all your suffering at the hands of our mighty oppressors. May nothing be lost, may nothing be forgotten.<sup>8</sup>

In *Die Boerevrou* (Boer Woman), the first Afrikaans magazine for women, fiery debates raged about who this 'Boer woman' was and what she looked like. For weeks, the chatty letters page (aptly named 'Around the coffee table') of this remarkable magazine was flooded with suggestions of who this 'Boer woman' was, and is.

The catalogue of qualities is endless. The Boer woman is queen, mother, bride, sister, girlfriend, teacher, housekeeper; she is pure, natural, humble, friendly, loving, humorous, shy; she makes soap, brews coffee, bakes rusks, darns stockings, stitches clothes, slaughters sheep, feeds chickens, manages domestic workers and kisses her husband and children. But she is also someone who remembers. A short story that appeared in *Die Boerevrou* in 1922 is telling. It is called 'The memory of a little old bonnet', and the bonnet herself is the narrator:

And the past, lying at my back? What a fertile pasture is it not for the thoughts of a little old bonnet, who has been through so much, and has shared the shifting fates of so many mistresses... It is almost 85 years ago that I saw the first light of day while on the trek out of the old colony. Sannie's mother made me on the long road to the North.

The bonnet tells the love story of Sannie and Piet who come to a tragic end when both are savagely murdered by Zulus in separate horrific incidents. The bonnet is theatrical in her bitter resignation:

Yes, Sannie and Piet are better off – their Trek is over – but for the little old Bonnet? So many shifting fates, and in the end, this little spot in the cold Museum, with memories, memories, nothing but memories!

The creation of memory becomes a focused, almost aggressive project. Andriessen, one of the first writers to coin the phrase 'volksmoeder' (mother of the nation), tells the story of a commandant Fourie's daughter in his 1903 pamphlet, *The women of the Boers*. The girl watched stonily and without tears as British soldiers set her home alight. When the house had burnt down an English officer asked her for a cup of coffee, which she served him herself. Surprised, he asked her why she would do that, as he had just burnt down her house. According to Andriessen she answered:

Only because it will make our people bitterer and braver when they hear that I still gave you coffee after you stole from us everything we owned. Believe me, our people will take revenge for every cup of coffee you took from us.<sup>9</sup>

It is obvious that the brave Boer girl makes sure, in Andriessen's view, that the memory will be bitter. Even as she is performing this task, she is thinking of what 'our people' will have to hear and what effect such stories will have on them. In 1920, the editor of *Die Boerevrou* (Boer Woman), Mabel Malherbe, called on readers to send in their memories:

<sup>8</sup> J. Brandt, *Het concentratie-kamp van Irene*, Cape Town: H.A.U.M. 1905, 123.

<sup>9</sup> W.F. Andriessen, *De vrouwen der boeren*. Place unknown: Publisher unknown 1903.

You must write down what is still fresh in your memory and you must write it like you say it... Who is ready to write these stories? Powerful fare for Boer sons and daughters that will inspire them with lofty ideals and warm love for their country and their people.

We therefore know that women remembered the concentration camps, and that these were early and deliberate memories. It would also appear that they claimed this project of remembrance as part of their identity. So how are we to understand this role adopted by women, women who are normally and typically invisible in patriarchal legends of male conflicts and conquests? To answer this question it is necessary to take a closer look at what is being remembered – and try to pinpoint what is being forgotten.

The stories that women wrote and told about their part in the war are first and foremost about their suffering in the concentration camps. Postma wrote as early as 1918 of a ‘register of horrors’<sup>10</sup> while Van Heyningen remarks that the early tales are ‘accounts of devastation and suffering, tragedy piled upon tragedy.’<sup>11</sup>

It is however interesting that this first wave of stories is in fact not merely a ‘register of horrors’, but can also be described as an inventory of ‘indomitable resistance’.<sup>12</sup> The first people to write about the role of women in the South African War emphasise the pain and suffering of the women in the camps, while at the same time arguing that women were not just passive victims of a dreadful tragedy, but played an active and important part in the war. Women and girls are described as activists who played multiple roles far beyond their heroic and stoical acceptance of the suffering they had to endure in the camps. They were farm managers, soldiers, spies, supporters and letter writers... and they even managed to terrorise the British. What is striking, though, is that underlying all the descriptions of what women did during the war, inside or outside the camps, is a specific idealised image of what women were like or, perhaps, should be like. Neethling describes the purpose of her book as follows:

To write the story of Boer women as they showed themselves during the war, truly, fairly... their strength, their patient endurance, their heroic steadfastness.<sup>13</sup>

In 1905 Johanna Brandt writes the following about the concentration camps:

It was a dreadful life in the camp...and everywhere you witnessed the grief... of mothers as they had to watch their children die, of women fearful and anxious for their men and sons in battle; yet you witnessed their courage, their faith and their fortitude, and their trust in God their father – and you developed a deep respect for them.<sup>14</sup>

Like Brandt, Neethling emphasises the patience and perseverance of the women in the camps:

The patriotism, the patience, the endurance of the women, has been wonderful. To many a one there was no loss, no hardship, no disappointment she feared so much as that her husband would disgrace his men and surrender. We know of a woman in a camp who had lost her only two children and had suffered much; but when her

<sup>10</sup> W. Postma, *Die Boervrou. Moeder van haar volk*. Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers 1918.

<sup>11</sup> E. van Heyningen, *The creation of a mythology, historiography and the concentration camps of the South African War, 1899-1902*, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners. Biography of a people*. Cape Town: Tafelberg 2003, 256.

<sup>13</sup> E.N. Neethling, *Should we forget?* Cape Town: H.A.U.M. 1902.

<sup>14</sup> J. Brandt, *Het concentratie-kamp van Irene*. Cape Town: H.A.U.M. 1905, 11.

husband came in, instead of welcoming him, she burst into tears, exclaiming, 'O, this is the hardest blow of all'.<sup>15</sup>

Andriessen, who wrote up many of the women's stories in *The women of the Boers*, stresses the agency, and even activism, of the women during this time. He tells the story of a Bloemfontein woman who was ordered to bake bread for British soldiers and refused to do so at first, but was forced to comply. The soldiers all fell very ill and it was established that the woman had added copper sulphate to the dough. Another woman, according to Andriessen, refused to help a British soldier, his 'teeth chattering with fever', and said to him: 'I will not help to make you better just so you can go and shoot dead our people.'<sup>16</sup> As letter writers, the women, it is told, were relentless in their support of the South African soldiers and encouraged them never to give up. During the war Jan Smuts wrote a letter in which he states:

And yet the women persevere in the most wonderful way; there is almost no letter that is smuggled out of the concentration camps to the commandos that doesn't encourage the men to persist to death and never to bring the shame of surrender on their families. No wonder that the burghers are so devout, it is as if their spirit is not of man but of God.<sup>17</sup>

Andriessen also describes women who did men's work on the farms in their absence:

The harvest is gathered, the corn cut, bound into sheaths and brought to the loft in the arms of women and children. And that besides, the loyal spouse still cares for the patriarch's family... she provides the cattle with what they need so that they can be used for ploughing once more... It was painful to witness, the women everywhere... doing men's work. In the stable and in the fields, women and young girls, women driving the ox wagons, and with such calmness and serenity...<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion

The women in these stories are calm, patient, strong, brave, practical, devout – so much so that one may indeed be forgiven for thinking that they are 'not earthly beings, but of God'. The trauma of the war is carefully noted, but the emotional impact of the trauma (as described in these writings) appears to be quite unusual. Despite all the reports of pain and suffering there are no stories about depression, anxiety, hysteria, hopelessness or withdrawal. The normal symptoms of post-traumatic stress are strangely absent. It is perhaps no wonder that Neethling comments about her own book: '(it) may read too much like fiction', but '(t)here is no fiction about it'.<sup>19</sup> Contemporary readers of these traumatic tales cannot help but wonder whether the flip side of the instruction to remember was indeed also an instruction to forget. It appears that in this early wave of books and stories about the war there was a determination to forget everything that went against the ideal that was created. It meant that even those things that could have been ambiguous were 'forgotten'. Consequently, we have in the remembrances of our heroines not only the institutionalisation of memory, but also the institutionalisation of forgetting.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> E.N. Neethling, *Should we forget?* Cape Town: H.A.U.M. 1902, 5-6.

<sup>16</sup> W.F. Andriessen, *De vrouwen der boeren*. Place unknown: Publisher unknown 1903, 84-85.

<sup>17</sup> W.F. Andriessen, *De vrouwen der boeren*. Place unknown: Publisher unknown 1903, 86.

<sup>18</sup> W.F. Andriessen, *De vrouwen der boeren*. Place unknown: Publisher unknown 1903, 80-81.

<sup>19</sup> E.N. Neethling, *Should we forget?* Cape Town: H.A.U.M. 1902, i, iv.

<sup>20</sup> I. Hofmeyr, 'Popularizing history: The case of Gustav Preller', in *Journal of African History*, 1988, 29.

If one is to argue that in the aftermath of the war a conscious project of remembrance was instituted, for women and by women, the question arises why only certain things were remembered, while others were systematically forgotten. One might speculate why the early memories were always of terrible suffering or of courageous resistance. It would appear that through active participation in this project of memory (and forgetting), Afrikaans women at the beginning of the century participated, consciously or unconsciously, in the creation of a very specific image of themselves. Historians agree that the role played by women in this process of remembering was unusual, given that men normally dominated the political arena. The women's participation can perhaps be understood in terms of Foucault's notion of 'the agency of the seemingly powerless in the midst of social constraint'.<sup>21</sup> By means of those things that they remembered and told, as well as those that remained forgotten and unspoken, the women, who throughout presented themselves as shy and modest, were in fact active participants in the construction of their own identity as Boer women, or the Boers' women. This image of an almost pietistic passivity on the one hand, and a reckless activism and agency on the other, would later lay the basis for the idea of the 'volksmoeder' (mother of the nation). It was an ideal of womanhood that would be firmly present during the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism.<sup>22</sup>

There is indeed nothing coincidental about memory and forgetting.

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## The Voortrekker in Search of New Horizons

*Lize van Robbroeck*

to forget and – I will venture to say – to get one’s history wrong, are essential forces in the making of a nation<sup>1</sup>

I

We are marshalled into two lines – boys to one side, girls to the other. I am wearing a long *volkspeleerok*, a lilac folk dress the exact shade of jacaranda blooms, dutifully sewn by my gran Mémé. I feel the traditional white lace kerchief scratching my neck, my feet resisting the pinch of my brand-new black school shoes, neatly buckled over a pair of white socks. Earlier this morning I took down the frock from where it was hanging, covered in plastic and reeking of mothballs, next to my virginal white Holy Communion dress. Sister Boniface bends over the record player. Her Dominican nun’s habit is daringly fashionable, the hem barely covering her knees. As the first chords of *Afrikaners is plesierig* fill the air, we take up our positions. Sister Boniface puts her hands around sister Modesta’s waist, and they twirl away.

In the singing class, we are taught ditties from the FAK songbook, a treasure trove of light Afrikaans song: *My noointjie-lief in die moerbeiboom; Wanneer kom ons troudag Gertjie; Sarie Marais...* Sister Boniface sings in perfect Afrikaans, tinged with a melodious Irish accent – transforming the dust and plains of our language into moss and peat.

At the end of standard five I leave the Afrikaans convent school (the only Afrikaans convent in the world!) and move on to a big Afrikaans girls’ school. The principal conducts the standard six girls to a bronze cast of Anton van Wouw’s *Die Noitjie van die Onderveld* (‘Simple country girl’).

The Voortrekker girl stands about one foot (30cm) tall on a stone podium; feet together, hands crossed. Her head is slightly bowed; the small, bronze face barely visible and shaded by her *kappie* (bonnet). There is something despondent about her stance. ‘This, girls,’ the principal informs us, ‘is an example of the demeanour of a respectable young Afrikaans lady – proper, humble, chaste.’

However, at this school, the Voortrekker girls wear neither long dresses, nor bonnets. They are robust and rowdy, with muscular hockey calves and ruddy cheeks. After school they march and salute in their brown militaristic uniforms, singing cheery songs about camp fires and *magtige dreunings* (mighty rumblings)<sup>2</sup>. I soon realise that the nuns, despite their brave efforts to turn me into a culturally authentic Voortrekker girl,

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Renan in E. Heide. 1987. *Mass media, cultural tradition, and national identity*. Fort Lauderdale: Verlag Breitenback. p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> In the rousing, patriotic Afrikaner nationalist song, *Die lied van jong Suid-Afrika*, the ‘mighty rumblings’ referred to here are the sound of a young nation rising.



Figure 12.1 Anton van Wouw, 'Simple Country girl'. Bronze, 30 cm.

have failed dismally. Here my knowledge of *volkspele* steps and FAK songs is meaningless.

I struggle to get a grip on the more subtle, underlying cultural codes. Due to my European Catholic background, I remain an outsider, and I am confronted with an impenetrable Afrikaans 'laager'; for the first time I hear about the *Roomse gevaar* (the so-called Roman Catholic 'menace'), the *Swart Gevaar* (Black 'danger'), the *Rooi Gevaar* (Red 'onslaught'). I realise that I am not an Afrikaner, even though my Flemish parents speak Afrikaans to us at home. I discover that I could never be one of them, no matter how hard I tried. I come to understand that my mother tongue is not the language of my mother, which makes all the difference.

Now, almost thirty years later, I shake my head in disbelief as I peruse a Sanlam advertisement in *Insig*.

## Ontmoet die nuwe voortrekkers.

Vry in hulle liefde vir Afrikaans; gedrewe in hul passie om hulself vreesloos uit te druk. Só steek hulle die grense oor van vooropgestelde idees; oorwin hulle die berge van gister se persepsies. Dis hierdie soort mense wat ons inspireer om Afrikaans te ondersteun met 'n rits borgskappe vir die kunste. Want hulle is hedendaagse voortrekkers, op pad om Afrikaans na 'n nuwe bestemming te neem. En ons wil deel wees van daardie reis. Ons dink vooruit. En jy?

**Van links na regs:** Carla Kreuser, ontwerper en mode-voorloper wat mense weer laat dink oor hul idee van Afrikaanse meisies; Grenville Williams, altyd op soek na oop ore vir Afrikaanse rymklets-groepe; Mbulelo Grootboom, akteur en lektor, wat sy Afrikaanse nalatenskap met trots op die planke bring; Richard de Jager, plaasseun, stilis en breidrag-ontwerper, aan die voorpunt om Afrikaanse kultuur-ikone hoogmode te maak; Anita Kruger, film- en teatervervaardiger en Afrikaanse drama-koningin, sonder skroom om haar ouma se Voortrekkerkappie teen die son te dra.



Figure 12.2 'Meet the new Voortrekkers'. Sanlam advertisement, *Insig Magazine*.

'Meet the New Voortrekkers', the advertisement proclaims, introducing readers to a group of young, confident, multiracial and androgynous artists. Long forgotten is the chaste and humble country girl. Forgotten too the militaristic and exclusive youth movement standing for racial and cultural purity. The only requirement is that *Die Taal* ('The Language') be spoken with pride. Clearly the Voortrekker, as a locus of remembrance, is also a place of deliberate forgetting.

Though national identity has often been regarded as God-given, and therefore imagined as something natural and primordial, it is not generally acknowledged as a relatively modern notion – namely that of a fictitious community construed in a premeditated and deliberate fashion, usually in times of crisis when the survival of a

particular society was at stake.<sup>3</sup> As such, the Afrikaners presently occupy an interesting position, seeing that they used to be a rather undefined and divided ethnic group, once self-fashioned as a nation, and now demoted to only one of many African tribes whose tribal adherence presents a threat to the integrity of the unstable postcolony. From nation to tribe – moreover, a tribe with pariah status! A change of this order (in a community for whom self-determination has always served as a historical meta-narrative) must of necessity inflict traumatic wounds to the collective self-concept. This liminality (between ethnicity and nationality, tradition and global modernity, dominance and disadvantage, colonialism and postcolonialism), is precisely what interests me with regard to the image of the Voortrekker. It is an image that has undergone significant changes: originating from historic events in the 19th century, becoming an icon of the Volk (Nation) in the 1930s, and finally evolving into a symbol of a more inclusive, cynical, militant and/or critical understanding of the Afrikaner's role in the New South Africa.

## II

The Great Trek, along with the figure of the Voortrekker, was generally accepted as the hallmark of Afrikaner origin and identity. The centrality of this historic event in the Afrikaner's national consciousness was, however, only established during the fervent and carefully orchestrated nation-building campaign of the 1930s and 1940s. At the time the Afrikaners' survival as an ethnic group was under threat due to (inter alia) the depression, the dividing character of Unionist politics, and a competitive black upward mobility. The ideologically-driven and renewed interest in the Great Trek during the 1930s secured the figure of the Voortrekker as an icon of the Afrikaner nation and a beacon of Afrikaner nationalism. Nations are often portrayed as a solitary figure. One only has to think of the allegorical 'Statue of Liberty' depicting the myth of a free and fair America. The continuous representation of the Voortrekker image in Afrikaans newspapers and magazines (a striking example of the irreplaceable role of press capitalism in the process of creating a nation) has deeply etched the bearded patriarch on horseback and his modest but stalwart bonneted wife into the Afrikaner imagination. Clearly this national ideal struck all the right chords to mobilise and unite the depression-ridden Afrikaner. During the commemorative ox-wagon trek of 1938 the men grew beards, while the women wore bonnets and long dresses. Hundreds of couples in traditional Voortrekker attire were married alongside the ox-wagons, and many children of the commemorative trek were aptly named Ossewania and Eeufesia – derivatives of the Afrikaans word for ox-wagon ('ossewa') and centenary festival ('eeufees') respectively.

The obsessional continuation of a stereotype (such as that of the heroic Voortrekker in the Afrikaans magazine *Die Huisgenoot* of the 1930s) pays tribute to the

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<sup>3</sup> Andries Treurnicht articulates the idea of 'nations' as an integral part of a God-given command: 'If you believe ... that God has a mission for those exceptional individuals called nations, if you believe that you are meant to survive as an identifiable nation to fulfil your specific calling, can it be right to neglect your nation's characteristic feature, its feeling of unity, its nationalism, its identity?'. A.J. Botha. 1986. *Die evolusie van 'n volksteologie*. D.Th. dissertation, University of the Western Cape. p. 131. According to Benedict Anderson, however, the nation is an imaginary society, purposefully created for the political survival of a particular society or ethnic group. B. Anderson. 1983. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso Books.

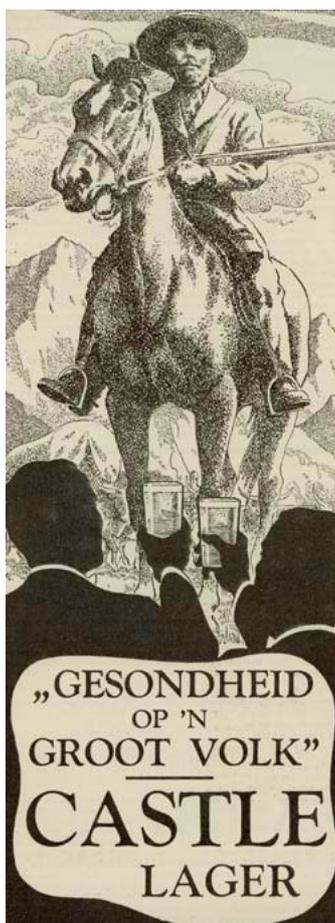


Figure 12.3 Castle Lager advertisement, *Huisgenoot* 1938.

unmistakable presence of self-awareness and the accompanying psychological unease and anxiety.<sup>4</sup>

Over-articulation is a means to suppress the insight that the stereotype is an imaginary construct, thereby quelling any fears that the heroic Voortrekker might be a mere myth, while affording an image to be exploited for political purposes.

In the global imagination, however, it is not the narcissist, allegorical self-portraits of nations and ethnic groups that dominate, but the less attractive stereotypes: Bruce and his kangaroo-skin hat, sporting corks to ward off the flies; Hans with his *lederhosen* and big belly. Following the 1948 election victory, the ethnically exclusive image of the Voortrekker was turned into a national emblem.<sup>5</sup> The Great Trek was foregrounded as every South African's legacy. The Grand Narrative of the Voortrekker was told and retold in all South African history school books, and symbols associated with the Great Trek (the torch, the ox-wagon, the iconic figure of the Voortrekker) were forced down all South Africans' throats by every available medium and means – from postage stamps to the national anthem. This cultural violation caused irreparable damage to the

<sup>4</sup> H. Bhabha. 1994. 'The other question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism', in: H. Bhabha. *The location of culture*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>5</sup> It is significant that the building costs of the monument (£360 000) were largely borne by the government. Another telling factor is that the monument was privatised in the 1990s, when it became apparent that the dispensation was to meet with major changes. Compare the text by A. Grundlingh (2001): 'A cultural conundrum? Old monuments and new regimes: The Voortrekker Monument as symbol of Afrikaner power in a postapartheid South Africa', in: *Radical History Review* 81.

image of the Afrikaner, giving rise to a less flattering stereotype – that of the Afrikaner as a thick-necked, khaki-clad, brutal racist.

More than any other structure, the Voortrekker monument embodies the narcissism, paranoia and chauvinism of the Afrikaner during the apartheid years. This monolithic monument, surrounded by its circular and uninterrupted laager of ox-wagons carved in stone, exemplifies a central aspect of identity formation, namely exclusivity. The establishment of an inclusive ‘we’ always goes hand in hand with a negative description of the rejected Other. In fact, the definition of the Self (embodied in the civilised, God-fearing and valorous Voortrekker) is positively dependent on a clearly defined (primitive, bloodthirsty and cowardly) Other. Especially in the Hall of Heroes, where a procession of large marble relief panels tells the story of the Trekkers’ struggle to bring the light of civilisation to Darkest Africa, the subtext of self-righteousness and self-glorification is quite clear. To the scores of white Afrikaans children visiting the monument on school excursions, the image of the defenceless Voortrekker children and women overpowered by hordes of cruel savages must have made a lasting impression. Similarly the patriarchal nature of Afrikaner culture was reinforced by the brave heroes coming to their rescue.

The inauguration of the monument on 16 December 1949, shortly after the Nationalist Party had come into power in 1948, not only proclaimed the political triumph of Afrikaner nationalism, but also implied that this victory was divinely sanctioned. Just as the victory of the hugely outnumbered Voortrekkers against the Zulus at Blood River proved to Afrikaners that they were God’s chosen people, the unlikely victory of the Nationalist Party in 1948 was similarly interpreted as a divine intervention. The fact that nationalist monuments are often drenched in religious symbols is no coincidence.<sup>6</sup> In the same way that the secular nation state had replaced the theocracy of the middle ages, the magical symbolism of religion was later applied to underpin the power of the state. In the process the identity of Afrikaner nationalism and the Protestant religion became inextricably linked.

But no nation’s self-fashioning remains intact. As the crisis that faced the Afrikaners in the 1930s and early 1940s faded, and they increasingly profited from the ‘affirmative’ practices of the Nationalist government, the general profile of the Afrikaner changed drastically.<sup>7</sup> The changing status of the average Afrikaner, together with the inevitable claims made by the country’s displaced black population, would of necessity impact on the Afrikaner’s self-image. Ideological and class differences that had always existed in Afrikaner ranks, though temporarily erased by a mutual desire for political and cultural recognition, emerged more strongly than ever, and right-wing Afrikaners increasingly tended to appropriate the cultural symbols of a united nation.<sup>8</sup> A growing number of cosmopolitan Afrikaners would in due course become either apathetic towards, or embarrassed by their Nationalist heritage. A younger generation was soon to discover

<sup>6</sup> B. Anderson, 1983. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso Books.

<sup>7</sup> According to Grundlingh, the Nationalist Party’s regime resulted in the urbanisation of 84% Afrikaners towards 1974. From 1948 to 1975 the number of Afrikaners occupying white-collar positions escalated from 28% to 65%, while Afrikaners in the agricultural sector and industry experienced a sudden heave. As a consequence the rise of the Afrikaans middle classes was established during the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s. A. Grundlingh, 2001. ‘A cultural conundrum? Old monuments and new regimes: The Voortrekker Monument as symbol of Afrikaner power in a postapartheid South Africa’, in: *Radical History Review* 81: 99.

<sup>8</sup> One only has to think of the 150th commemoration of the Great Trek in 1988, where efforts to revive the former political victory failed dismally when the centenary festival was hijacked by rightist movements such as the AWB (an Afrikaner resistance movement).

that the 'feats' of their forefathers had actually been deplorable, and that it was becoming rather 'common' to make a display of one's Afrikaner roots.

It is generally accepted that the establishment of powerful icons sets the scene for iconoclasm. Most of today's young Afrikaners, having escaped the programmatic cultural indoctrination of their parents, are no longer interpellated by the heroic Voortrekker narrative. For the new Afrikaner generation, an obvious way to deal with the chauvinistic outrages and the subsequent pariah status of their cultural heritage, is to reject and ridicule the historical cultural symbols.<sup>9</sup> It therefore comes as no surprise that many young Afrikaners regard the identification with the collective symbols of a bygone era of Afrikaner glory as naive. T-shirts sold at the *Klein Karoo Kunstefees* ('Little Karoo Arts Festival') equated the ox-wagon (colonial motif of Western civilisation in the dark heart of Africa) with 'trailer trash'. At the opening of the *Spier Contemporary* art exhibition in 2007, a young Afrikaans arts collective parodied the Voortrekker and other outdated Afrikaner symbols, and no-one batted an eyelid. Caricatures of the naive, obtuse Boer have become commonplace in the media and entertainment industry.

The opposite also applies, however. One has to keep in mind that the generation of young Afrikaners now sitting at their school desks, has to a large extent been spared the programmatic excesses of apartheid propaganda. To them the stories of brave Voortrekkers and the heroes of the Anglo-Boer war seem brand-new. These inspiring narratives pose a welcome alternative to the negative role assigned to Afrikaners by post-apartheid history. The unprecedented and unexpected success of Bok van Blerk's song about De la Rey, a once famous Boer general, points towards a fertile breeding ground for rekindling the Afrikaner nationalist sentiment amongst young Afrikaners. This apparent need for a positive identification with ones Afrikaans heritage should in fact come as no surprise.

In terms of a Freudian interpretation, the Afrikaner's traumatic political disempowerment and the destruction of his self-concept have been transferred to a process of mourning and, eventually, healing. The glorious story of the Afrikaner, cast in the mould of the Great Trek and endlessly reified in the school history taught during the apartheid years, has become a lost object of mourning. The heroic figure of the armed and mounted Boer finds its final, convulsive revival in the figure of De la Rey. The spate of articles on Afrikaner identity, the bitter polemics on the Boer War and other key events in Afrikaner history, are symptomatic of catharsis. By way of discussion and analysis, the mythical object of mourning is gradually discarded. The teleological, symphonic Grand Narrative of the Great Trek finally makes way for an insurgence of the real. In this way a more balanced understanding of history (history as a web of numerous contingent, disrupted, many-sided, contradictory and polysemic narratives) is gradually emerging.

But is a Freudian interpretation of this nature viable? I doubt it. Freud underestimates the perverse readiness of the collective (any collective!) to forget. The bitter indignation, discontent and obscene self-pity (about affirmative action; about the new dispensation's 'suppression' of Afrikaans) that often slur letters to the Editor in the Afrikaans press, are signs of a surprisingly short memory. But what does this need to forget signify? Paul Ricoeur points out that it is not coincidental that the words 'amnesia' and 'amnesty' have the same etymological origin. The desire for oblivion

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<sup>9</sup> The German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas, identified this process, as demonstrated by German youths, as a reaction against the Nazi outrages of the Second World War. J. Habermas, 1988. 'A kind of settlement of damages: On apologetic tendencies in German history', in *New German Critique*, Spring/Summer 44: 34-44.

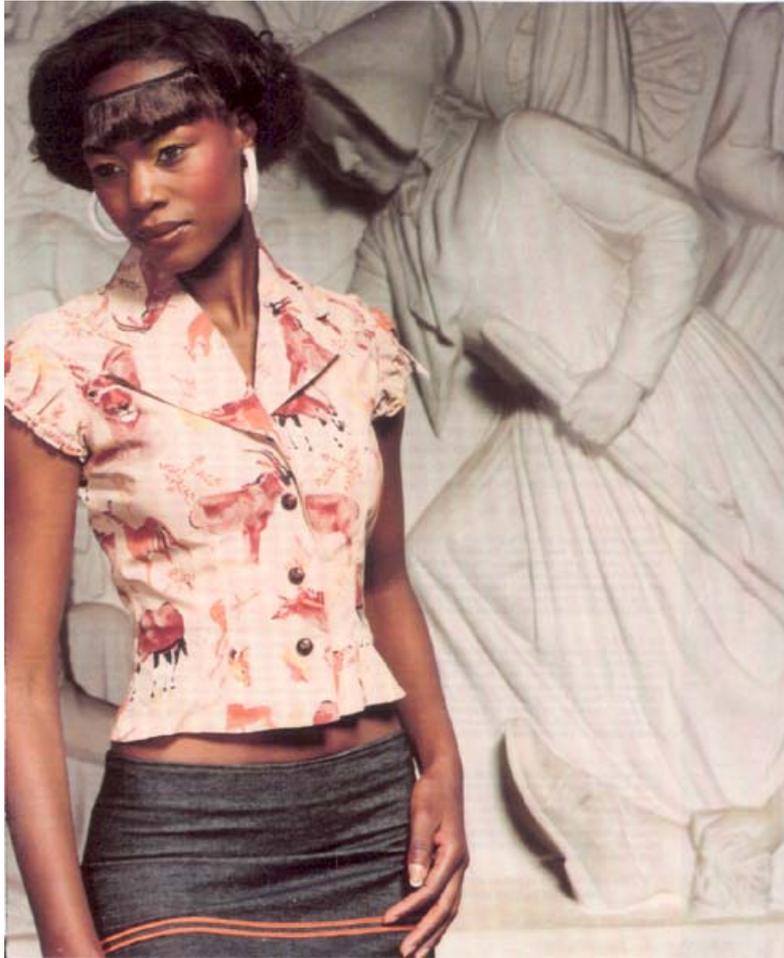


Figure 12.4 Fashion Photograph, Fair Lady magazine, 25 September 2002

signifies a need for indemnification rather than forgiveness – the need to forget that forgiveness must be asked.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore it is hardly surprising that the Voortrekker monument, representing an imaginary sense of unity and adherence to the exclusivity of the Afrikaner, still serves as the primary symbol of an Afrikaner ‘essence’. In a telling photograph from the transitional political phase of 1990 to 1994, Tokyo Sexwale takes up a triumphant stance inside the laager. In a more recent fashion magazine, an elegant black model poses in front of one of the monument’s marble relief tiles, right inside the sanctuary of the monument itself.

But here the familiar colonial dualism is markedly reversed: modernity, youth and prosperity are depicted as features pertaining to Africa, and represented by the model wearing a colourful top decorated with rock-art motives, while the Voortrekker woman (preserved for posterity in her pale bonnet and long dress), is reminiscent of the obdurate past.

<sup>10</sup> ‘It is not by chance that there is a kinship, a semantic kinship ... between ‘amnesty’ and ‘amnesia’. The institutions of amnesty are not the institutions of forgiveness. They constitute a forgiveness that is public, commanded, and that has therefore nothing to do with ... a personal act of compassion. In my opinion, amnesty does wrong at once to truth, thereby repressed and as if forbidden, and to justice, at it is due to the victims.’ S. Antohili, ‘Talking history: Interview with Ricoeur’, [www.janushead.org/8-1/Ricoeur.pdf](http://www.janushead.org/8-1/Ricoeur.pdf) [Retrieved 23 September 2007].

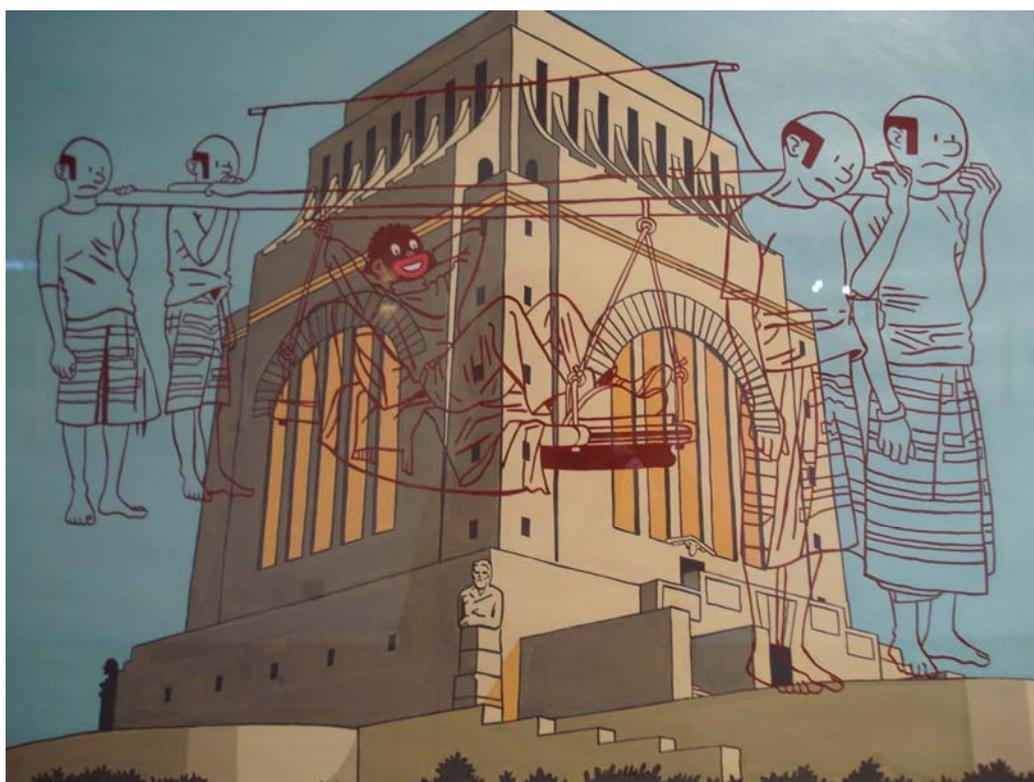


Figure 12.5 Anton Kannemeyer. “Voortrekker Monument”.

### III

One question now remains: are there any possibilities whatsoever of recapturing the Voortrekker image, apart from a nostalgic-ativistic right-wing revival (as the De la Rey phenomenon is often interpreted) or the flippant oblivion portrayed in the Sanlam advertisement? Is this advertisement’s banal therapeutic multiculturalism (if the old white Voortrekker was the disease, the new multiracial Voortrekker is the cure) the only way for Afrikaners to claim their heritage without compromising their loyalty to the New South Africa? Not necessarily so. Self-reflection and humour offer alternative, more nuanced opportunities for fundamental reflection on Afrikaans places of remembrance.

Anton Kannemeyer’s ‘Voortrekker Monument’ examines the fear of retaliation that possibly underlies the numerous debates about the future and nature of the Afrikaner in the New South Africa.

He overwrites the authoritarian aspect of the Voortrekker monument with a spectre of four identical middle-aged white men (caricatures of Kannemeyer himself?) who, in a parodic inversion of the colonial cliché, are carrying a black man in a hammock. The overtly stereotyped features of the man in the hammock signifies the deeply-rooted nature of white preconceptions about Africans – the very preconceptions manifesting in the Voortrekker monument. The power of the intimidating monument, founded on the radical exclusion and degradation of the Black Other, is undermined by exactly those fears, inferiority complexes and feelings of guilt that were to be allayed by the erection of the monument. Here disillusion bears self-knowledge, a fruit that is not to be despised.

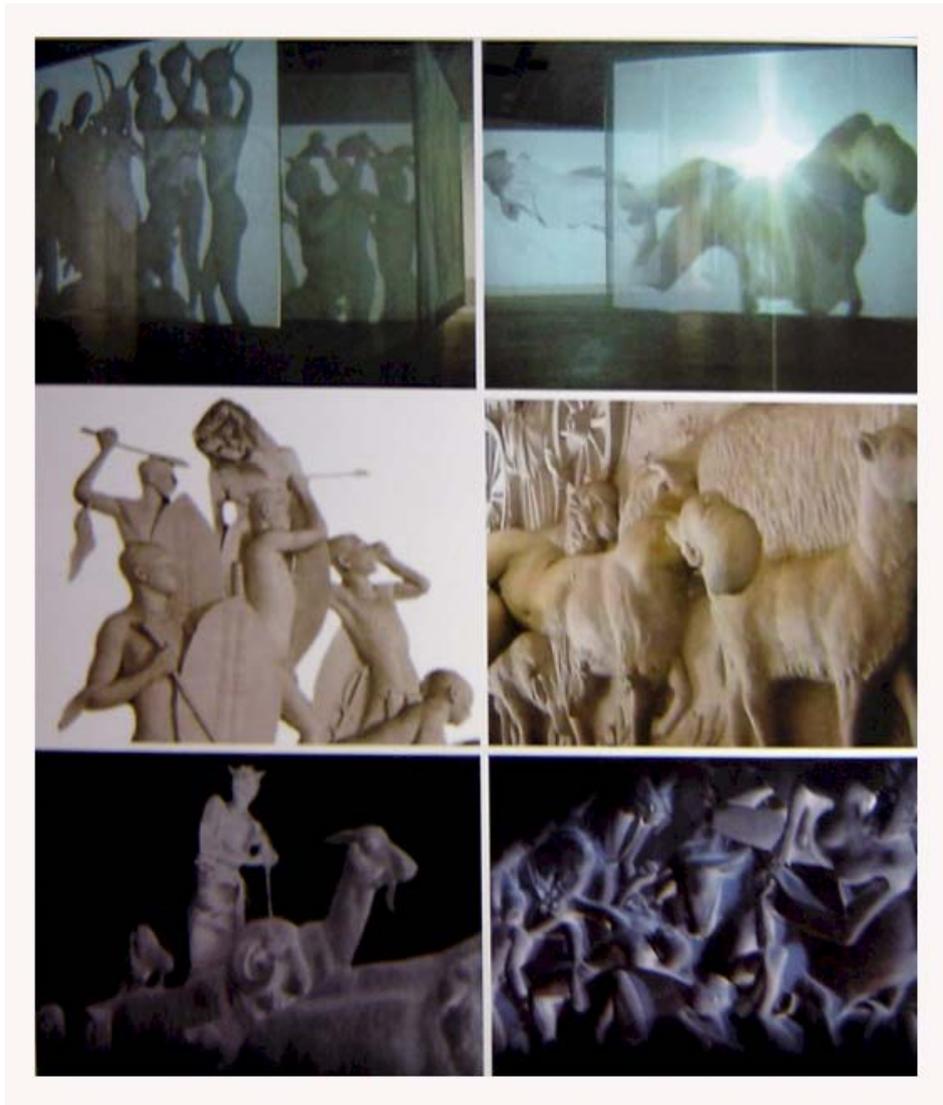


Figure 12.6 Minette Vari. Chimera. Video Installation. 2001.

In Minette Vari's video installation, 'Chimera' (2001), the Voortrekker monument is also exploited as a forum for radical self-examination. Vari uses the marble reliefs in the Hall of Heroes as a background against which she projects the white man's profound unease with Africa. Using an insert of her own naked body, Vari disrupts the reliefs' self-glorifying version of history. Her body is constantly transformed from a shaman-like shepherd to a flying woman with the head of a beast. This perpetually moving and changing spectre destabilises the hierarchic stasis of the panels and disrupts the symphonic flow of the narrative with an ominous dissonance. Freud's concept of *unheimlichkeit* – the sudden, disconcerting strangeness of the familiar – is brought into play.<sup>11</sup> The disturbing figure of the animal-like chimera alludes to a post-humanistic vision of identity that undermines the essentialist stereotypes in the Hall of Heroes. Here the white body literally becomes alienated, whereby the artist not only articulates her own alienation as a disillusioned South African, but also the inherent strangeness and flux of identity as such. In this way the Afrikaner's story of self-justification is transformed into a narrative of displacement. As any account is always selective, thus

<sup>11</sup> L. Van der Watt. 2005. 'Witnessing trauma in post-apartheid South Africa: The question of generational responsibility', in: *African Arts* 38(3).

serving to mask ideological agendas, bodily experience is here applied to resist the narrative, or even to contradict it. Vari does not repeat or recount the story of the Voortrekkers in a different way, but the story itself is infiltrated and disrupted by the artist's personal experience of radical strangeness and the traumatic discomfort of being an Afrikaner and white person.

By playing visual games with the iconic status of the Voortrekker monument, both Kannemeyer and Vari demonstrate that instead of regarding places of remembrance as places of reappropriation (of a monolithic Self), they can be reinvented as loci of reflection for promoting self-knowledge. This may be one way of confronting the Afrikaner individual with his personal alienation, displacement and hybridity, thereby possibly enabling him to revel in a newly discovered, celebratory freedom.

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## English

*Christine Antonissen*

### I

There is something rather uneasy about the thought of English as a space of memory or memorialisation for Afrikaans. One can't easily dispel a vague feeling of embarrassment at the idea that bilingualism features prominently in the specific language-memories of Afrikaans communities. English and Afrikaans are strange bedfellows: over time the relationship has been marked, either simultaneously or in turn, by admiration, amazement and reproach – and this continues right into the present. Of course, the complex relationship between the two languages and the two language communities dates back quite a long way. After 1806 the Cape was no longer Dutch, but the Dutch-speaking inhabitants stayed on. The British government that took constitutional control of the Cape after 150 or so years of Dutch East India Company rule, was obliged to seek a way of peaceful coexistence between the earlier established Dutch community and the new colonists. From the very beginning of European settlement everything that is characteristic of language contact situations was there. Afrikaans is the product not only of gradual language shift or dialect change, but also of the sustained interaction with indigenous languages, with slave languages and with English.

As early as 1910, eight years after the end of the Anglo-Boer war, the decision on official languages in the newly established Union of South Africa, reflected the reality of two strong, separate language communities (notably, the indigenous African languages were not considered at the time). In spite of a British victory in 1902 over the largely Dutch-speaking Boer republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State,<sup>1</sup> and their inclusion in a consolidated British colony, a compromise arrangement was accepted when it came to the language policy of the Union. Rather than following a winner-takes-all principle that would recognise English only, both Dutch and English were made official languages. In 1925 – fifty years after the establishment of the 'Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners' (GRA) in Paarl with the explicit aim of propagating Afrikaans as a language in its own right – Afrikaans replaced Dutch as an official language. Then already the relationship between Afrikaans and English and between the language communities that were identified by each of these languages showed tell-tale signs of an ambivalent history. The introduction of Afrikaans as an official language was preceded by almost 100 years of its sporadic usage in popular texts that illustrated local language variation, specifically the colloquial Cape Dutch.<sup>2</sup> For those who had been educated in Dutch and could read and write the language well, Afrikaans instead

<sup>1</sup> Cf. D.Denoon, *A Grand Delusion*. London: Longman, 1973, 75-79, for a description of the futile attempts, specifically of Milner after the war, to Anglicise the Dutch/Afrikaans community.

<sup>2</sup> A.Deumert. 'Language variation and standardization at the Cape (1880-1922): A contribution to Afrikaans sociohistorical linguistics', in *American Journal of Germanic Linguistics and Literatures*, 13.4: 30152, 2001.

of Dutch as an official language, was hardly acceptable. For them, Dutch was the standard language; Afrikaans did not have the required kind of social and educational prestige. Others preferred English as the language of literacy and social progress, and thus chose to migrate from Dutch to English. For many living in the rural districts Afrikaans had become their only language; it had, however, never been the only language in any part of the country. For this reason, Afrikaans can never be considered without contrasting it and taking into account its relation with the other South African languages; one can hardly think of Afrikaans in South Africa without some or other contrast to Dutch and finally also to English the only other Germanic language in the country. A large part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's memory of the relationship between English and Afrikaans is coloured by the memory of a war. After 1866, following the discovery of mineral wealth in the interior beyond the colonial borders, the British policy of non-expansion was revised. The young Republics of the Transvaal (ZAR) and the Free State that were established on an ideal of independence from British government, became interesting to British statesmen like Rhodes and Milner in a new way. It was not the unequal competition between British troops and Boer soldiers for control over gold- and diamond fields that became prominent in the collective memory; the aspect of the conflict between Boer and Brit (1899-1902) that shaped attitudes towards and memories of English for more than fifty years afterwards, was the hardships that women and children endured at the hands of members of the British forces. Grundlingh<sup>3</sup> points out that a shared language contributed significantly to the development of Afrikaner unity as did other factors such as the perception of a shared past, and shared religious convictions and practices. Even so, in the process of rebuilding infrastructure and communities before and after the unification of 1910, and in the political development of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, white English and Afrikaans communities were dependant on one another. For Afrikaners, English was friend and foe, ally and oppressor, language of education and domination, sign and signal of what could be achieved and what was unattainable.

Against this brief, sketchy background, I shall examine English as a space of memory from three perspectives, namely personal memory of the acquisition of linguistic identity in an Afrikaans-English household, memories of English in the development of Afrikaans writers and poets, and memories of the 70 year long period in which, as official languages, Afrikaans and English divided and united communities in public domains.

## II

Developmental Psychology and mnemonic analysis often reflect on the question as to how early the first conscious childhood memories are established, and what it is that determines a specific experience as one that will become fixed in the individual consciousness so that it stands out as a memory. One of my earliest and very lucid memories that often surfaces, is one relating to language and emotion: we are sitting around the dining room table, mother, father and three little girls building a puzzle – one with a picture of a Union Castle passenger liner in blue and grey and white colours. As was the custom at the time, in adult conversations children were seen and not heard. The effect is that one becomes semi-transparent, that one overhears adult conversation as if one is eavesdropping. You don't ask questions and you don't risk making a

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<sup>3</sup> A.M.Grundlingh, 'Afrikaner Nationalism and White Politics', in: B.J. Liebenberg en S.B.Spies (eds), *South Africa in the 20th Century*. Pretoria: J.L.van Schaik, 1993, 268.

contribution. The topic of discussion is the child that has to go to school the following year, and the question is whether she will be enrolled in the English or Afrikaans class at the dual-medium school in our little town in Natal. According to dad it would be the Afrikaans class – no argument. But, in my mother's defence, she cannot speak Afrikaans. Then, dad finds, it is high time that she learns to.

I can't remember having any specific language preference at school, with family or with friends, before or after that conversation. My father was Afrikaans, my mother English. To her we spoke English, to our father – also English, even though he spoke only Afrikaans. I have no recollection of stress or distress, of conflict or misunderstanding in managing the two languages. The neighbours' children, the Andersons, were English and spoke only English; the older cousins on the farm were Afrikaans and spoke only Afrikaans. I don't recall language being an 'issue' in those communicative spaces. Nor do I remember how beyond understanding, I eventually started speaking Afrikaans. What I do remember, is the shock and dismay I felt on that same day when my mother, following my father's instruction, started consciously and persistently to speak Afrikaans to me. There was a scene in the kitchen where I realized that she was deliberately addressing me in Afrikaans, and that she didn't want to answer me in the language that had been established as our 'first language'. The feeling of alienation and rejection was too much for my five-year-old equilibrium, so I started to cry; in English I shouted that she shouldn't speak to me like that, that I didn't like it.

Three months later I was sitting in Class 1 in the Afrikaans class. As far as I know there was nothing wrong with my English or my Afrikaans. The one remnant of our early English-as-home-language, was that us children used 'jy' and 'jou' (the *tu*-form of the pronoun) in addressing our parents – if one could use the English 'you' without being impolite, then the direct equivalent was probably in order. I always found my friends' 'ma, wat maak ma' or 'pa, sal pa my help'<sup>4</sup> style rather comical. In any case, the memory of the little outburst in the kitchen where I stamped my feet and screamed in frustration, and the conversation that led up to it, is an enduring one. My protest had been in vain. We never used English systematically in our home again. The younger brother born in my grade 1 year was introduced to Afrikaans as his first language.

What kind of emotion is woven into the use of a language (any language) so that a calculated change in linguistic behaviour is interpreted as betrayal, as a violation of agreement, a breach in one's sense of security? In a novel that topicalises the question of 'how we became as we now are', Christa Wolf<sup>5</sup> points out that it cannot be answered without consideration of such early, intense memories.

One can't escape asking about the nature of the relationship between language and identity. Language is widely recognized as one of the central markers of personal, but also of social and cultural identity. Referring to the experience of so-called 'Latinos' in the USA, Anzaldúa writes 'ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity – I am my language',<sup>6</sup> and Ramsdell writes 'language is identity and identity is political'.<sup>7</sup> I am not alone within the Afrikaans memorial community if I identify myself as 'Afrikaans', and simultaneously remember very dear English grandparents who found it difficult to

<sup>4</sup> Although the *vous*-form in Afrikaans is technically 'u', it is general practice in Afrikaans to use the title rather than the pronoun in directly addressing an older person, thus 'ma, wat maak ma' ('Mother, what is mother doing') rather than 'ma, wat maak u' ('Mother, what are you doing'), or 'pa, sal pa my help' ('Dad, will dad help me') rather than 'pa, sal u my help' ('Dad, will you help me').

<sup>5</sup> C. Wolf. *Kindheitsmuster*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1976, 12-15 ff.

<sup>6</sup> G.E. Anzaldúa. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The Neri Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987, 59.

<sup>7</sup> L. Ramsdell. 'Language and Identity Politics: the Linguistic Autobiographies of Latinos in the United States'. In *Journal of Modern Literature* 28:1 2004, 166.

follow the Afrikaans that their grandchildren were speaking to one another. The relationship between English and Afrikaans may have been tricky, at times even painful, but it was always intimate.

### III

Wolf concerns herself with questions about the historicity of identity. She draws attention to the fact that at some or other mostly unidentifiable moment, every person starts to perceive himself/herself historically, that is, as being intricately part of the period in which they are living.<sup>8</sup> She suggests an answer to the question of how we come to our present identity. According to her, one kind of answer would be found in a list of book titles that stand out as having been formative. In the literature, the poetry and prose of a community, you are likely to find a memorial space. In the transition from personal memory to collective memory I will reflect on English as a language which Afrikaans writers inevitably had to take into account.

I grew up with A.A. Milne's *Christopher Robin* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*, with *Nursery rhymes* and *The wind in the willows*. The bedtime stories, nursery rhymes, fairy tales and fables remain seated somewhere in a safe, trusted space. Later, but with less emotional attachment, there were Afrikaans stories such as *Huppelkind* and *Die wonderlike motor van Barnabas Bombas*. We were introduced to the legacy of the icons of Afrikaans literature. Completely un-chronologically, we were guided into the work of (amongst others) Langenhoven, such as *Sonde met die bure* and *Herrie op die ou tremspoor* – novels that were consciously written as part of a project intended to establish Afrikaans as a literary language. There were M.E.R's *Karliën-en-Kandas* rhymes and Eitemal's *Jaffie*. At some stage there was also Eugene Marais, Leipolt, N.P. van Wyk Louw, W.E.G. Louw, Eybers, Opperman – poets whose work confirmed that Afrikaans is a worthy language. The work presented to us in school was not focussed as much on pride of the fact that Afrikaans could be independent of Dutch, as it was on pride of the fact that works like *Raka*, *Die Dieper Reg*, *Heilige Beeste* and *Belydenis is die Skemering* were proof that Afrikaans literature could keep up with and hold its own against English!

If one looks retrospectively at the space created by these first Afrikaans writers and poets, it becomes apparent that they owe much of their development as creative artists to contact with English. A community that claims the work of its artists to be shared cultural property has to accept, even embrace, the various sources from which the art originates. To illustrate how English functions as a memorial space I refer to the contact of a number of iconic Afrikaans literary figures with English during their formative years. My selection is to some extent random – as is the nature of most memories. The first writers who wrote in Afrikaans (rather than Dutch) often did so in a self-conscious and sometimes openly pedantic way, not as full time writers or poets, but as journalists, teachers, doctors, lawyers, politicians.

Quite a number of Herzog prize<sup>9</sup> winners received much if not all of their formal schooling through the medium of English. This was sometimes due to the fact that English institutions provided the only well established educational opportunities in a

<sup>8</sup> [...] 'sich selbst historisch zu sehen; was heiBt: eingebettet in, gebunden an seine Zeit' [...] one (begins) to see oneself historically; i.e. embedded in, bound to one's own time. C.Wolf. *Nachdenken über Christa T.* Darmstad: Lucheterhand, 1968, 95

<sup>9</sup> The Herzog prize, arguably the most prestigious award for creative writing in Afrikaans, is decided annually by the Suid Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns (South African Academy for Arts and Sciences). See [http://www.akademie.co.za/new\\_page\\_2.htm#Hertzogprys](http://www.akademie.co.za/new_page_2.htm#Hertzogprys)

given context. So, for example, N.P. van Wyk Louw, even in his first school years in a predominantly Afrikaans Karoo town, Sutherland (1911 - 1919), received his tuition in English because it was the only option. However, Eugene Marais had his schooling in Pretoria in English even though there was a choice between Dutch and English schools. The Louw family moved to Cape Town in 1920 where Wyk and Gladstone completed their high school years at SACS, and afterwards went to study at the University of Cape Town (UCT). I.D. du Plessis, who was born in Philipstown, completed his school education at Wineberg Boys High in Cape Town, and also went to university at UCT. Education through medium of English, even when the field of study was not specifically languages or social sciences, inevitably brought exposure to a different perspective from the local one. Most of these writers, in reflecting on their own development, refer to English writers, poets, and literary traditions. Also, their writing often bears traces of thematic and structural features of English works.

It is said of Leipoldt that he grew up in a polyglot household where Afrikaans, English, and German were actively used. As a young journalist, he was war correspondent from 1899 until 1901 for an English newspaper, *The South African News*, of which the owners were outspokenly pro-Boer. At the time there was a host of English leaders in Cape Town who sympathised with the Boer republics. So, for example, Leipoldt was supported by John X. Merriman as well as Fred Centlivres in his protest against the manner in which the British government and the local government in Cape Town waged the Anglo-Boer war. In contrast, there were people in the Cape such as S.J. du Toit, who vigorously supported the development of Afrikaans rather than Dutch, but who sympathised with the English cause during the war. The suggestion that political divisions were drawn along the same lines as language divisions, that English automatically represented imperialism, liberalism and anti-Afrikanerism, is a construction that is not borne out by the available evidence.

Leipoldt grew up in Clanwilliam, started working in Cape Town as a bilingual journalist who could write equally well in English and in Afrikaans, and eventually trained as a medical doctor and paediatrician in London. A. G. Visser, who started his career as a teacher and journalist in the north, also studied medicine in England. J. H. H. de Waal, a nephew of Onze Jan Hofmeyr, who opened the genre of historical romance in Afrikaans literature with his *Johannes van Wyk*, studied law in London and later practiced in Cape Town as a lawyer. So too did H. A. Fagan, who is seen as the founder of realistic drama in Afrikaans. He received the Herzog prize in 1936 for *Die ouderling en ander toneelstukke*, a compilation that included *Ousus*, which is considered to be his best play. A remarkable contribution in the form of Afrikaans animal stories came from the Hobson brothers, descendants of the 1820 settlers in the Eastern Cape, who had grown up in an English speaking family in the district of Graaf-Reinet. The overwhelmingly Afrikaans speaking community in which they lived ensured that they were competently bilingual, and that their writing, which was based on experiences and observations from their environment, would be in Afrikaans. Already in 1930 they were awarded the Herzog prize for their literary contribution, specifically for *Kees van die Kalahari*.

Writers and poets of following periods in Afrikaans also produced creative work in contexts where English was used regularly and systematically. To name but a few: Jan Rabie, married to the artist Marjory Wallace, wrote to her in English while he was working on an Afrikaans novel, and explained in detail what he was planning, how he was progressing, and what he was battling with in his work.<sup>10</sup> Andre Brink taught at

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<sup>10</sup> J.C.Kannemeyer, *Jan Rabie*. Kaapstad, Tafelberg, 2004, 287-8.

English institutions, Rhodes University (Afrikaans-Dutch, 1961-90) and the University of Cape Town (English, 1991-2000); later he also started writing in English and did the translations of his Afrikaans work into English, himself. Antjie Krog, who comes from a family of farmers in the Free State where memories of the Anglo-Boer war remained alive in all sorts of ways, was still at school when her first collection of Afrikaans poems was published. She finally published, in 1998 and in 2004, two non-fictional works articulating intensely personal observations and a new kind of identity, in English. She writes about her experiences as a radio journalist covering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings (*Country of my Skull*), and about her impressions of the transformation process in the country (*A Change of Tongue*). Afrikaans translations of these books appeared at a later stage. After about 10 collections of poetry from her Afrikaans pen between 1970 and 2000, she exhibited the same artistic flair in English with *Down to my last Skin* and later with *Body Bereft* (*Verweerskrif*). In a similar way award-winning South African writers of English works didn't either escape the entwined relationship of English and Afrikaans and the effects of having shared spaces. For many their names already signal family histories in which an Afrikaans ancestry played a more or less recent role: J. M. Coetzee, Michiel Heyns, Rian Malan – to name but a few.

#### IV

If language is a space, a place in which people function, then it can also be, just like any other place, either safe, or threatened and threatening. My own memory is that simultaneous exposure to and use of Afrikaans and English in itself does not have to create conflict; the threat lies in the shattering of established, secure patterns. Spaces change over the course of time – what was initially threatening can eventually become familiar, part of the trusted and appreciated. It took just over a hundred years to establish an Afrikaans literary tradition; currently a lively publishing industry bears testimony to the success of the enterprise. In its own right, Afrikaans developed a literary space alongside and contrasting to English, and it is a space that has been enriched through continuous contact with English. Recognition that English has always been present in Afrikaans memories, and has always been rapping at the windows, crying through the locks, does not change the variety of feelings that are associated with it. Despite having achieved the kind of security that comes from owning an established space, English remains for Afrikaans a controversial space.

Memories are not necessarily less complex than reality itself. Leipoldt's introduction to English in the Hantam illustrates something of the versatility that many Afrikaans families elected and simply lived; however, that was not the rule within the rural Afrikaans environment. In the North-West, English is often jokingly referred to as a foreign language. In Calvinia, a Biology teacher of the 1960s and 1970s is remembered for, amongst other things, the way he referred to his own English as 'just enough for personal use' – not enough to share, nothing fit for the market, nothing that will generate capital or any other kind of profit. English may have enriched the literature that his colleague taught in the Afrikaans class, but to him only distant contact was safe. Introduce a most friendly and accommodating English guest, and the space would become insecure; ask Mr. Lenhoff to welcome the visitor in English and make him feel at home, and the space would become uncomfortably narrow. For some, English is a reminder of boundaries, of being an outsider, also of unpleasant, even embarrassing histories that easily incense.

Maybe even more: in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when English clearly dominated, there were people with Afrikaans as their first language who chose, for social reasons, rather to associate with English. They made a few shifts and adjustments within the linguistic spaces, sending children to English schools, accepting English as a home language, keeping little contact with Afrikaans speaking family and friends. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Afrikaans was identified as the language of an authoritative government, many felt that if they had to choose between the two official languages of the time, then English was the safest, perhaps in terms of conscience the only, choice. Jan Rabie, who is regarded as the first of a new generation of Afrikaans writers that emerged in the 1960s and was referred to as the ‘Sestigers’, was already a critical thinker as a student – or as some would say, he liked controversy. Even in his criticism of the Afrikaner establishment, he persistently worked and gave his critiques in Afrikaans. After a lifetime of protest against Afrikaner Nationalism, he came with the credo: ‘My name is Jan Rabie. Without Afrikaans I am nothing’.<sup>11</sup> The same form of protest in Afrikaans was not possible for everyone.

There is another group, namely the coloured and black speakers of Afrikaans whose political space was limited in that they either were never assigned the right to vote, or were disenfranchised after 1948. More concretely, the denial of the right to vote materialised in (e.g.) limitation of movement, housing, employment, quality of life chances. Those affected could not easily dissociate language from political space. For many speakers of Afrikaans their first language no longer provided the sense of security that it once had done. English then became a place of refuge. Today it is clear that, in response to no longer feeling at home in their own language, a significant number of Afrikaans first language speakers consciously made a linguistic shift. Parents that grew up with Afrikaans have started to speak English to their children when the infants are still in the cradle.

David Crystal estimates that two thirds of all children in the world grow up in a bilingual milieu,<sup>12</sup> and Grosjean is of the opinion that roughly half of the world’s population know at least two languages.<sup>13</sup> According to Crystal’s calculation, for 41% of the people that know more than one language, English is one of the two,<sup>14</sup> and according to Romaine, of all the people that have a relatively good command of English more than half have it not as a first, but as a second language.<sup>15</sup> As second language speakers of English, Afrikaans speaking South Africans fit this mould well. At least in this respect we are not alone in the universe, nor unique in our relationship to English.

A constitution that officially recognizes 11 languages manifestly has the intention to maintain the variety of languages spoken in the country, at least to a reasonable extent and also in the public domain. Thus the South African constitution provides for a number of opportunities in which one can simultaneously find personal expression in Afrikaans, and gain access to a bigger space by means of a world language like English. In Africa, as in many other multilingual communities, besides the practical benefits offered by multilingualism, a certain amount of prestige is associated with the knowledge of more than one language. Proficiency in two or more languages is largely

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<sup>11</sup> ‘My naam is Jan Rabie. Sonder Afrikaans is ek niks.’ J.C.Kannemeyer, *Jan Rabie*. Kaapstad, Tafelberg, 2004, 459.

<sup>12</sup> D.Crystal, *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 172.

<sup>13</sup> F.Grosjean, *Life with Two Languages: an Introduction to Bilingualism*. Cambridge, Ma., Harvard University Press, 1982, 11.

<sup>14</sup> D.Crystal, *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 173.

<sup>15</sup> S. Romaine, ‘The Bilingual and Multilingual Community’, in Bhatia en Ritchie, *The Handbook of Bilingualism*, Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2004, 395.

seen as ‘a sign of intellectual or cultural superiority’.<sup>16</sup> Even so, a significant number of historically Afrikaans speakers, more specifically families in the coloured communities, have over the past 40 years increasingly chosen to raise their children as virtually monolingual speakers of English, rather than as bilingual speakers of Afrikaans and English. This has been confirmed in relatively lengthy interviews with members of three generations in family context in 2003<sup>17</sup> and in follow-up data collected since then. For people who were cast as the lesser members of the Afrikaans language community for too long, English opens new horizons. The decision to replace Afrikaans as the family’s first language and raise a second language to that position often represents more than mere protest against what is experienced as Afrikaner domination; it is also a reminder of the fact that a new language can create new spaces, and this offers people within confined spaces the opportunity to shift boundaries.

In 2003 a colleague and I interviewed a young mother whose father used to admonish her if her Cape-Afrikaans dialect was too prominent. She was reminded that she should speak the standard, notably the white standard. Her linguistic consciousness had clearly been shaped by such a family history – she recognises the shibboleths of the different varieties of Afrikaans spoken in the region, is adeptly bilingual and when it suits her, she speaks the most beautiful idiomatic Afrikaans. We specifically asked her about her and her husband’s decision to speak English to their children and to send them to an English school. My question was whether she didn’t feel a little sad about her children’s loss of Afrikaans, and whether the development of strong Afrikaans-English bilingualism was not a consideration for them. She paused for a moment, tilted her head, and gave an answer that made it apparent that the recent 20<sup>th</sup> century experience counts more than the now distant memories of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Cape history when identity with Afrikaans was outspoken in the coloured community. Her remark was that they had never had such a ‘thing’ going for ‘the Language’ as the Boers had.

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<sup>16</sup> N.C. Dorian, ‘Minority and Endangered Languages’, in Bhatia en Ritchie, *The Handbook of Bilingualism*, Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2004, 446.

<sup>17</sup> See C.Anthonissen & E.George, ‘Family Languages: Bilingualism and Language Shift’, in: Coetzee, A. (ed.) *Proceedings of the 21st World Congress of the World Federation of Modern Language Associations – Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes (FIPLV)* (in CD format), 2004, 1-17.

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## Language Monuments

*Siegfried Huigen*

### I

The year 1975 was declared Language Year by the South African government, and 14 August was declared a public holiday in celebration of the centennial of the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (Society of Real Afrikaners) so that ‘people all over the country can celebrate the birthday of Afrikaans’.<sup>1</sup> On that day, the festivities commenced at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. In memory of the eight founding members of the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners, eight ‘language torches’ departed from the Voortrekker Monument to all corners of the Republic and to South-West Africa (Namibia). In the following months, Afrikaans newspapers regularly covered the ‘Miracle of Afrikaans’, reporting on local festivities and publishing articles on the history of the Genootskap. One lasting outcome of this enthusiasm was a little-known language monument unveiled in East London on 9 September as part of a local language festival. It bears the words of a third-rate Afrikaans poet, C.F. Visser: ‘O, Moedertaal / O, soetste taal, / Jou het ek lief / bo alles’ (O mother tongue, O sweetest tongue, You I love above all). The unveiling of the huge language monument outside Paarl had been scheduled for 10 October, Kruger Day, for practical reasons: the weather was better in October than in August - the middle of the rainy Cape winter.

The erection of the language monument in Paarl had been in preparation since the 1940s. In 1965 a Monument Committee approved a design for a language monument by the Pretoria architect Jan van Wijk. It was to be a modernist concrete structure in the style of Le Corbusier, and according to the brief given by the committee it was to be visible from the main road and blend in with the landscape. The latter requirement was to be achieved by mixing crushed Paarl granite with the concrete. The report of the commission of experts describes the visual experience of the monument in terms of a future *promenade architecturale* (Le Corbusier):

The designer makes the visitor climb up stairs to reach the threshold of the entrance [...] The visitor reaches a fountain and, having enjoyed the sound of the water, turns right and proceeds to the open space of the inner court. In our view, this is one of the most attractive concepts of the whole design. From this point there will be a splendid view of the main column and the buttress supporting it, an opportunity to pause for a while on one of the granite benches that will be provided and to enjoy the panoramas in the different points of the compass. [...] Next to the main column, with a view on what the designer calls the ‘magical influences of Africa’, stands the smaller column that must symbolise our becoming a republic. [...] A basin at the foot of both columns effectively connects them [...]. We are also particularly struck by the three domes in the inner court which must remind us of the non-white elements. The inclined buttress of the inner court is reminiscent of another African motif, the ruins

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<sup>1</sup> *Die Burger*, 14 August 1975.

of Zimbabwe. We find the juxtaposition of these symbols of Africa particularly successful.<sup>2</sup>

The iconography of the monument is broadly based on statements made by two important Afrikaans authors. The conspicuous main column is based on a statement made by C.J. Langenhoven in Bloemfontein in 1914, in a speech for the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns (South African Academy for Science and Art). Langenhoven describes the development of Afrikaans as a line reaching for heaven, a parabola of linguistic achievement. Following in the footsteps of the poet N.P. van Wyk Louw, the horizontal dimension must express the connection of a 'lucid West' and a 'magical Africa'. The 'non-white' origins of Afrikaans are also referred to in the form of a small column, dedicated to Malay, on the stairway to the monument. For some Afrikaners, like Loots, the founder of the Monument Committee, these symbols were an impermissible overstepping of racial boundaries. In his view, this reference to the non-white contribution to Afrikaans was 'unnecessary'. In protest, he even threatened to disrupt the festivities with violent acts of sabotage.<sup>3</sup>

## II

Early in the morning of Friday 10 October, on Kruger Day, forty thousand Afrikaners started gathering around the monument on a mountain outside the small town of Paarl. According to reports in the Cape daily *Die Burger* a festive mood prevailed, stimulated by the brass band of the Department of Prisons and the military band of the Cape Coloured Corps. Special provisions had been made for coloured people. Although the terraces that had been 'reserved' for them were not entirely full, they nevertheless played a part in the proceedings. The Primrose Malay Choir in particular was a huge success in the amphitheatre at the foot of the monument. The choir was accompanied by a bass, guitars and ukuleles. Nine Air Force jets blazed a blue, white and orange trail – the colours of the flag – while two Afrikaner scouts hoisted the flag. At ten o'clock that night the celebrations culminated in the arrival of the language torches:

There was a stir among the crowd when hundreds of Voortrekkers [Afrikaner boy scouts] with burning torches started moving up a Paarlberg shrouded in darkness towards the amphitheatre. Contingents of eight with flags smartly handed over the route torches to the Premier [John Vorster] [...] For each torch, the Navy Band played a fanfare that had been specially commissioned [...] After the torch procedure, Mr Vorster delivered his address, after which the descendants [of the members of the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners] helped to light the main torch and to declare the monument officially unveiled.<sup>4</sup>

In conclusion, eight cannons fired a salvo. The eight language torches and eight cannons referred to the eight men who had founded the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners. Those present were probably well aware of this, in view of the constant stream of articles in the press and the attention devoted to it in Afrikaans-medium schools.

The Language Monument was the last of a series of Afrikaans monuments that marked the political position of Afrikaners in the country since the end of the nineteenth

<sup>2</sup> Language Museum, Paarl, Dokumente oor Taalmonument, Assessoreverslag van prysvraag, 21 January 1966.

<sup>3</sup> Language Museum, Paarl, Dokumente oor Taalmonument, Die Afrikaanse Taalmonumentkomitee, Minutes of 18 July 1975.

<sup>4</sup> *Die Burger*, 11 October 1975.

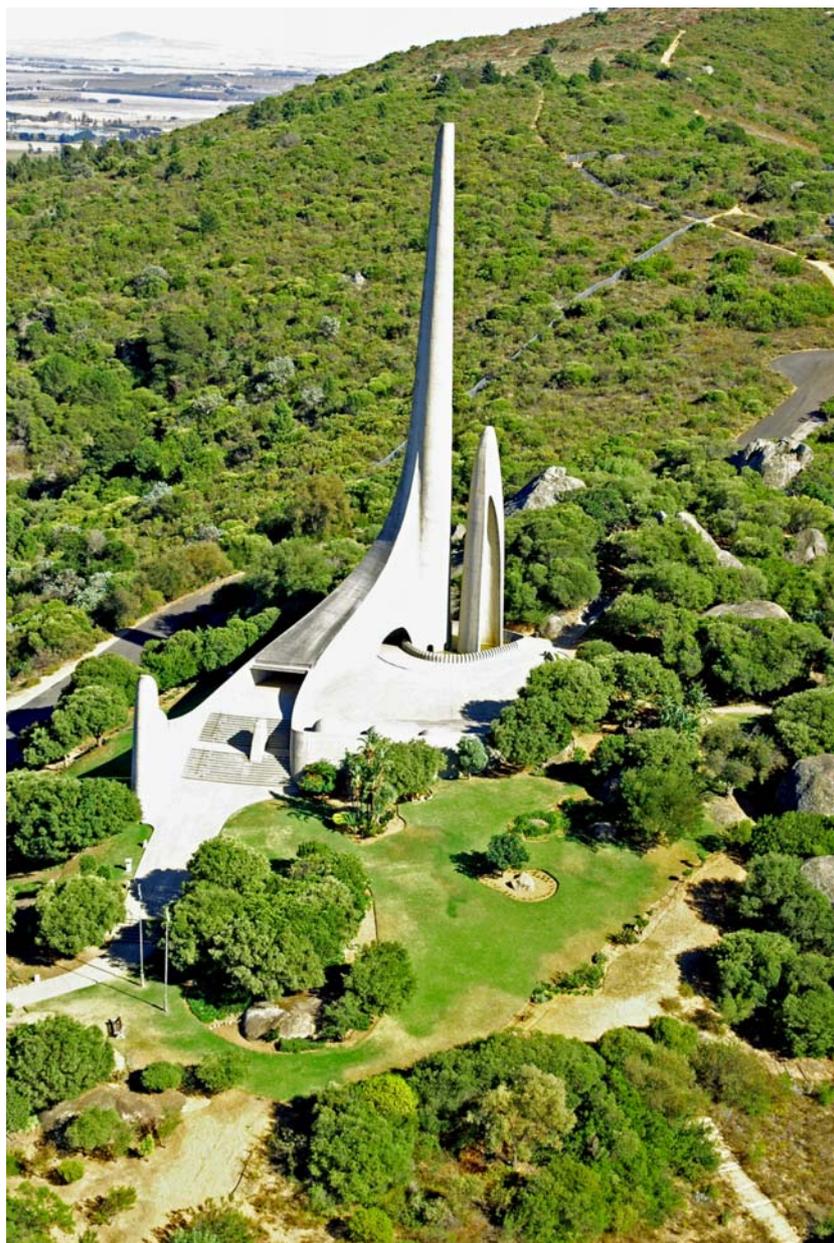


Figure 14.1 Afrikaans Language Monument near Paarl (Photo: Jana Enslin).

century. It was also the last time, on 10 October 1975, that the hegemony of Afrikaners in South Africa was celebrated.

### III

The series of Afrikaans monuments started approximately in 1893 with the unveiling of the first Language Monument in Burgersdorp in the Eastern Cape. Erected there to celebrate the Dutch language, it was even a world première: the world's first stone memorial to a language. A more common tribute would be a series of classical works or a large dictionary.

The Burgersdorp Language Monument marks the early phase of the language struggle of Afrikaners to have 'high Dutch', the same language as that of the Netherlands, recognized as a junior partner alongside English. The actions promoting 'Patriots', a variant of the Cape Dutch vernacular that was propagated as the official



Figure 14.2 Dutch Language Monument in Burgersdorp. Left: copy of the original statue from 1908; middle: original statue from 1893, which was destroyed by British soldiers in 1900; right: a monument which commemorates the Anglo-Boer War (Photo: author).

language by the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners*, still occupied the second place. Moreover, these actions stagnated during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).

The nature of the Burgersdorp festivities was rather different from that of the 1975 festival, which was run tightly by a South African police colonel. The occasionally chaotic Burgersdorp festival lasted five days. There were processions of farmers on horseback, picnics, official dinners and endless speeches. It was a sort of village fair. The centrepiece of all activities was ‘Oom’ Daantjie van den Heever, a convivial fellow who took a salute in mufti, but wearing a helmet of the Free State Artillery. After the parade he took part in a race with ‘several ladies’, which he lost. A separate race was organized for ministers of the church.

There even was a publicity fiasco. Some days before the start of the actual festival, a ‘scandal and farce burlesque’ was staged in Venterstad. This advance festival was held to collect funds for the official festival in Burgersdorp. The children were lavishly entertained in the hall of the Dutch Reformed Church and rewarded with *English* prize books. In the evening, an ‘Amateur Entertainment, in support of the Taal Festival Fund’ took place, presided by Oom Daantjie. For three hours the audience was entertained with *English* items. Oom Daantjie’s own children also participated. True, the last item on the programme was a reading of a poem by the Dutch poet Nicolaas Beets. However, after singing the nationalist *Afrikanerbond* song, the proceedings were closed with the singing of ‘God save the King’. *Die Patriot* and *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, Cape newspapers that supported Afrikaner nationalism, cried shame on it.<sup>5</sup>

The Burgersdorp Language Monument was unveiled a few days later in the presence of the leaders of Afrikaner nationalism, the Cape politician ‘Onze Jan’ Hofmeyr and the

<sup>5</sup> D.H. Cilliers, *Albert se aandeel in die Afrikaanse beweging tot 1900*. Burgersdorp, Burgersdorpse Seëlkomitee, 1982, 72-82.

author-journalist S.J. du Toit. Following the classicist tradition of giving abstract concepts a female shape, this language monument was a comely young girl of whom rumour had it that Oom Daantjie's daughter had sat for it. Cradled in her left arm the statue bore a tablet with the inscription: 'Vrijheid voor de Hollandsche Taal' (Freedom for the Dutch language). Unfortunately this elegant statue did not grace its pedestal for long. In 1901, it was smashed by English troops and the pieces were transported to King William's Town, a few hundred kilometres from Burgersdorp. After the war, in 1908, the English colonial regime donated a copy of the statue, which was mounted on the empty pedestal. When the decapitated and armless statue was uncovered on a rubbish tip in the 1930s, it was erected diagonally behind the copy.

In 1893 the Afrikaner nationalists were still a politically subordinate and, in comparison with the English rulers, a vulnerable group of underdeveloped rural people taking their first hesitant steps to getting themselves organised. Initially there was no agreement about the language which should be used as the language of the people. It was only during the Second Language Movement, after 1905, that the enthusiasm to have Afrikaans recognised surpassed that favouring Dutch. The First and Second Language Movement had propagated Afrikaans as a characteristic of an Afrikaner identity and wanted it to occupy a central position in the fight for political power. 'Afrikaans was made in South Africa to suit our African circumstances and way of life; it grew up together with our national character; it is the only bond that holds us together as a distinct nation; the only characteristic of our people', said the author Langenhoven.<sup>6</sup> Language was the starting point on the road to realising fully-fledged citizenship. Language activism also envisaged economic benefits. General Herzog foresaw that in the bureaucracy and the press more jobs would become available for white Afrikaans-speakers once a better position for Afrikaans had been gained.<sup>7</sup>

In 1925 Afrikaans was recognised as an official language of the Union of South Africa. This Afrikaans was still a nascent language, based on the Paarl variety of the Cape Dutch vernacular. In order to make this language more acceptable to the bourgeoisie, it was embellished with borrowings from Dutch. Not everyone was satisfied with the result. The Transvaal language advocates Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller regarded this type of Afrikaans as too close to the Paarl (Western Cape) form whereas they had hoped it would be closer to the Dutch varieties of Cape Dutch. For instance, they bemoaned the fact that imperfect tense forms had virtually disappeared from the new standard Afrikaans. A literature also had to be built up.<sup>8</sup> In Van Wyk Louw's view, a high-quality literature was the justification of national independence. Good poetry was a matter of national policy.<sup>9</sup> Even in the 1940s language users were still uncertain about the language norms of Afrikaans.<sup>10</sup>

The next target in the language struggle of the Afrikaners was equality with English. This became a possibility only after the National Party came to power in 1948 and made language equality within the civil service compulsory, and also introduced Afrikaans-medium education for Afrikaans-speaking white and coloured people. Beyond these fields, Afrikaans was too far behind English. Even after 1948, English remained the language of choice in the cities, in the business world and especially among black

<sup>6</sup> C.J. Langenhoven, *Versamelde werke*. Cape Town: Nasionale Pers 1938, Deel xii, 371.

<sup>7</sup> J.B.M. Hertzog, *Die Hertzogtoesprake*, Deel 3, April 1913-April 1918. Johannesburg: Perskor 1977, 264-265. Hertzog was a former Boer general and an Afrikaner nationalist politician.

<sup>8</sup> S. Swart, 'An aspect of the roles of Eugène Marais and Gustav Preller in the Second Language Movement c. 1905-1927', <http://academic.sun.ac.za/history/downloads/swart/eugenemarais.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> N.P. van Wyk Louw, *Versamelde prosa*, Vol. I. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau 1986, 18-25, 44-48.

<sup>10</sup> A. Deumert, *Language Standardization and Language Change. The Dynamics of Cape Dutch*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins 2004.

people. The preference of blacks for English was on the one hand due to the fact that since the nineteenth century they had been almost exclusively educated in English under the English colonial regime and (partly as a result of this education policy) because English was regarded by black people as the main gateway to Western knowledge and economic progress. In this regard Afrikaans was less significant; besides, it carried the stigma that it was used by white officials to implement the policy of apartheid. Consequently, Afrikaans was able to maintain its claims to equality with English only for as long as black people remained excluded from political power and Afrikaners constituted the majority within white politics.

#### IV

The language monument in Paarl was elected to commemorate the founding of an association that promoted the recognition of a variety of the Cape Dutch vernacular and the establishment of an Afrikaner national consciousness in which language was an important symbol of identity. This Afrikaner Nationalist sentiment existed in the planning of the Monument Committee right from the outset. According to the competition of 1965, the monument had to ‘symbolise the miracle of our cultural and political growth. [...] the first Afrikaans Language Movement that started here in Paarl was therefore much more than just a language movement; it was a movement for the cultural, political and religious liberation of the Afrikaans section of the population’.<sup>11</sup> The Republic Column of the Monument that shared the basin with the Language Column expressed these sentiments. In the iconography of the monument the roots of Afrikaans were ascribed to the rational powers of the ‘lucid West’. In the monument, ‘magical Africa’ is a continent that has to be guided by Afrikaans and by the Republic of South Africa. The report by the commission of experts of the competition mentions ‘the role of guidance and assistance that our country must play on the continent.’<sup>12</sup> The Language Column and Republic Column are positioned in the monument in a colonial opposition to the horizontal components, which are intended to represent Africa. According to this symbolism an originally rational Afrikaans language and a nation of European origin want to give guidance to an irrational and passive Africa.

Ten years later, when the unveiling took place, this pipe-dream of 1965 had long proved to be an illusion. In 1975 almost all of Africa had been decolonised. In 1974, Angola and Mozambique were the last to gain independence. A few months before the unveiling of the monument South African troops had started an ultimately abortive campaign against the Marxist MPLA, which was about to take over the government of Angola. Internationally, South Africa was becoming increasingly isolated because of its apartheid policy, while the black population was less and less willing to tolerate white minority rule.

In the meantime the government continued to pursue equality between Afrikaans and English in education. This had consequences for black schools only much later. Although it was decided in 1965 that from the last year of primary school Afrikaans would be used on an equal basis with English as the medium of instruction in black schools outside the homelands, this policy was never implemented in Soweto, for example. There it was only introduced in 1974. In 1975, however, black school boards

<sup>11</sup> Taalmuseum, Paarl, Dokumente oor Taalmonument, Die Afrikaanse Taalmonumentkomitee, Boukundige prysvraag, 12 April 1965.

<sup>12</sup> Taalmuseum, Paarl, Dokumente oor Taalmonument, Assessoreverslag van prysvraag, 21 January 1966.

in Transvaal instructed their schools to ignore this policy. One important reason for the resistance was that a greater role for Afrikaans as the medium of instruction was regarded as an excessive burden on pupils who were already finding it difficult to receive their education in English. Instead of acquiring subject knowledge, they would lose even more time learning an additional language of instruction. However, the deputy minister of Bantu education, Andries Treurnicht, stuck to his guns. 'In the white area of South Africa, where the government supplies the buildings, gives the subsidies and pays the teachers, it is surely our right to determine the language dispensation'. Tensions surrounding the use of Afrikaans existed in Soweto long before 16 June 1976, when the black pupils in Soweto rebelled.<sup>13</sup>

The speech made by John Vorster when the Language Monument was unveiled contains traces of a sense of being under threat and isolated. At the start of his speech he turned on critics in Africa, Europe and America who alleged that the Afrikaners were merely temporary residents in South Africa, remnants of colonialism. The existence of Afrikaans proved, in his view, precisely that Afrikaners were entitled to be in South Africa because Afrikaans had originated in Africa. 'All responsible people in the world and in Africa irrevocably accept that we have the right to be in South Africa and form part of Africa. [...] We can celebrate tonight knowing that we are recognized and that our title deed to be here is written in Afrikaans'.<sup>14</sup>

(The second part of the articles in *Die Burger* in which the unveiling of the Language Monument and Vorster's speech were reported on, was printed next to a photograph on which eight (!) white men kneel before the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. Given the symbolic overload of the ceremony, the impression is created that this juxtaposition was not coincidental.)<sup>15</sup>

The racial policy of the National Party government carried much of the responsibility for the isolation of institutionalised Afrikaans. Afrikaans-language universities were not accessible to coloured speakers of the language. The Afrikaans media presented Afrikaans mainly as a 'white man's language' and defended the apartheid regime. The special editions of *Die Burger* and *Paarl Post* published on the occasion of the unveiling of the monument contained few or no references to coloured speakers of Afrikaans, whereas they accounted for almost half of the total number of native speakers and an article was devoted to the much smaller 'Jewish contribution to Afrikaans'.<sup>16</sup> The government did not exactly deal leniently with critical authors either. In the Language Year, shortly before the unveiling of the monument, the Afrikaans poet Breyten Breytenbach was arrested on suspicion of terrorism. On 13 October, two days after the big day in Paarl, a report on the Language Monument and a report on Breytenbach's wife, who had filed a request for a visa in Paris to visit her husband in prison, shared the front page of *Die Burger*.

## V

After 1994 the Language Monument initially became the target of loathing of the abuse of power by Afrikaners. Breytenbach's labelling of the monument as a concrete penis in *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* was repeated with variations. Some critics

<sup>13</sup> J.C. Steyn, *Tuiste in eie taal. Die behoud en bestaan van Afrikaans*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1980, 255-305.

<sup>14</sup> *Die Burger*, 11 October 1975.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Bylae tot *Paarl Post*, 15 August 1975; Afrikaans 1875-1975, special supplement to *Die Burger* for the unveiling of the Language Monument on 10 October 1975.

even thought that they could detect the stink of urine at the base of the language column. The curves on the horizontal part of the monument which were supposed to symbolise Africa were described as ‘little turds’.<sup>17</sup>

The new government put forward a proposal to declare the Language Monument a monument to all languages in South Africa. The attempts to profane the monument or to change the original meaning by decree were short lived. Year after year the subsidy for maintenance costs was simply paid out.

In 2009 the Language Monument has become a popular attraction for foreign tourists. Only one third of the visitors were South Africans; two thirds came from abroad.<sup>18</sup> The monument has developed into one of many enclosed (and therefore safe) tourist enclaves in South Africa.<sup>19</sup> There are helpful elucidations of the symbolism of the Monument in various foreign languages. Afterwards the visitor can have coffee and buy souvenirs, most of which are the usual collection of ethnic art and T-shirts. Information on Afrikaans is hard to find. The Language Monument prefers to advertise the ‘spectacular sunsets and sundowners’ rather than the Afrikaans language.<sup>20</sup> Like so many others in the new South Africa, the monument has been repackaged. It is now a Paarl version of Table Mountain or Cape Point, more a natural phenomenon for the avid tourist gaze than a place of historical significance.

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<sup>17</sup> Case No: 1995/08 SABC – Agenda, Die Taalmonument; Afrikaner-Kultuur (AKB ), D.J. Malan en Andere (Complainant) vs. SABC (Respondent). Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa: <http://www.bccsa.co.za> (viewed 15 September 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Language Monument, Paarl, Visitor statistics, April 2005 to March 2007 (with thanks to Gerda Odendaal, student of Afrikaans and Dutch, University of Stellenbosch, for obtaining the statistics).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. A. Grundlingh, ‘A Cultural Conundrum? Old Monuments and New Regimes: The Voortrekker Monument as Symbol of Afrikaner Power in a Postapartheid South Africa’, in: *Radical History Review* 81 (Fall 2001), 95-112.

<sup>20</sup> Language Monument Restaurant, <http://www.tourismcapewineland.co.za/za/guide/6de,en,SCH1/objectId,CTR4201za,curr,ZAR,season,at2,selectedEntry,home/home.html> (viewed 15 September 2007).

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## The *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*

*Rufus Gouws*

### I

For the average language user, a dictionary is something that you do not argue with, that you rely on with varying levels of success to regain lost knowledge, for help with crossword puzzles and that you sometimes, very successfully, use to press flowers or as a doorstop. But despite the nature of the use of a dictionary – whether it is in fulfilling its genuine purpose or not – the typical user sees the dictionary as an authoritative container of grammatical and other information that provides the holy truth. That’s why in spoken language people do not refer to ‘*a* dictionary’ but to ‘*the* dictionary’ – almost like *The Bible*. Not everybody is aware of the existence of a variety of dictionary types, each having to comply with its own typological criteria and help a specific target user group in a particular way to meet their specific needs in accordance with their research skills. One particular dictionary can’t be everything for everybody – that is something that dictionary users often have to be reminded of. The fact that each specific dictionary has a distinct role in the recording and reproduction of language is also seldom emphasised. Moreover, the fact that between the wealth of dictionaries there is one which can be seen as the crown jewel of the dictionary family is also not always recognised. This jewel is the comprehensive explanatory dictionary, and in Afrikaans this typological place is occupied by the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (Dictionary of the Afrikaans Language), commonly known as the WAT.

The WAT as comprehensive dictionary is a source of information – as supplement, as affirmation and often also as reminder. But as Afrikaans source of reminding it is not only the content of the *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* that is relevant, but the history of this dictionary as well that calls one’s attention to numerous places of remembrance. As far as the content of the WAT is concerned, one must take note of the fact that a comprehensive dictionary typically consists of multiple volumes compiled over decades – for example, it took 148 years to complete the comprehensive *Het Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (The Dictionary of the Dutch Language). The comprehensiveness of such a dictionary lies in its choice of items included for treatment, in the variety of data types that are treated in the dictionary as well as the nature and the extent of their treatment. The comprehensiveness with regard to the choice of words brings about the fact that such a dictionary includes a lot of words and phrases for treatment and in that way makes the user aware of various old and lesser-known language forms. The dictionary becomes a recollection of bygone and less ordinary language use; this is what the WAT is par excellence. In his reaction to a very negative discussion of his *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary* of 1961 in *Life* magazine, a discussion which, like many others, condemned this dictionary for not begin prescriptive enough, the American lexicographer Philip Gove said the following:

The responsibility of a dictionary is to record language, not set its style. For us to attempt to prescribe language would be like *Life* reporting the news as its editors would prefer it to happen.

The way in which a dictionary gives account of language and language use is determined by the dictionary types, the dictionary's functions and, especially, the target users and their needs. Smaller dictionaries, like school, learners' and even standard dictionaries aim to portray the standard variety of a language.<sup>1</sup> A comprehensive dictionary, however, has to give a comprehensive account of the given language.

As a comprehensive dictionary, the WAT is seen as the most exhaustive Afrikaans lexicographic source. It is the dictionary which must portray the full extent of Afrikaans with all its varieties and dialects, the dictionary which has to give an exhaustive account of the Afrikaans lexicon, the dictionary which, through its choice of items, becomes a treasure chest of the language filled with lexical places of remembrance. While a smaller dictionary like a standard dictionary is aimed at the present and the future and therefore has a stronger normative role, the inclusion and treatment in a comprehensive dictionary is aimed at the past and the present and the dictionary therefore has a strong informative approach. The informative nature of the WAT forces the lexicographers to acknowledge the standard as well as non-standard varieties of Afrikaans. There may not exist a purist attitude that tries to isolate the Afrikaans language from the influence of other South African languages, that tries to ignore the reality and the influence of contact among languages, or that tries to allay the dynamic nature of language change. The real language of the real language users as practiced in actual usage situations should be treated in this dictionary. As a language treasure the WAT must record, treat and protect the lexical riches of Afrikaans – and allay the sentence of evanescence. By focussing on the present as well as on the past, the WAT must become a place of remembrance for members of the Afrikaans community where words as well as other aspects of language can be recalled.

Paging through any of the thirteen volumes of the WAT that have already appeared calls up many memories for Afrikaans native speakers. The variety of dialects as well as idioms and set expressions confirms the richness of Afrikaans. The strong Dutch basis of older Afrikaans, in addition to the numerous non-Dutch words of both the present and recent past also show the influence of other languages, particularly English. This choice of words gives a clear indication of the changing nature of the Afrikaans vocabulary. A noticeable difference between recent volumes and older ones can be found in the inclusion and treatment of technical language. During the earlier phases of the WAT's development, there were not enough Afrikaans technical dictionaries and the WAT consequently included and treated numerous technical terms. Today the Afrikaans technical lexicography is well developed and the WAT only records a limited part of that section of the Afrikaans lexicon. It is specifically the technical terminology used in communication between expert and lay person that is considered for inclusion in the WAT.

Frequent reference has been made to the linguistic content of the WAT and will therefore not be discussed here. The emphasis of this contribution rather falls on certain aspects of the origin, development and positioning of the WAT. The focus therefore is

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<sup>1</sup> Compare the discussions on typology in numerous places, among others Zgusta, L. *Manual of Lexicography*. Den Haag: Mouton 1971; Gouws, R.H. & Prinsloo, D.J. *Principles and Practice of South African Lexicography*. Stellenbosch: SunMedia 2005 and Gouws, R.H. *Leksikografie*. Cape Town: Academica 1989.

not on an approach from the theoretical lexicography, but rather on the reality of the lexicographic practice.

## II

Many good and bad memories are linked to the history of the WAT. There are memories of how to do something right and how not to do it; memories of how not to start something and indications of how to complete something; memories of isolated struggles, but also memories of successful cooperation between theory and practice; memories of insensitive dealings with language and attempts to overcompensate for this insensitivity; memories of how to become the catalyst for the development of a new discipline, but also of how to be the stimulus for further growth in this discipline.

The early history of the WAT has been thoroughly documented by among others Snijman (1964) and especially Gericke (1991). The work on the WAT started in 1926 but was preceded by a lot of preparation work, although history would show that this preparation work was not sufficiently aimed at the compilation of a comprehensive dictionary. The initial plan was to compile a much smaller dictionary meant to be completed in three years. According to a further agreement, that dictionary should have been completed by 1936 but that did not happen. In 1944 part of Smith's manuscript was handed over to Prof. J. du P. Scholtz for review. His findings were, among others, that there was a lack of direction from the editor in chief. When the first editor-in-chief, Dr J.J. Smith, took early retirement due to illness in 1945, nothing had as yet been published. Years later, a later editor-in-chief, Dr. F.J. Snijman, made the following comment with regard to Smith's retirement: 'For his own feeling both his life's work and his life ended in ruins.'<sup>2</sup> From this memory, future editors-in-chief could learn the necessity of including thorough planning and direction as essential elements of the WAT.

Although according to the initial contract between the Minister of Education and Home Affairs, Nasionale Pers (National Press - currently Media 24) and the University of Stellenbosch the dictionary was supposed to be compiled with government support, a lack of government funds resulted in the University of Stellenbosch carrying the financial responsibility of the dictionary project on their own from April 1945 to March 1946.<sup>3</sup> This was characteristic of the continued and important supporting role that the University would play through the years – and still plays today.

For many people, slow progress has become one of the lasting memories of the WAT. During a meeting of the Board of Control in March 1946 it was decided by the Board that 'a new editor-in-chief must agree to the completion of a manuscript of the whole dictionary ready for press in a period of five years after the starting of his term of office and ... to the publication of a number of letters two years after his commencement of office'.<sup>4</sup> The position was offered to Prof. J. du P. Scholtz who declined it because: 'I don't have the conviction that the Dictionary is placed on the foundation necessary for its satisfactory continuation and completion'.<sup>5</sup> According to him it was also impossible

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<sup>2</sup> *Unpublished*. Snijman, F.J. Die Afrikaanse Woordenboek teen sy agtergrond. Manuscripts: WAT archives 1963. (163).

<sup>3</sup> F.J. Snijman, *U woorde, u woordeboek*. Stellenbosch: Raad van Beheer oor Die Afrikaanse Woordeboek 1964, 14.

<sup>4</sup> F.J. Snijman, *U woorde, u woordeboek*. Stellenbosch: Raad van Beheer oor Die Afrikaanse Woordeboek 1964, 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*.

to complete the work within five years. The validity of Scholtz's finding would be confirmed in the years that followed.

In January 1947 Dr. P.C. Schoonees became the second editor-in-chief. This was actually a new beginning and not just a continuation of the editorial work of the WAT. In the modern lexicographic theory the compilation of a dictionary plan according to which the editorial work is set out in detail is seen as one of the most important early phases of any lexicographic process. Dr. Schoonees not only arranged for the compilation work of the WAT to start afresh, but also worked out a set of general editorial principles. Good progress during Schoonees's term was however followed by a very slow approach during the term of his successor, Dr. F.J. Snijman. Volume IV (H-I) of the WAT was released in 1961 and was the last volume under the chief editorship of Dr. Schoonees. The first volume under the chief editorship of his successor, Volume V (J-KJ), was released in 1968. The letter 'K' became a serious swamp for the WAT because Volume VI which appeared in 1976 only covered the partial article stretch KLA-KOL and Volume VII (KOM-KOR), partly under the editorship of Snijman and partly under the editorship of his successor, Mr. D.C. Hauptfleisch, appeared in 1984. With the release of Volume VIII (KOS-KYW) the letter 'K' was finally completed in 1991. Critics strongly spoke out against, among other things, the slow progress. They even were of the opinion that if that pace was kept up, it would take a further 120 years to complete the WAT. During Hauptfleisch's term, the editorial team seriously reflected on the slow progress and a new editorial system brought about real change which led to an increased pace. This was also characteristic of the era of Dr. D.J. van Schalkwyk and applies as well to the term of the current editor-in-chief, Dr. W.F. Botha, although forced personnel cuts led to a slight deceleration. Since 1991 the increased pace led to the completion of Volume IX (L) in 1994, Volume X (M) in 1996, Volume XI (N-O) in 2000, Volume XII (P-Q) in 2005 and XIII (R) in 2009. The current projection is that the WAT will be completed by 2025. The memories of progress that was too slow led to a reality of increased production.

### III

The WAT as comprehensive lexicographic project's reflection of the full lexicon of Afrikaans not only provides memories of language forms, but the history of this dictionary also indicates a significant influence on the interaction with theoretical lexicography.

The fact that, when work on the WAT was started, the compilation of a comprehensive explanatory dictionary for Afrikaans was premature, can be seen when looking at the reaction to the publication of the first volumes. At that stage in the broad field of Afrikaans linguistics there was very little talk indeed of attention to theoretical lexicography. Therefore no review or discussion followed that focused on the lexicographic quality of the WAT. There were however short discussions and announcements which showed a very positive reaction on the release of each volume and saw it as a 'national event'.

The first full discussion of a volume of the WAT was that of Combrink (1962), a probing critique of Volume IV.<sup>6</sup> Although other contributions on the level of theoretical lexicography had been made earlier and were still being made in those years,

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<sup>6</sup> J.G.H. Combrink, 'n Prinsipiële beskouing oor WAT IV', in: *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 2 (4) (1962), 199-221.

Combrink's review took a new course, namely a linguistic-based critique of the WAT.<sup>7</sup> In the general development of the lexicography it was also still an early phase, characterised by a strict focus on the linguistic content of dictionaries.<sup>8</sup> That was also one of the core elements of Combrink's review. Even more important than the value of Combrink's review as a commentary on the WAT was the fact that it was the start of valuable development of lexicographic theory in Afrikaans – and in this the WAT played no small role. For approximately two decades after the publication of Combrink's review the most important contributions to the theoretical lexicography of Afrikaans were probing discussions of the various volumes of the WAT.<sup>9</sup> The WAT wasn't only a stopover for language users with a thirst for knowledge of the language, but also for linguists and theoretical lexicographers who wanted to quench their thirst for criticism. The important role of the WAT in the development of the theoretical lexicography of Afrikaans should never be underestimated. Initially it was a catalyst – something causing change without changing itself. The change regarded the interest of Afrikaans linguists in lexicography, but despite their fierce criticism, the feeling existed that it led to little change in the WAT. However, the WAT played a double role in this development: besides being the catalyst, it was also the stimulant and the target of the lexicographical discussion, but also a product which finally reacted to the criticism. Change eventually came and theory and practice showed interaction. On the one hand the lexicographic practice of the WAT in due course made changes which led to the improvement of the lexicographic work, but on the other hand the Afrikaans theoretical lexicography also adapted due to the method of work and suggestions from the practice of the WAT. In this process the WAT must be seen as the most important stimulus in the development of theoretical lexicography in Afrikaans.

Lexicographers must refrain from placing themselves between a word and its meaning. As repository of information, a dictionary should not reflect the subjective views of its compilers. Prejudice on the level of for example politics and religion or the insensitive handling of sexist or racist words is not acceptable – also not in a comprehensive dictionary. It does not however prevent the lexicographer from including such words. But the way in which they are presented and treated is important.

Earlier volumes of the WAT didn't always treat such words with the necessary sensitivity. Especially Volume V (1968), the volume in which the alphabetical partial article stretch K-KJ was treated, is an example of the insensitive treatment of lexical items with a racist value. But even in later volumes, among others Volume VII (KOM-KOR) (1984), the necessary sensitivity in this regard is still not sufficient.

A fundamental breakthrough came in 1989 when a discussion on the lexicographic treatment of sensitive items was organised by Dirk van Schalkwyk. Besides the WAT's editorial staff, a number of local and overseas linguists as well as practical and theoretical lexicographers were invited to participate in the discussion. Invitees who were unable to attend were asked to provide their comments in writing. During this

<sup>7</sup> Compare S.P.E. Boshoff: 'n Standaardwoordeboek van Afrikaans', in: *Gedenkboek ter ere van die GRA*. Potchefstroom, (1926), 307-328, F.F. Odendal, 'Leksikografiese probleme I', in *Standpunte* 14(6) (1961), 53-61, F.F. Odendal, 'Leksikografiese probleme II', in *Standpunte* 15(1) (1961a), 49-54 and F.F. Odendal, 'Leksikografiese probleme III', in *Standpunte* 16(5) (1962), 48-55.

<sup>8</sup> Compare R.H. Gouws, 'Meilensteine auf dem historischen Weg der Metalexikographie', in *Lexicographica* 21 (2005), 158-178.

<sup>9</sup> Compare J.G.H. Combrink, 'Die sesde deel van die WAT', in: *Standpunte* 140 (32-2) 1979, 49-64, F.F. Odendal, 'Plus positief en plus negatief', in *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 19 (1) (1979), 24-41 and R.H. Gouws, 'Die sewende deel van die *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*' in: *Standpunte* 185 (1985), 13-25.

discussion, the quality of the WAT as place of remembrance came under fire during the planning and the discussion.

The event took place at a time of extreme sensitivity with regard to different forms of racism – especially in connection to the more insensitive treatment in the volumes of the WAT that had already been published. In order to show the WAT's new sensitivity with regard to racist language use, the editorial staff suggested that all racist lexical items must be excluded from future volumes of the WAT. Some participants agreed, but others found this unacceptable. It was argued that the WAT would then neglect its duty to account for the full lexical stock of Afrikaans. One of the prominent international metalexigraphers, Prof. Ladislav Zgusta, who could not attend the event but sent his comments to the editorial staff, summarised the matter well by saying that such a plan of action would amount to 'lexicographic myopia'. It was then decided that sensitive terms would be included, clearly labelled and treated briefly and to the point. The complete collection of recordings of the word's use would be stored in the WAT's electronic corpus where it would be accessible to researchers. A dictionary like the WAT may not only be a purist reminder of all that is well and good in the language, but should also remind us of words and the use of words that are to the detriment of the language.

#### IV

During the last decade the WAT has also focused increasingly on acting as a source of remembrance on another level. In the treatment of Afrikaans in general, insufficient attention has been paid to the description and treatment of etymology. Cooperation between the Buro van die WAT and the Instituut voor Nederlandse Lexicologie in Leiden led to the publication of *Etimologiewoordeboek van Afrikaans* (2003) and its supplement in 2007. These two products of the WAT have also become valuable sources of remembrance for and of Afrikaans.

Despite a hesitant start and a rough middle phase, the WAT is currently well underway to treat comprehensively the lexicon of Afrikaans. The dictionary therefore provides a lot of food for thought about Afrikaans. Within the broader Afrikaans lexicographic terrain, one of the most important places of remembrance in the development of the WAT is its contribution to the establishment of the theoretical lexicographical discussion in South Africa.

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## And the Greatest is... N.P. van Wyk Louw

*Luc Renders*

### I

In the detective novel *Orion* (2000) by Deon Meyer there are a number of references to N.P. van Wyk Louw. His poem 'Die hond van God' (God's dog) is mentioned in the same breath as the novel *Sewe dae by die Silbersteins* (Seven days at the Silbersteins) by Etienne Leroux: 'the reading and discussion of "Die hond van God" by Van Wyk Louw continued all through the night until Sunday afternoon after lunch'.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this reference is to demonstrate the cultural interest of the mother of Zatopek van Heerden, a police detective and the main character in the novel, and consequently of explaining Zatopek's exposure to intellectual stimuli. Van Wyk Louw's poem 'Ballade van die nagtelike ure' (Ballad of the night-time hours) also features prominently in *Orion*. Three stanzas from the poem are quoted. When listening to his older mistress reciting the poem, Zatopek realizes 'for the first time what art really is about'.<sup>2</sup> His obsessional quest for the love of his life is an antidote to the dark despair which gets hold of him after every brief, casual love affair. This quest leads Zatopek to Nonnie Nagel. But precisely his passionate love for Nonnie becomes Zatopek's Achilles' heel; in 'Ballade van die nagtelike ure' he recognizes his own sad predicament: 'I did not know that "Ballade van die nagtelike ure" would become the crystal ball of my life. I did not know how irrevocably and dramatically the morning of my life would spill me as flotsam over its rim'.<sup>3</sup> In the TV-serial based on *Orion* Van Wyk Louw is not as prominently present as in the detective novel itself anymore but at the height of their love affair Zatopek gives a book by Van Wyk Louw as a present to Nonnie.

Not only a writer of detective novels but also Afrikaans singers find inspiration in the poetry by Van Wyk Louw. To mention just a few examples: echoes of Van Wyk Louw's poem 'Jy was 'n kind' (You were a child) reverberate through the song 'Heiden Heiland' (Heathen Saviour) from the CD *Swanesang* (Swan song) by the band fokofpolisiekar. The playwright Deon Opperman reworks in his poem 'Die plukker' (The picker) one of Van Wyk Louw's most well-known poems: 'Die Beiteltjie' (The little chisel). On her CD *Amanda Strydom: woman by the mirror*, the singer Amanda Strydom renders Deon Opperman's poem into song. Willie Strauss has made a CD and a theatrical production entitled *Jou ma se poësie en anner gedigte* (Your mother's poetry and other poems). Some of the songs are musical settings of poems by Van Wyk Louw. In his cycle *Vier liefdesgedigte* (Four love poems) and in *Die dobbelsteen* (The

<sup>1</sup> 'n voorlees en bespreking van Van Wyk Louw se "Die hond van God" het regdeur die nag aangehou tot Sondagmiddag ná ete'. D. Meyer, *Orion*. Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau 2000, 85.

<sup>2</sup> 'Vir die eerste keer wat kuns werklik is'. D. Meyer, *Orion*. Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau 2000, 100.

<sup>3</sup> 'Ek het nie geweet dat "Ballade van die nagtelike ure" 'n kristalbal van my lewe sou word nie. Ek het nie geweet hoe finaal en dramaties die môre van my lewe my as opdriksel oor die rand sou mors nie'. D. Meyer, *Orion*. Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau 2000, 100.

die) the classical composer Cromwell Everson has put to music respectively three and two poems by Van Wyk Louw.

Cabaret is another form of popular culture. On the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of Van Wyk Louw's birth in 1906, the cabaret *N.P. van Wyk Louw en die meisies* (N.P. van Wyk Louw and the girls) was put on stage. This show was described as 'circus with narration'.<sup>4</sup> It was obviously not the intention of the producers to create great art but to provide light and somewhat saucy entertainment: 'Thus we prepared for the audience the most scandalous episodes from his life in the most exciting ways'.<sup>5</sup> This approach – popular art should indeed not be too difficult – obviously relegates the more intellectually challenging poems by Van Wyk Louw to the dustbin of history. To the question 'How do you deal with certain aesthetic mannerisms in the poetry of Louw?' the director Albert Maritz provides the following answer: 'We deliberately use little of his poetry and even less of his prose, and when his poetry is quoted, it is his 'reality'-poetry. Poetry which illustrates his values in life and which he prioritized: love, beauty, his religion and politics, his love for his country'.<sup>6</sup>

Does this mean that the work of Van Wyk Louw is to such an extent subjected to the ravages of time that it has become necessary to deal with it very selectively? Or has the present-day cultural climate become so shallow in comparison to Van Wyk Louw's day and age that there is hardly any interest in or time for the more precious and intellectually challenging things in life? *Die huisgenoot* (The housemate), the popular weekly in which Van Wyk Louw published a column, cannot be compared by any stretch of the imagination with its present-day version. A lot less raunchy than *Van Wyk Louw en die meisies* is *Klippie-nat-spu, van die haas!* (Pebble-wet-spit, from the hare), a word and musical programme based on *Klipwerk* (Stonework) from the collection *Nuwe verse* (New poems) and the musical documentary made for television *Big, bigger than ... N.P. van Wyk Louw*, which according to the Internet site of Kyknet, presents an overview of the ups and downs in the life of this giant in the history of South Africa.

Van Wyk Louw is omnipresent not only in more popular formats but also in highbrow literature, and his influence reaches far and wide. Winged words from his poems are often used as titles of anthologies such as *Die dye trek die dye aan* (The thighs attract the thighs) by Antjie Krog and Johann de Lange, *Ons klein en silwerige planeet* (Our small and silvery planet) by Johann Lodewyk Marais and Ad Zuiderent, and *O wye en droewe land* (O wide and sad country) by Adriaan van Dis and Robert Dorsman. Even though the poetical climate has undergone a seismic shift – poets no longer strive for the purest expression of the most exalted emotion or thought; contemporary poets are already contented when they can quietly sit and chew on a bone – the aftershocks of Van Wyk Louw's poetry can still be clearly registered. The poetry by a wide range of older poets from Johann Lodewyk Marais to Antjie Krog is clearly indebted to him. And in the poems by the younger generation of Afrikaans poets such as Ilse van Staden, Gert Vlok Nel and Danie Marais echoes of poems, stanzas or verses from Van Wyk Louw can be heard.

<sup>4</sup> '[s]irkus-met-vertelling'. H. Morgan-Hollanders & A. Maritz, 'N.P. van Wyk Louw en die meisies: Haydee Hollander gesels met die produksiespan', available on: [www.litnet.co.za](http://www.litnet.co.za).

<sup>5</sup> 'Dus het ons die opspraakwekkendste dele van sy lewe vir die gehoor probeer berei op die opwindendste maniere moontlik'. H. Morgan-Hollanders & A. Maritz, 'N.P. van Wyk Louw en die meisies: Haydee Hollander gesels met die produksiespan', available on: [www.litnet.co.za](http://www.litnet.co.za).

<sup>6</sup> 'Hoe kom jy verby seker estetiese geaffekteerdhede in Louw se poësie?' 'Ons gebruik doelbewus min van sy poësie en nog minder van sy prosa, en wanneer die poësie ter sprake kom, is 'realiteits'-verse ter sprake. Verse wat sy lewenswaarhede onderstreep en prioriteit geniet het in sy lewe: liefde, skoonheid, sy godsdiens en politiek, sy liefde vir sy land'. H. Morgan-Hollanders & A. Maritz, 'N.P. van Wyk Louw en die meisies: Haydee Hollander gesels met die produksiespan', available on: [www.litnet.co.za](http://www.litnet.co.za).

Not only poets but also prose writers quite often get drawn into an intertextual discussion with Van Wyk Louw. In *Die boek van toeval en toeverlaat* (2006) (The book of coincidence and consolation) by Ingrid Winterbach, the main character has an enormous admiration for shells because they are the result of a predictable, mathematical process. Shells are perfectly rhythmical and balanced: 'Like Piero in the poem by Van Wyk Louw, the nautilus shell lives beautifully in mathematics'.<sup>7</sup> This reference evokes two poems by Van Wyk Louw: 'Piero della Francesca'<sup>8</sup> and 'Pure mathematics'.<sup>9</sup> However, the novel makes the point that this state of complete harmony and utter perfection is unattainable to man. Man is the plaything of capricious forces. Loss and mortality are inherently part of his destiny.

Not only man's striving for perfection but also the ominous, uncontrollable, dark urges of man were confronted in Van Wyk Louw's poetry. In the epic poem *Raka* they form the biggest threat to progress, civilization and order. The novel *Raka – die roman* (2005) (*Raka – the novel*) by Koos Kombuis starts where Van Wyk Louw's poem ends: the battle between good and bad, light and darkness has been decided in favour of the forces of evil. They can now go on the rampage. In the Afrikaner community they already hold sway. The picture which is sketched of the family of minister Theunis Opperman, which is supposed to be exemplary, is extremely disenchanting. The fact that the novel is set in Stellenbosch, the bastion of the Afrikaner, just adds insult to injury.

*Raka – die roman* is a sombre book. Fortunately, the lavish use of humour makes the novel lightly digestible. The characters created by Koos Kombuis and the situations in which they get entangled often have a slapstick quality to them. The absurd exaggerations and the excessive larger-than-life characterizations make the novel into a hilarious read. Whether the reader keeps on laughing until the closing paragraphs is, however, not so certain. The portrayal of the total moral decay of the Opperman family – at the beginning of the final scene 'the children, completely stoned after taking Jozi's pills, sit and listen to Jan Blohm. 'Listen,' says Jozi. 'He sings Van Wyk Louw'<sup>10</sup> – suggests that nothing is left of the lofty ideals Van Wyk Louw tried to infuse into his people. Is change, fear and loss the fate of a people, which after 1994 has lost its political power, has to fight for its survival once again and as a result has to face a severe crisis of identity? It is bitterly ironic that this extrapolation takes place on the basis of an epic poem by a poet and thinker who had such high aspirations for his people and his country. And *Raka – die roman* is child's play in comparison with *Kontrei* (2003) (*Region*) by Kleinboer to whom Koos Kombuis dedicated his novel, or *Horrelpoot* (2006) (*Trencherman*) the dystopic novel written by Eben Venter.

*Raka – die roman* is not great art – this cannot be expected of a writer who has chosen the name Koos Kombuis (Koos Kitchen) as a pseudonym – but the futuristic vision which is sketched of the Afrikaner and by implication of the Afrikaner people, is horrifyingly pessimistic. Inevitably Van Wyk Louw's thoughts on literature and culture, language and people are poignantly activated and radically deconstructed in Koos Kombuis's novel.

<sup>7</sup> 'Soos Piero in Van Wyk Louw se gedig, leef die nautiluskulp skoon in die wiskunde'. I. Winterbach, *Die boek van toeval en toeverlaat*. Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau 2006, 307.

<sup>8</sup> N.P. van Wyk Louw, *Versamelde gedigte*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1981, 256.

<sup>9</sup> N.P. van Wyk Louw, *Versamelde gedigte*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1981, 182.

<sup>10</sup> 'sit die kinders, diep gerook van Jozi se pille, en luister na Jan Blohm. 'Hoor daar,' sê Jozi. 'Hy sing van N.P. van Wyk Louw'. K. Kombuis, *Raka - die roman*. Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau 2005, 221.

## II

Van Wyk Louw aspired to give legitimacy to the Afrikaner people through the creation of works of art of outstanding beauty. In order to achieve this objective, Afrikaans literature had to break free from the cosy local realism which had characterized it until then. Through the intrepid depiction of all aspects of human life, Afrikaans literature should strive to embody universal truths. The aristocratic artist should make this possible. Van Wyk Louw saw himself as the spokesperson for, and the representative of this ideal. Apart from the pompousness, emotionalism and self-aggrandizement to which this occasionally led, Van Wyk Louw has in his own poetry according to general consensus succeeded in reaching a superior level: 'With all he has written, Van Wyk Louw is the greatest poet in Afrikaans literature' is the assessment of John Kannemeyer in his *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse literatuur* (1978) (History of Afrikaans literature).<sup>11</sup>

Van Wyk Louw's ambition to create an outstanding literature cannot be isolated from his thoughts on the position and the role of the writer in his community and on the importance of the literary work. While the literary work expresses on the one hand everything that makes a people unique, it can on the other hand transcend a people by opening up a wider perspective and thus by broadening a people's intellectual horizons. Van Wyk Louw writes the following about the importance of the writer C. Louis Leipoldt:

In the days of our greatest need Leipoldt was the *heart* of the Afrikaans people ...

At that time Leipoldt talked, put into words our ache and he let this Afrikaans world of ours shine of a love which has grown during hundreds of years ... He at one stage personified the *intellect* of our people. Maybe he was not a great thinker himself, but he had something in himself which reached beyond the thinking of our people. In many respects he bumped against the narrow confines of our small Afrikaans way of thinking ... But he showed a whole generation that there are things lying outside of us.<sup>12</sup>

Undoubtedly when he wrote this, Van Wyk Louw was also thinking of himself. It is not surprising that Van Wyk Louw was a staunch defender of the literary products of the younger generation of writers, though, as was the case with Jan Rabie, he also had a number of reservations.

Whereas the poetry of Van Wyk Louw is not directly politically involved, his plays most of the time deal with current social issues. Moreover, a number of them are occasional plays or radio plays which were commissioned, such as *Die dieper reg: 'n spel van die oordeel van 'n volk* (1938) (Profound justice: a play about the judgement on a people) which was written on the occasion of the centenary of the Great Trek. It was performed during a popular festival organized by the Afrikaans Cultural Council of Pretoria celebrating the laying of the cornerstone of the Voortrekker Monument on 16

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<sup>11</sup> 'Met dit alles is Van Wyk Louw die grootste digtersfiguur van die Afrikaanse letterkunde'. J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse literatuur . Deel I*. Kaapstad: Academica 1978, 437.

<sup>12</sup> 'In die dae van ons grootste nood was Leipoldt die *hart* van die Afrikaanse volk ... Toe het Leipoldt gepraat, woorde gegee aan ons smart en hierdie Afrikaanse wêreld van ons laat opglans van 'n liefde wat in honderde jare gegroei het ... Hy het op een tydstip die *intellek* van ons volk verpersoonlik. Hy was miskien self geen groot denker nie, maar hy het iets in hom gehad wat buite die denk van ons volk gereik het. Hy het hom in baie opsigte teen die eng grense van ons Afrikaanse gedagewêreldjie gestamp ... Maar hy het aan 'n hele geslag getoon dat daar dinge buitekant ons lê'. J.C. Kannemeyer, *Leipoldt*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1999, 656.

December 1938. The play attracted large audiences. *Die pluimsaad waai ver of bitter begin* (The seed is blown faraway or bitter beginning) is a play Van Wyk Louw was commissioned to write in 1966, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of South Africa becoming a republic. *Berei in die woestyn* (Prepared in the desert) was written and performed in 1968 at the 'Feast of the soil' which was organized just once. A number of the radio plays by Van Wyk Louw were commissioned and broadcast by the SAUK, the Afrikaans radio service.

H.F. Verwoerd, then prime minister, lashed out sharply at *Die pluimsaad waai ver of bitter begin* which he denounced as unpatriotic. Van Wyk Louw was very much taken aback by Verwoerd's stinging attack. His play was intended to support the Afrikaner cause: an act of remembrance of the Anglo-Boer war and a warning against internal division. His play was not meant to discredit Afrikaner nationalistic ideology but on the contrary to reaffirm and to reinforce it. The negative reactions to his play in Afrikaner nationalistic circles were founded on a misinterpretation of its message.

In his plays Van Wyk Louw did not try to break down the protective fences erected by Afrikaner nationalists: 'When somebody says that I am a rotten writer, I just shrug – who am I to judge? But when my Afrikanership is put into question, that can still sting, and very painfully indeed ... When there is a call for young poets who sing really nationalistically, one can easily say: 'What has happened to Van Wyk Louw, who has tried to do exactly that for the last thirty years?''<sup>13</sup>

Van Wyk Louw was a prominent writer but also an academic and a well-known personality. He reached a wide audience with his columns, which appeared amongst others in *Die huisgenoot*. He reflects on literature, literary criticism, Afrikaans, Afrikaans literature, his own creative work, the role of the Afrikaans writer, Afrikaner nationalism, the formation of a people, etc. Art and people always get inextricably intertwined. In the preface to *Berigte te velde* (1939) (Messages from the battle field) Van Wyk Louw writes:

But when re-reading these texts it seemed to me as if one conviction lay at the basis of all of them, an inclination to bring together two points of view which are normally sharply opposed to one another: 1. a belief in the primacy of the purely aesthetic in art, and 2. the conviction that such a 'purely aesthetic' art is a big, even a determining factor in the life of a people – and that this has not only to do with the quality of the life within that people, but even on a more fundamental level with the right of existence of that people itself.<sup>14</sup>

Van Wyk Louw had the ambition and the vision to pry Afrikaans culture loose from its suffocating mediocrity. He wanted to give so much momentum to a new language and a young people that it would allow them to claim their rightful position amongst other more established languages and nations. He saw himself in the role of a facilitator. Through his poetry and his essays he gave the Afrikaans people the self-confidence that

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<sup>13</sup> 'As iemand sê ek is 'n vrot skrywer, haal ek my skouers op – wie is ek om te oordeel? Maar as my Afrikanerskap in twyfel getrek word, kan dit nog seer maak, bitter seer ... As gevra word om jonger digters wat eg nasionaal sing, kan een maklik sê: 'Wat het gebeur met Van Wyk Louw, wat dit al dertig jaar probeer doen?'. J.C. Steyn, *Van Wyk Louw. 'n Lewensverhaal. Deel II*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1998, 1046.

<sup>14</sup> 'Maar by die herlees van die stukke het dit my voorgekom asof daar een oortuiging aan almal ten grondslag lê, 'n neiging om twee standpunte saam te vat wat anders skerp teenoor mekaar gestel word; 1. 'n geloof aan die primaat van die suiwer estetiese in die kuns, en 2. die oortuiging dat so 'n "suiwer estetiese" kuns 'n groot, selfs 'n beslissende faktor in die lewe van 'n volk is – en dat dit nie alleen met die kwaliteit van die lewe binne daardie volk te doen het nie, maar nog dieper, met die bestaansreg van die volk self'. N.P. van Wyk Louw, *Versamelde prosa. Deel I*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg 1986, 3.

it did not have before. On a cultural level, he achieved what Afrikaans political leaders brought about with the election victory of the National Party in 1948: a renewed belief in the future of the Afrikaner people and of the Afrikaans language. The merits of Van Wyk Louw are generally recognized in the Afrikaner community. Van Wyk Louw has been given a mythical, almost godlike status. His intellectual legacy is presented as everlasting.

Van Wyk Louw of course has to be situated within his historical context. The thirties and forties were a period of renewed combativeness and growing pride of the Afrikaner, the following decades an era of political and cultural consolidation of power. In spite of his criticism of certain aspects of the policies of the National Party Van Wyk Louw has never distanced himself from Afrikaner nationalism. His world view is determined by his steadfast Afrikanership. It prevented him from analysing South African reality from an inclusive perspective. It is ironic that whereas Van Wyk Louw sees resistance and revolt against the injustice experienced by a people as an inalienable right, he grants this right only to the Afrikaner people:

It is often said that Van Wyk Louw was ahead of his time with regard to South African politics. What is probably meant was that he was too liberal. This statement may be true as far as the coloured community is concerned. But when we look at his view on the position of the blacks in this country, our judgment has to be different. Once again, as a consequence of his coupling of people, culture and language, his position boils down to apartheid.<sup>15</sup>

Is it as a result of the loyalty of Van Wyk Louw to the nationalistic ideal that his ideas were so highly appreciated by the Afrikaner elite and by Afrikaner intellectuals and that he himself could become an icon? That a quotation from Van Wyk Louw, together with one from C.J. Langenhoven, is inscribed on a plaque at the entrance of the Afrikaans Language Monument in Paarl, is not at all surprising. Did his views have such wide acceptance precisely because they did not shake the foundations of Afrikaner nationalism and did not undermine the policies of the different National Party governments? Did most Afrikaner intellectuals not find inspiration in the same nationalistic sources? Were most of them not members of the same brotherhood? In the final analysis a large majority of Afrikaners, also the intellectual elite, were unquestioning and docile supporters of the National Party. Have the ideas of Van Wyk Louw not all too often been used to provide intellectual cover for the apartheid policies of the white government?

It speaks for itself that the ideas of Van Wyk Louw had to be propagated. The organisation of an N.P. van Wyk Louw-memorial lecture at the Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit - now the Johannesburg University - expressly served that purpose. F.I.J. van Rensburg posits that one of the objectives was 'to explore the "*unprocessed possibilities*" in the oeuvre of Louw. In this way this is not only a *homage* or a *memorial lecture*, but also a determination of the relevance of the oeuvre of Louw "for future times".<sup>16</sup> And indeed most speakers did what was expected of them: they did

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<sup>15</sup> 'Dit word dikwels gesê dat Van Wyk Louw sy tyd vooruit was ten opsigte van die Suid-Afrikaanse politiek. Hierdeur word seker bedoel dat hy te liberaal was. Hierdie stelling mag waar wees waar dit gaan oor die Kleurlinge. Maar as ons kyk na sy siening van die swartes se posisie in die land, moet ons oordeel anders wees. Weer, as gevolg van sy koppeling van volk, kultuur en taal, kom sy siening neer op apartheid'. R.E. Van der Ross, 'Onvoldoende liberalisme' in W. Burger (red.), *Die oop gesprek. N.P. van Wyk Louw-gedenklesings*. Pretoria: Lapa 2006, 95.

<sup>16</sup> 'om die "*onverwerkte moontlikhede*" van Louw se oeuvre verder uit te werk. Sodoende is dit nie bloot 'n *huldigingslesing* of 'n *herdenkingslesing* nie, maar ook die bepaling van die tersaaklikheid van Louw

their utmost to emphasize the continued relevance for later generations of Van Wyk Louw in different domains of human endeavour. Only in the more recent lectures has this trend been buckled; the hero worship of Van Wyk Louw has somewhat waned and a more polemical and critical line has been taken. It is striking how apologetically and cautiously even the mildest criticism of Van Wyk Louw is generally formulated. Old habits die hard. This subservient approach is also evident in J.C. Steyn's voluminous biography *Van Wyk Louw. 'n Lewensverhaal* (1998) (Van Wyk Louw. The story of a life). Consequently this biography comes across as a hagiography and not as an objective description and a sober assessment of a writer's life.

### III

After 1994 the situation of the Afrikaner has radically changed. With the advent of majority rule the National Party, and with it the Afrikaner, lost all political power. Both the language and the culture of the Afrikaner have since come under severe pressure. Reasonably speaking one could have expected that with the bankruptcy of Afrikaner nationalism the ideas of Van Wyk Louw also would have lost some if not all of their appeal. This has not happened. From a deep-rooted feeling of injustice and indignation different outfits, cliques, movements and brotherhoods have desperately been looking for a new nationalistic dynamism for the Afrikaner people. Van Wyk Louw seems to be more popular than ever. There are of course parallels, but also big differences, between the thirties and forties on the one hand and post-apartheid South Africa on the other. But whether the ideas of Van Wyk Louw should still determine the direction in which the Afrikaner should march in the twenty-first century is certainly food for discussion in a serious open debate. Is Van Wyk Louw still the superafrikaner who will come to the rescue of the Afrikaner people in times of its most pressing need? Should Afrikaners like Breyten Breytenbach and other former apostates not replace him as role models and cult figures? The cases of Breytenbach, Beyers Naudé and others show that it is almost unthinkable that a dissident could ever be canonized as an icon of the Afrikaner people.

The frequent use by certain people and organizations of the name and views of Van Wyk Louw – very often simply as an authoritative argument – inevitably implies that his reputation should be vigorously protected and defended. For a large number of Afrikaners, Van Wyk Louw was and still remains untouchable as a writer and a thinker. He is like a Teflon pan: stain resistant and rustproof. Moreover, he can be appropriated without any problems by a wide spectrum of opinionated persons or groups, from self-proclaimed liberals to die-hard conservatives – ironically these days mainly by dyed-in-the-wool conservatives. Recognition can sometimes come from a very unexpected source indeed: in 2005 South African president Thabo Mbeki posthumously awarded the Order of Ikhamanga in Gold to Van Wyk Louw.

In the light of the momentous political and social shift which occurred in South Africa after 1994 it is surprising that there is so little appetite in academic circles to analyse Van Wyk Louw's ideas critically and to investigate whether they still have any relevance in the new South Africa. Critics who have done exactly that and pointed out certain weaknesses or shortcomings in Van Wyk Louw's oeuvre have often been mercilessly attacked. But the intellectual legacy of a writer is neither untouchable nor unassailable, no matter what desperate efforts are undertaken by his self-appointed heirs

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se werk "vir latere tye". W. Burger, 'Voorwoord: die (steeds) oopgelate kring'. In W. Burger (red.), *Die oop gesprek. N.P. van Wyk Louw-gedenklesings*. Pretoria: Lapa 2006, ii.

and acolytes to keep it alive and well. Ultimately nothing lasts forever, not even the greatest of icons.

The spiritual legacy of Van Wyk Louw is undoubtedly safer in the hands of popular writers, singers, composers and authors. They at least make creative use of N.P. van Wyk Louw's ideas by confronting them with the constantly changing political and social South African landscape. Is this not the most suitable homage to a great Afrikaans poet?

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## Why Have a Ghost as a Leader? The ‘De la Rey’ Phenomenon and the Re-Invention of Memories, 2006-2007

*Albert Grundlingh*

### I

In an altogether unusual way, a dimension of the South African War of more than hundred years ago came to knock on the door of Afrikanerdom in 2006 and 2007, in the form of a popular song entitled ‘De la Rey’, and sung by Louis Pepler under the stage name Bok van Blerk. The song is about the exploits of the Boers during the war under the charismatic leadership of General Jacobus Hendrik (Koos) de la Rey. At the time of the centenary of the South African War in 1999-2002 there was little sign of mobilisation around bygone military events; in fact, the Afrikaners’ commemoration of the war was characterised by contemplative reflection rather than by an emotional reliving of the past.<sup>1</sup> However, four years later ‘De la Rey’ struck gold.

Within less than a year Bok van Blerk sold the unequalled number of 200 000 CDs – an exceptional achievement in a relatively limited market. Moreover, his concerts were packed with enthusiastic fans, from the rural areas in South Africa to as far afield as America, Canada, the Netherlands and New Zealand.<sup>2</sup>

For many fans the concerts were an emotional issue. Some teenagers were totally carried away: with closed eyes and hand to the heart they almost went into a trance on hearing the first chords of De la Rey. Among the enthusiastic crowds were those who regard the song as nothing less than a new national anthem.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, this song did not appeal to the youth only. In Potchefstroom, where Bok van Blerk performed at the Aardklop Arts Festival, ‘little old ladies with gilt-framed reading glasses’ whispered the words in unison while ‘elderly men wearing Piet Retief beards’ jumped to their feet and heartily joined the students in song.<sup>4</sup>

### II

What was Van Blerk’s intention in bringing De la Rey back to life? The media regularly questioned him about this and his answer was the same every time: it was merely about a historical figure and not politically motivated.<sup>5</sup> What complicates the matter, however, is that there are of course many levels of political expression. If one focuses on overt

<sup>1</sup> A. Grundlingh, ‘Reframing remembrance: The politics of the centenary commemorations of the South African War of 1899-1902’, in: *Journal of South African Studies* 30(2), June 2004, 369-375.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Burger*, 7 February 2007, ‘Dié Bok se bokkies wil hom hééé!’

<sup>3</sup> *Die Huisgenoot*, 15 February 2007, ‘Hoe rey die boere? Jil-Jil so!’

<sup>4</sup> *Beeld*, 28 September 2006, ‘Bok van Blerk se magtige dreuning’.

<sup>5</sup> For example, ‘Bok maak hart oop oor De la Rey’, in *Rapport*, 26 February 2007.

and explicit intentions linked to a programme, there is no evidence that Van Blerk and his group had any connections with organised politics before the CD was launched. But other dimensions of political involvement could indeed exist. In his description of the connection between politics and music, Goehr points out that

... by denying involvement with the political, musicians might be playing out in music their most effective political role – ... in abstraction, in transcendence ... In general, abstraction or transcendence has been seen to be achieved in the employment of creativity, imagination, and contemplation in what nearly two centuries ago was referred to as ‘the free play of faculties’.<sup>6</sup>

It can be argued that it is at this broad level of transcendence that the political nature of De la Rey comes to the forefront – it touches on the cultural and historical dimensions, and within this framework creates space for free association. Van Blerk’s viewpoint is that it deals with the restoration of a part of history that is in danger of being forgotten. He demarcates the terrain within which he operates: ‘Patriotism is not always political. Just ask the Scots who still cry – even today – when they hear “Flower of Scotland” being played. It touches one’s inner being, one’s identity and culture’.<sup>7</sup> From this broad, transcendental perspective the audience can then interpret the song in their own way.

De la Rey must also be read against the background of the other songs on the CD that are mostly about liquor consumption, cars, girls in bikinis and rugby (the ‘coloured’ wing Bryan Habana). These contributions are more in line with mainstream Afrikaans light music and have a different flavour. Consequently one can deduce that it was not initially the intention of Van Blerk and his group to send out a strong political message.

In slight contrast to the political assumptions concerning De la Rey, it was also alleged that the song was merely produced for financial gain. Van Blerk denied this: ‘On the contrary, it was a bit of a risk to include this song in a commercial album. If someone had tried to tell me a year ago that a song about a Boer general would become a number one hit on the radio, ahead of the top names in the music business, I would have laughed at him.’ At the same time, he made the point that it was only logical that an artist would never turn out a product in the hope that it will not succeed. However, De la Rey exceeded their wildest expectations and ‘we are obviously not going to be ashamed of, or apologise for the fact that we are making money with it’.<sup>8</sup>

De la Rey as a historical figure was not simply chosen by chance. Besides the fact that De la Rey rhymes with the Afrikaans word ‘lei’ (to lead), which was surely an important consideration, Van Blerk also found him a ‘fascinating character’.<sup>9</sup> The renowned poet and writer Antjie Krog agrees with this view. She contends that De la Rey was ‘a fantastic choice for the song, considering that on the very day of his death various myths came into being about the man’.<sup>10</sup>

There were various elements and apparent paradoxes that afforded him status as an enigma. He had his doubts about Paul Kruger’s declaration of war in 1899, yet he avowed that he was altogether willing to commit himself to the battle. During the war, he became known as the ‘Lion of the Western Transvaal’ as a result of his military genius. But he was also a gallant general who showed concern for the wounded general P.S. Methuen. At the time of the turmoil caused by the 1914 Rebellion he was strongly

<sup>6</sup> L. Goehr, ‘Political music and the politics of music’, in: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (52)1, Winter 1994, 107.

<sup>7</sup> *Rapport*, 24 February 2007, ‘Bok maak hart oop oor De la Rey’.

<sup>8</sup> *Rapport*, 24 February 2007, ‘Bok maak hart oop oor De la Rey’.

<sup>9</sup> *Rapport*, 21 October 2006, ‘Bok van Blerk staan styf oor sy De la Rey-lied’.

<sup>10</sup> *Die Matie*, 21 March 2007, ‘Krog positief oor De la Rey’.

influenced by the shadowy Boer prophet Siener van Rensburg, and this contributed to the fact that he acquired a certain mystic quality. In addition, the circumstances surrounding his death, which Siener supposedly predicted, fanned his supporters' suspicions. On the eve of the Rebellion, just outside Johannesburg, De la Rey was accidentally hit by a ricocheting bullet fired by the police, who mistakenly identified the car in which he and General C.F. Beyers were travelling as that of a criminal gang. Some of his supporters, who had their doubts about the way in which he died, spread the false rumour that he had been shot deliberately on government orders.<sup>11</sup> His mythical status flourished even further. Aspects of his career and his death clearly contributed to the creation of his image as a charismatic hero. It is this De la Rey aura that Van Blerk and company exploited in the song and the video. Antjie Krog rightly points out that 'De la Rey is pictured in romantic terms in the song: rushing at a gallop, flying across the landscape, known by his praise name: the Lion of the West Transvaal. A lion and a horse, majestic, beautiful, fearless and fast'.<sup>12</sup>

But why, one may well ask, have mainly the youth of the 'volk' now decided to choose a ghost as a leader?

### III

Historically speaking, protest music was not an outstanding genre in Afrikaans music, with the important exception of the Voëlvry Movement who in the 1980s used their music in a unique way against the ruling apartheid government.<sup>13</sup> During the first half of the 1990s, at the time of the transition in South Africa, Afrikaans music showed mainstream qualities and was mainly devoid of political elements. Yet, music with implicit social commentary gradually started to surface. Bands such as those of Karen Zoid – the first Afrikaans rock chick – and others with names like 'Klopjag' ('*Raid*'), 'Snotkop' ('*Snothead*'), 'Brixton Moord en Roof Orkes' ('*Brixton Murder and Robbery Band*') and 'Fokofpolisiekar' ('*Fuck Off Police Car*') all addressed elements of the changing contemporary dispensation and established their own artistic critical accents. Some of the music, like Zoid's, contained nihilistic ambivalences, while the lyrics of others were more outspoken in denouncing state policy and showed increasing rancour at still having to do penance, as Afrikaners, for the sins of apartheid. Although they were at times explicit in their discontent, they did not express this dissatisfaction in the form of a potentially ethnic project.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, it can be argued that the frustration that these groups pinpointed did, to some degree, prepare the way for De la Rey.

A striking feature of De la Rey is the nostalgic undertone of the song, which refers longingly to a hero of bygone times. Although the phenomenon of nostalgia has the past as its subject, its essence is to be found in the present. It is constructed in the present and

<sup>11</sup> H. De la Rey, *Die ware generaal Koos de la Rey* [compiled by Lappe Laubscher]. Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis 1998; F. Pretorius, *Generaal JH de la Rey*, Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis 2007; H.J. May & I. Hamilton, *Die dood van Generaal de la Rey*, Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel 1968; A. Grundlingh, 'Probing the prophet: The psychology and politics of the Siener van Rensburg phenomenon', in *South African Historical Journal* 34, 1996, 225-239.

<sup>12</sup> A. Krog, 'The myth, the general and the battlefield', Lecture, Department of Sociology, Stellenbosch University, 16 March 2007.

<sup>13</sup> A. Grundlingh, 'Rocking the boat in South Africa? Voëlvry music and Afrikaans anti-apartheid social protest in the eighties', in: *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 37(3), 2004, 483.

<sup>14</sup> Andries 'Roof' Bezuidenhout, 'From Voëlvry to De la Rey: Popular Music, Afrikaner nationalism and lost irony', LitNet Seminar Room, 28 February 2007, <http://www.litnet.co.za> (accessed 2 March 2007); M. Bosman, 'Die FAK-fenomeen: Populêre Afrikaanse musiek en volksliedjies', in: *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* 41(2), Winter 2004, 36-37; *Akropolis*, 16 June 2007, 'Die jeug se vastrap'.

accordingly bears the tracks of the spirit of the age in which it is created. At the same time, the nostalgically constructed mental image of the past is set up in opposition to the present, which subsequently implicitly forces a comparison. In both cases, a particular reciprocal action takes place. The past is inclined to become purified and idealised while the present is experienced as being disagreeable and threatening. Emotional strength can therefore be drawn from the past.<sup>15</sup>

However, this does not necessarily mean that nostalgia is an antiquated and sentimental kind of reflection that has a crippling effect on the challenges of the present. As Kloppers<sup>16</sup> indicates, '[i]t is rather a form of affirmation of life, recalling certain matters from the past and reclaiming them (often in new ways)'. In this sense nostalgia cannot in the first place be seen as atavistic in so far as it rather attempts to overcome a modern kind of fragmentation by energising images of the past.<sup>17</sup> In conjunction with this aspect, nostalgia can be a journey of discovery that gives meaning to the present. According to the well-known Afrikaans writer Dana Snyman, who relies heavily on nostalgia in his work, 'after 1994 many Afrikaners were slightly ashamed of our past [...] now we are unashamedly involved in rediscovering ourselves. To rediscover yourself you must know who you were. That is why we become nostalgic about the past'.<sup>18</sup> Within the context of rituals of dance and music that have the past as subject, Eyerman and Jamison emphasise that this practice does not demonstrate some kind of 'primitiveness', but rather constitutes a present that can be remembered in a creative way. Similarly nostalgia cannot merely be linked to particular political schools of thought. In this regard Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase point out that '[t]he view of nostalgia as a self-serving, chauvinist, right-wing version of the past foisted by the privileged and propertied likewise neglects half the facts. The left no less than the right espouses nostalgia'.<sup>19</sup> Without wanting to imply that the African National Congress still strives after a leftist ideological agenda today, it can be said that it does indeed often appeal to a leftist struggle past.

It is easy to see the ghost of the old and obdurate Afrikaner nationalism in these De la Rey flights of memory. Perhaps too easy. It is true that a few people waved the old South African flag at concerts, but on the whole the discourse exuded a different spirit. Van Blerk himself claims that it has to do with respect for cultural goods and that they are '100% in favour of moving on', of leaving the apartheid past behind and of being part of the 'rainbow nation ... but then we ask to be treated in the same way as other groups'.<sup>20</sup> The desire is therefore expressed to be accepted fully as a minority and without reserve in the new South Africa.

Although his word naturally does not have to be accepted, Van Blerk's followers also make it clear that

[we do not] long for the old dispensation of the Broederbond and the mendacious National Party ministers. We are merely seeking a new identity, an identity that is removed from

<sup>15</sup> For a general discussion on the nature of nostalgia see D. van Zyl, 'O boereplaas, geboortegrond': Afrikaner nostalgia and the romanticisation of the platteland', Unpublished Honours research essay, Stellenbosch University, 2006, 3; F. Davis, *Yearning for yesterday: A sociology of nostalgia*. New York: The Free Press 1979, 37-38.

<sup>16</sup> E. Kloppers, 'Die postmodernisme, nostalgie en die himniese geheue', in: *Stilet* (XV(2)), September 2003, 205.

<sup>17</sup> Compare J. Fishman, *Language and nationalism*, Massachusetts: The Open Press 1972, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Sarie, June 2007, 'Gister se dinge'.

<sup>19</sup> C. Shaw & M. Chase, *The imagined past: History and nostalgia*. Manchester: Manchester University Press 1997, 27.

<sup>20</sup> *Beeld*, 17 November 2006, 'Besige bok is 'n bok vir sports'.

the lip-service and lies of the National Party. And the attempts at indoctrination by the Broederbond. In other words, the Afrikaners' own identity and not the politicians' rendering ... And that new identity has become clear to me in the case of artists like ... Bok van Blerk.<sup>21</sup>

#### IV

The emotion-laden quest for identity of Van Blerk's followers can also be situated within the broader context of South Africa's material realities. As far as the economy is concerned, there are analysts who claim that despite difficulties, the Afrikaners are financially in a better position at present than in the time of apartheid.<sup>22</sup> Ton Vosloo, chairman of Naspers, has pointed out that notwithstanding 'pockets of poor whites ... in material terms things have never been so good ... Notice who possess beach houses and drive 4X4s, besides a Merc and another smaller car as well as a bakkie in the garage or yard. We complain far too easily while we are sitting pretty.'<sup>23</sup>

It is in this connection that Herman Wasserman wrote a satirical response in which he exhorts De la Rey to come and lead the Boers:

You will have to come and fetch them. But remember not to look for them in the wrong places. Although Bokkie's little song laments the fact that his wife and child are languishing in a camp ('my vrou en kind lê in 'n kamp en vergaan'), the people who sing his song at the top of their voices do not live in squatters' camps. Their children are not perishing while their parents earn a starvation wage by toiling in other people's kitchens and gardens. No, you will have to fetch your followers from Tyger Valley, Somerset Mall and Menlyn Park. You will see huge, shiny 4X4s, packed with supplies from Woollies, following your horse out of the parking areas.<sup>24</sup>

De la Rey is also advised to change his attire, because 'that bandolier and waistcoat are going to make you look very out of place among the Billabongs and Levi's that the young fellows wear when they go out for a drink at the Mystic Boer in the evenings'.<sup>25</sup> This point of departure does not necessarily cancel the idealistic yearnings of Van Blerk's adherents, but by involving other realities it does indeed place the youth's position in perspective.

An analysis of the nature of the De la Rey concerts clearly shows that excessive drinking is part of the profile. A report of a specific concert stated that the drinking went on to a point of great exuberance.<sup>26</sup> Although excessive drinking is, of course, quite common among the youth and does not necessarily have any greater overt meaning, it is in sharp contrast to the sober historical figure that is called to mind. One commentator formulated it in the following way:

The Boers of whom Bok van Blerk sings were God-fearing people with self-respect, pride, ethical values, moral values, standards and loyalty. The 'Boers' who sing De la Rey in bars these days lead debauched lives. They have no self-respect. They sleep around and have no moral or ethical values, because all they do is look for the

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<sup>21</sup> H.H.B. Zaayman, 'Leandri jou doring', 6 December 2006 <http://www.litnet.co.za> (accessed 2 February 2007).

<sup>22</sup> S. Terreblanche, 'Mag en onverdiende rykdom in Suid-Afrika', in *Vrye Afrikaan*, 15 February 2007.

<sup>23</sup> *Die Burger*, 11 May 2007, 'De la Rey-verwagtinge en die pad na oorlewing'.

<sup>24</sup> *Die Burger*, 12 February 2007, 'Repliek: Ope brief aan Koos de la Rey'.

<sup>25</sup> *Die Burger*, 12 February 2007, 'Repliek: Ope brief aan Koos de la Rey'.

<sup>26</sup> *Die Huisgenoot*, 15 February 2007, 'Hoe ry die boere? Jil-Jil so!'

next opportunity to become motherless. What is more, there is much we can say with regard to loyalty.<sup>27</sup>

In the same way there is also a discrepancy between the language usage of certain individuals and the general passion for Afrikaans Van Blerk lays claim on. One fan had the following to say about Van Blerk: 'I dig his music. He's a cool dude. I like Bok because he says it like it is. I'm telling you, he's hot! Hot like a potato!'<sup>28</sup> It is clear that some young people will derive from rock concerts whatever makes sense (or non-sense) to them, notwithstanding the more elevated connotations that others might want to attach to such shows. These expressions of behaviour indicate simultaneously the multiple contexts within which De la Rey has been received and interpreted.

Furthermore, it is obvious that the De la Rey phenomenon shows strong signs of a masculine character. As Cornell puts it, 'Masculinity is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practice through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture.'<sup>29</sup> In the case of De la Rey it is not only the masculine icon of the man on his horse that occupies the particular space, but without trying to pretend that De la Rey does not have its quota of female fans, it seems as if men are over-represented at concerts and women stay slightly in the background. De la Rey, it appears, speaks more powerfully to men than to women.<sup>30</sup>

It is understandable that if one looks at the phenomenon from a different angle, both the lyrics of De la Rey and the emotive nature of the song are enough to make one suspect that a resurgence of sectional nationalism is apparent. In the absence of large-scale formally organised nationalistic Afrikaner structures that are striving for the return of the old political dispensation, it would however be difficult to channel the possible power of De la Rey into meaningful avenues. Today, without the backing of state power, Afrikaner organisations such as the 'Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurkring' and 'Solidariteit' have a different role than in the past.

In this respect, the song at best caused political stirrings. It should also be taken into account that some of the Afrikaner youth see the 'old' Afrikaner nationalism as a strange, distant phenomenon with which they find it difficult to identify; it has an archaic and problematic character. It is even experienced so negatively that it is felt it should rather not be studied.<sup>31</sup> The idiom and register in which some of the youth discover De la Rey differs altogether from the way in which older generations experience it.

A somewhat unexpected reaction to the De la Rey phenomenon at one stage was that the government deemed it advisable to issue a statement on the matter. The statement read that each group has the right to freedom of speech but that it is necessary to be aware of 'De la Rey and its coded message to fomenting revolutionary sentiments'.<sup>32</sup> The dynamic of such an exaggerated reaction points to a distrustful state. The Afrikaner establishment reacted in a similar manner to the Afrikaans anti-apartheid music of the Voëlvry Movement in the late 1980s.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, under communism in Eastern Europe,

<sup>27</sup> *Die Huisgenoot*, 1 March 2007, 'Forum: Brief van L.M. Janse van Vuuren'.

<sup>28</sup> *Die Huisgenoot*, 15 February 2007, 'Hoe ry die boere? Jil-Jil so!'

<sup>29</sup> R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1995, 71.

<sup>30</sup> Personal observation by author and independent observations by Sandra Swart and Lize-Marie van der Watt.

<sup>31</sup> Feedback of Stellenbosch University History students, 2007.

<sup>32</sup> 'Press statement', <http://everfasternews.com> (accessed 7 February 2007).

<sup>33</sup> A. Grundlingh, 'Rocking the boat in South Africa? Voëlvry music and Afrikaans anti-apartheid social protest in the eighties', in: *International Journal of African Historical Studies* (37(3), 2004, 491.

popular music was frequently seen as subversive. Garofalo points out that this was a widespread phenomenon:

[The] suspicion [exists] on the part of the authorities that even the most innocuous songs contain subversive political content, which is received as such by a 'knowledgeable' audience. The tendency has had the effect of politicizing music which is not intentionally political and enhancing the power of music which is.<sup>34</sup>

In this way, exactly the opposite is achieved of what was initially desired. It is not too far-fetched to suspect that the ANC's reaction to the song possibly lay in the fact that during the anti-apartheid struggle the term 'Boere' was synonymous with the enemy and that it was expressed, among others, in the slogan 'Kill the Boer, kill the farmer'. Today, thirteen years after 1994, the term 'Boer' has not yet lost its negative political connotations in certain black circles.<sup>35</sup> In the light hereof it is understandable that a song in which the 'Boers' are mobilised might cause suspicion. Sean Else, one of the co-writers of De la Rey, found it 'quite worrying that we be analysed under a political microscope' as a result of 'a song that is about a Boer general of 100 years ago'. According to Else, a song that the previous deputy president Jacob Zuma regularly sang at gatherings, 'Awulet' umshini wam' ('Bring my machine gun') had the potential to be far more inflammatory than De la Rey.<sup>36</sup>

## V

Reservations about the song probably emanate from an assumption that the Afrikaner youth in the new South Africa ought to create a new and more appropriate identity. The irony however is that for some supporters De la Rey, as indicated, is in fact regarded as a positive, forward-looking expression of identity, supported by a relatively uncontaminated pre-apartheid South African version of history. Since many of these young people have a limited understanding of the past, they see De la Rey as new and fresh, despite the possible repugnance that it may evoke in others.

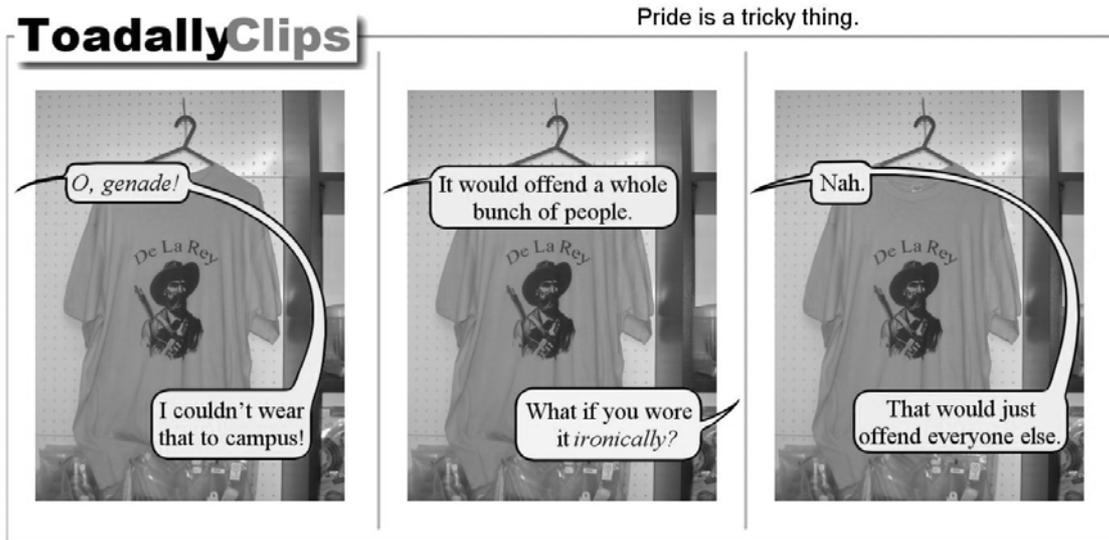
In a concluding perspective, it is useful to compare De la Rey with the way in which the South African War was used as a historical marker in Afrikaner circles in the past. During the 1930s and 1940s, at the time of the flourishing of Afrikaner nationalism that finally came to political fruition at the polls in 1948, the prevailing discourse on the South African War mainly centred on regaining political power after the defeat suffered in 1899-1902. When the results of the 1948 election became known, some Nationalists took it to mean that the injustices of the past had been redressed.<sup>37</sup> In 2006 and 2007, the discourse mainly centred on a cultural expression and rediscovery of identity without conveying a message that focused on the regaining of power. In fact, in a certain sense, the song reflects the sense of futility in realising that power has been surrendered for good, thus the almost plaintive appeal to a bygone leader whose time is, likewise, long past.

<sup>34</sup> R. Garofalo (ed.), *Rockin' the boat: Mass music and mass movements*. Cambridge MA: South End Press 1992, 10.

<sup>35</sup> *Mail and Guardian*, 18-24 May 2007, 'De la Rey – Is it just a song?'

<sup>36</sup> *Beeld*, 'Almal ken die wet, sê Sean Else oor 'De la Rey'.

<sup>37</sup> A. Grundlingh, 'The war in twentieth-century Afrikaner consciousness', in: D. Omissi & A. Thompson (eds), *The Impact of the South African War*. Basingstoke: Palgrave 2002, 29.



17.1 The weight of tradition

The great majority of Afrikaners are level-headed enough to realise that erstwhile political power cannot be regained. During an interview in 2004, Tim du Plessis, the editor of *Rapport*, made the following comment on the creation of a new Afrikaner identity: 'No-one sees a political Afrikaner any longer. Politics is a sore point that white Afrikaners in particular avoid, apart from on election days ... but there are other spaces that they explore intensely.' In this regard there is 'a golden thread that runs through everything: continuing interaction with the country that is just as dynamically and unpredictably changing as the Afrikaans community'.<sup>38</sup> Two years later, the De la Rey phenomenon would prove to be a manifestation of the process. The chords of the song resounded loudly in an apparent attempt to mobilise the Afrikaner. But this does not necessarily imply any sinister intent. Given the constant shifts occurring in the Afrikaner community it appears to be little more than a temporary flare-up that could be taken over by other voices promoting an identity strain containing different accents. Be it as it may, it will be difficult in the future to ignore De la Rey as a retrospective pointer in Afrikaans popular culture – even if it is only enshrouded in spectral mists.

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<sup>38</sup> *Rapport*, 3 October 2004, 'n Groep wat herskep word'.

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## *Boeremusiek*

*Stephanus Muller*

In the twenties and thirties traditional boeremusiek was played widely throughout South Africa. Many evenings the sounds filled houses and public places, sounded out over our land and gladdened the hearts of Boer people.<sup>1</sup>

### I

On 18 January 2001, I am sitting in the lounge of Professor Stanley Glasser in his house in London. Glasser is the retired Head of Goldsmiths College, University of London, and an expatriate South African. We talk about South African composition, and the imperative for South African composers not to compose European music for South Africa, but rather South African music in which Europe could be interested because it is South African. Glasser advances the notion of a kind of composition engagée. He asks where the desire is to hear the sounds of the land, where the intimate engagement with the music of the people is to be found. And then he says:

Go to a Vastrap and see what you can do with it. Go to a Vastrap evening in Nelspruit or wherever. And see what it means, the dancing, the life, it's all part of the music ... I'm talking about if there's a dance in Nelspruit on a Saturday night and all the farmers are coming in and the locals are coming in and there is a boeoreorkes. Where are you guys ... do you ever roll up to that sort of thing? No. It's the composer who has got to do that. It's all very well to take poems by Van Wyk Louw or Leipoldt and set them. You could set it twelve tone, whole tone, keys. Whatever you like. It doesn't matter what you use, but it's the feeling you have that's got to be very attached and respectful to the community as opposed to the university, I may put it that way. I used to live in Bethel, going to a dance in the local hall, with a Boeoreorkes playing. It was so lively and everybody was in a good mood and you'd see African children looking through the window and everybody was enjoying it in their own way.<sup>2</sup>

'You guys'. The musicologists. The academics, including and especially Afrikaners, in the suburbs and the universities. The only paper on boeremusiek at a local academic conference for music researchers ever heard by the present writer, was in Pretoria in 2002. The secretary of the local boeremusiek club addressed delegates at the invitation of Professor Chris Walton, a born Englishman who had recently arrived from Zurich to take up the Headship of the Department of Music at the University of Pretoria. Walton found boeremusiek fascinating, partly because of the significant similarities between the

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<sup>1</sup> Lourens Aucamp cited in Piet Bester, *Tradisionele Boeremusiek: 'n Gedenkalbum* (Pretoria: Afrikanervolkswag, 1987), unnumbered page 'Voorwoord'. Translated from the Afrikaans. All translations from the Afrikaans are by the present author.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Stanley Glasser on 18 January 2001 at his home, 46 Weigall Road, London.

local sound and the folk music equivalent in Switzerland. It was a memorable occasion, not only because the paper was so interesting and the presenter very knowledgeable, but also because of the reactions of the small audience consisting of academics and music students. As the presenter demonstrated, on one of the concertinas he had brought with him, a retired English-speaking professor from the University of the Witwatersrand started moving to music, looked merrily to her neighbour and asked: ‘Where are the days?’ If the music had continued for a little while, I am convinced that she would have started to dance. The Afrikaans students and academics cringed in their seats in the lecture room. Boeremusiek is not Culture (with a capital ‘C’). It is a little low, a little feeble, a little simple, a little direct, a little too close to our uncultivated needs and past.

It is therefore hardly surprising that there are no entries on boeremusiek in Jacques Malan’s *South African Music Encyclopaedia*. There is no reference to boeremusiek in Jan Bouws’s *Komponiste van Suid-Afrika* [Composers of South Africa] (1971), Bouws’s *Die Musieklewe van Kaapstad 1800-1850 en sy verhouding tot die musiekkultuur van Wes-Europa* [The Musical Life of Cape Town 1800-1850 and its relationship to the musical culture of Western Europe] (1966), Peter Klatzow’s *Composers in South Africa Today*, or in any of the twenty-five editions of the *South African Journal of Musicology (SAMUS)*, or any of the congress proceedings of the then South African Musicological Society or the Ethnomusicology Symposium. Nothing either in *Ars Nova*, *Muziki*, *The Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa* or *Musicus*. The ‘sounds that filled houses and public places’ in the twenties and thirties clearly did not reach universities, at least not in the form of published research, research papers or documents. Academically institutionalized musicians and researchers never made this ‘place’ their own. The boeremusiek that ‘gladdened the hearts of Boer people’ is not the music of the Afrikaner intelligentsia.<sup>3</sup>

## II

Conviviality is perhaps too light-hearted a description of the function implied here. Boeremusiek is a performance practice, a form of musical expression that links closely with memory as a performative entity. It recalls and carries memories, even maintains them. Boeremusiek is perhaps the most exemplary form of cultural expression connected to Afrikaners that can claim to maintain the collective memories of a ‘group’ in this way, without also imparting to the group political, social or racial definitions. In Japie Laubscher’s *Ou Waenhuis* (‘The old barn’), the concertina playing has a meticulous, pernickety quality, just like Japie’s thin moustache. It is very different from Manie Bodenstein’s broad, lyrical sound in *Lentebloeisels* (‘Spring blossoms’), or Dirkie Smit’s unsteady rhythm in *Mielieblare* (‘Mealy leaves’). In his *Jampot Polka* (‘Jam pot polka’) on the accordion, Nico Castens is a virtuoso performer who can do absolutely everything and with intense energy alternates each repeated fragment with small appoggiatura’s, syncopated beats or changes in articulation. The sorts of memories that Mieke Bal calls ‘cultural memory’ are inherent to these sounds.

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<sup>3</sup> There are exceptions to this generalization. Professor F.E. (Charles) Fensham was well-known in boeremusiek circles. Later State President C.R. Swart composed the Maluti song and there is a photograph of him in Piet Bester’s *Tradisionele Boeremusiek* where he plays his traporreltjie (pump organ) (see p. 125). When Anton Hartman remarks that ‘even the symphony orchestra’ can’t play the Zoutpansberg se settees like the Vier Transvalers (see p. 27 in *Tradisionele Boeremusiek*) this observation only serves as an illustration of the chasm between high and low musical culture.

The spirit of cultivation that characterized the Afrikaner in power misunderstood this energy of boeremusiek. For the Afrikaner concerned with Culture, boeremusiek was a matter of identity, of tradition, of cultural distinctness. It is therefore not strange that the FAK (Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge, translated here as Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies) Music Commission considered the matter of the ‘quality of boeremusiek’ in 1953. The minutes of that meeting read as follows:

It has transpired from discussions that there is no clarity about what ‘Boeremusiek’ and a ‘Boere-orke’ [‘Boeremusiek band’] really means. Originally, the bands now called ‘Boere-orkeste’ used to provide the accompaniment to dances. Later, they were also used at Boere events, where the term ‘Boere-orke’ seemed to originate. The problem of the SABC [South African Broadcasting Corporation] is that listeners are asking for more ‘Boeremusiek’.<sup>4</sup>

The Gallo-music archivist and David de Lange expert Rob Allingham describes boeremusiek as follows:

As I’ve come to understand it, boeremusiek is not just any type of Afrikaans music – in the minds of most of its fans (and detractors), boeremusiek can be typically categorised as an instrumental dance genre which, more often than not, features the concertina as the principle instrument to render the melodies. (There are ‘modernised’ boeremusiek variations where the melodic leads are played with a piano accordion or even electric keyboards but the concertina, although originally of English origin, is so imbued with Afrikaner-ness in the minds of most boeremusiek fans that it has become a virtual cultural touchstone.) Another defining element is the repertoire: boeremusiek melodies draw almost exclusively on Dutch-German-French sources or sometimes, Cape Coloured/Malay influences. The characteristic off-beat rhythm that came to dominate the genre from the fifties onwards derives directly from the Cape goema-based rhythm – prior to that, the rhythm patterns were also Dutch-Germanic.<sup>5</sup>

Allingham ends his e-mail to the current writer by saying that David de Lange would not normally be described as a boeremusiek musician, as he sang instead of playing an instrument. And yet, in his book *Tradisionele Boeremusiek*, Piet Bester devotes a long section to De Lange.<sup>6</sup> It is this uncertainty with regard to genre definitions (not unique to boeremusiek and applicable to most if not all popular music culture) that points to a living, fast-evolving practice rather than an expression in dialogue with tradition.

The estrangement between a South African academic musical discourse and boeremusiek is confirmed in Piet Bester’s rich notes on boeremusiek as a musical practice of autodidacts:

One day [Hansie van Loggerenberg] heard a black man play a concertina and he stepped up to listen more closely. The Black played only one tune on an old boere

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<sup>4</sup> Minutes of the FAK Music Commission’s meeting held on Saturday 25 April 1953 in the FAK offices in Johannesburg. Translated from the Afrikaans. See PV 1/2/3/4/2/2/1, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Five ‘solutions’ were also suggested by the Music Commission, including that Anton Hartman would draft an statement on boeremusiek which would be published under the name of Stephen Eyssen ‘to stimulate further discussions and criticism’.

<sup>5</sup> E-mail to the current writer, 20 February 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Piet Bester, *Tradisionele Boeremusiek*, 50-53.

concertina, but Hansie became interested. After the Black taught him a bit, he bought his own concertina and not long after he could play Sarie Marais fluently.<sup>7</sup>

At the age of six, Fanie Bosch exchanged some of his best doves for a ukulele. After that, he also taught himself the pump organ, guitar and banjo: 'Fanie says that he never had any lessons or teaching and that he had to struggle on his own to master the concertina.'<sup>8</sup> Oom (Uncle) Nelie Janse van Rensburg was taught the concertina by his uncle, Kerneels Pienaar, whose sheep he tended during the winter in Swaziland: 'Uncle Nelie kept his blood warm with the soft, melodious sounds of his boere concertina'.<sup>9</sup>

Boeremusiek cannot be reduced to a nationalist discourse. There is something provisional, unregulated, spontaneous, unwritten about boeremusiek.<sup>10</sup> One day, when Fanie Bosch was busy recording a LP,

... a new tune came into his head. When the next number had to be recorded, he gave the orchestra the rhythm and the key in which he wanted to play and launched into the new piece. He says that it went surprisingly well and the piece was recorded without a single mistake. His banjo player, old Banjo Botha, was apparently almost crazy with frustration. He just failed to understand how something like that could be done!<sup>11</sup>

Hendrik Susan apparently composed the number *Ons lag, sing en dans* ('We laugh, sing and dance') only minutes before a performance.<sup>12</sup> It is the same Fanie Bosch of the improvised recording who, after he had lost two digits of his right index finger, had to do a radio broadcast with a bandaged finger. He then composed the *Seervinger wals* ('Sore finger waltz').<sup>13</sup>

### III

*Die Seervinger wals*. Boeremusiek titles represent an Afrikaner topography far removed from the triumphalism of Afrikaner monuments, statues, theatre complexes and sport stadiums. And it is a topography that stirs memories rather than encourages historical reflection: *Soepvlees-polka* ('Soup-meat Polka'), *Lekker Kafferbier* ('Tasty Kaffir Beer'), *Pinana Booi* ('Banana Boy'), *Kamiesberg settees* ('Kamies Mountain Settees'), *Jou Flerrrie* ('You Flirt'), *Eensaam wals* ('Lonely Waltz'), *Dik Dawid settees* ('Fat David Settees'), *Die Soebat wals* ('The Pleading Waltz'), *Lentebloeisels* ('Spring Blossoms'), *Pannekoek wals* ('Pancake Waltz'), *Ou Willie se vastrap* ('Old William's Vastrap'), *Rietspruit Galope* ('Reed Stream Gallop'), *Die Blomkool polka* ('The Cauliflower Polka'), *Die Skelmvy-wals* ('The Slap-and-tickle Waltz'), *Vaalhoed* ('Faded Hat'), *Eensaamheid* ('Loneliness').

The titles refer to food, places, love, seasons, people. The references are far removed from the exclusivities that would characterize the Afrikaner community during its years in power. We find in these titles a subtle evocation of mood and an artless poetry of

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 54. Translated from the Afrikaans.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 138. Translated from the Afrikaans.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 146. Translated from the Afrikaans.

<sup>10</sup> Boeremusiek is a performative culture that survives mostly through oral transmission. Piet Bester writes in *Tradisionele Boeremusiek*: 'Of course Hansie [van Loggerenberg] could read music ... The most of the old Boere musicians and even many performers today were not as privileged. '; 56. Translated from the Afrikaans.

<sup>11</sup> Piet Bester, *Tradisionele Boeremusiek*, 140. Translated from the Afrikaans.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 139.

existence. Karel Schoeman writes about his visits to the Free State farm of Dot Serfontein and her family:

... what I now recognize clearly as influences, are the historical and genealogical interests of Dot's husband and the boeremusiek that he played from records. I remember one particular visit when we only departed late on that Sunday afternoon from the farm. Sitting in the back seat of the car during the long return journey to the city I saw the dusk-encroaching veldt pass by with the maudlin music inseparably a part of it: 'Eensaamheid' ['Loneliness'] by Sewes van Rensburg is particularly clear in my memory. The name, no longer the tune. First the emotion, then the rhythm and then the images and the words fit: it was that evening in the car on the road back to Johannesburg that the passage came to me that I used in 'n *Lug vol helder wolke* ['A sky with clear clouds'], 'The silence and loneliness were intertwined in the sound of their words and weighed on the spirits; their music spoke of their isolation and deep silence, and of infinite space around every word and each flickering candle in the dark.'<sup>14</sup>

Although Schoeman writes that it is the name of the music that lingers – 'Loneliness' – it is impossible to separate the 'maudlin music' from his observations. The fact that Schoeman can't remember the tune, but instead distinctly connects the music to the dusk-encroaching veldt separating the farm and the city, tells us something about the kind of memory work performed by boeremusiek. The representation of the past in this music is not direct, but spatially concrete, emotionally highly tuned and historically informed.

Not only the names of boeremusiek numbers evoke, create, imply the 'isolation and deep silence, and ... infinite space around every word', but also the names of people who made the music. Jewish names appear in the band lists. Names like Saul Benjamin (Boy) Solomon, Harry Bartz and 'a Jew, Postma, who also played the violin'.<sup>15</sup> English names too like William Schreiner (Willie) Cooper and Morgan O'Kennedy. And then the names of bands and groups: Die Soetspelers ('The Sweet/Good Players'), Die Vyf Vastrappers ('The Five Vastrappers'), Die Vier Transvalers ('The Four Transvalers'), Die Vyf Voortrekkers ('The Five Voortrekkers'), Die Vyf Dagbrekers ('The Five Day Breakers'), Die Vier Hugenote ('The Four Huguenots'), Die Ses Hartbrekers ('The Six Heart Breakers'), Die Baanbrekers ('The Pioneers'), Die Hoogekraal Orkes ('The High Kraal Orchestra'), Die Vier Staatmakers ('The Four Dependables') and Die Naglopers ('The Night Riders'), described by Rian Malan as follows:

[To my mind De Lange is by far] the most compelling figure in the history of Afrikaans popular music. His music is electrifying. His banjo player was Coloured in days when that was unthinkable. He danced and drank like a demon. He screwed everything that moved. His band was called the Naglopers ... How cool can you get?<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Karel Schoeman, *Die laaste Afrikaanse boek: outobiografiese aantekeninge* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 2002), 399. Translated from the Afrikaans.

<sup>15</sup> Piet Bester, *Tradisionele Boeremusiek*, 206. Translated from the Afrikaans.

<sup>16</sup> Letter of Rian Malan on Sênet, 3 July 2006. Translated from the Afrikaans. See also the significant body of correspondence between Rian Malan, Rob Allingham, CIA and Puris that appeared on LitNet about David de Lange at <http://www.oulitnet.co.za/senet/default.asp>. This 2006 correspondence is dated 14 June, 15 June, 26 June, 3 July, 10 July, 1 August and 2 August.

## IV

Boeremusiek was, surprisingly perhaps in the light of the rigid paternalism of the governing Afrikaner, a music also practiced by women. There was Cissie Cooper who played the piano and sang, Carolina Leeson who played the piano and dreamt the melody of *My mooi Carolina* [‘My pretty Carolina’],<sup>17</sup> Lettie Palm who played guitar, piano and concertina, Anna van Loggerenberg who played the drums in the band of her husband, Hansie. Many women played in Pietie le Roux’s Stellenbosch-boereorkes: Laetitia Louw, Elise van Vuuren, Bettie van der Merwe, Annette Scheepers, Ena Krige, Lena Theron, Martha le Roux, Hester le Roux, Petra Schoeman, Rykie Smit, Anna Minnaar, Dux van Niekerk.<sup>18</sup> And then there is the extraordinary tale of Jo Fourie, born in Zwolle in the Netherlands in 1884. In 1934 she created her own boereorkes in the Groot Marico and began to notate all the boeremusiek tunes she encountered. After her husband’s death in 1939, and after her children were married off and had left the house, she began travelling though the country

to find all the old and almost forgotten tunes and songs. She was particularly interested in old people who could still play or sing these songs. In the back of her car she had an old duet concertina, because many of the old people no longer had an instrument on which they could play. This quest lasted almost eleven years ...<sup>19</sup>

It is an indication of the disregard for boeremusiek in intellectual discourse that Jo Fourie is not recognized as South Africa’s first female ethnomusicologist. Stories such as these collected by Piet Bester call for the kind of historical treatment enabled by the rhetoric of fictional narrative. It emphasizes, once again, something about the kind of collective cultural memories activated by boeremusiek.

Who listens to Boeremusiek today? And what do they hear when they listen to it?

One of the most beautiful stories written by Piet Bester in his ethnographic treasure trove *Tradisionele Boeremusiek* is the story of Sakkie van Wyk. His father Gert, a good violinist, farmed on a piece of land called Morkanie, close to Schweizer Reneke. Gert stopped making music after the death of his two daughters and thereafter also forbade his sons, Sakkie and Gert, to play any dance music. Gert was so talented that he could make the most beautiful sounds by blowing into the spout of a coffee kettle. Apparently the sounds thus made sometimes sounded like a violin, and sometimes like a saxophone. The two boys secretly acquired a concertina and a guitar and started practicing in the veldt, far from the house. The instruments were hidden under a large halved paraffin drum under a bush on the bank of a small stream.<sup>20</sup>

Hidden instruments. Secret musicking. One thinks of old instruments that can no longer be played by young people. Concertinas, banjos, accordions, pump organs. And then one thinks of empty dance halls, hotels, bars, empty barns, farm houses, recording studios. One thinks of the clerks, hospital porters, teachers, farmers and mine captains that Piet Bester writes about. There is a hidden history in these things, in the spaces where this music sounded and in the colourful lives of the musicians. This is neither the canonized history of Western art music in South Africa, nor the now dominant history of jazz and other forms of black music performance. Boeremusiek is a kind of secret music, connected to a silenced history in an ever more competitive South African

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>18</sup> See list in Piet Bester’s *Tradisionele Boeremusiek*, 61.

<sup>19</sup> Piet Bester, *Tradisionele Boeremusiek*, 130. Translated from the Afrikaans.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 150.

historiography. It calls for curatorship because of the pasts it allows, in ever diminishing degrees, to infiltrate the present.

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## *Die Stem*<sup>1</sup>

*Stephanus Muller*

### I

Music is high or low. It can ascend or descend (like mountains and valleys) with an ascending run or descending scale. It is here, close to home (tonic), or there, close to relatives (relative or parallel minor/major, perhaps dominant or subdominant keys). Sometimes it moves, as is envisioned in Schoenberg's idea of tonality, to far-off reaches of larger tonal geographies, to the furthest of such places before it returns (if it returns at all) to the known world of the tonic. Music as a kind of *res extensa*.<sup>2</sup> Orchestration could be airy and spacious in the hands of Webern, or constructivist and muscular when done by Brahms. Music creates horizontal contours and arches through the distances between notes (intervals). These distances are determined during performance by controlling the time-space separating the end of one tone and the beginning of the next (articulation). Music is architecturally monumental in form, like a Beethoven symphony, or it is in expression and form as intimate as the salon.

We cannot approach music in language without the metaphors of place and space. Individual combinations of tones (musical 'works') constitute designated spaces. When these spaces become known after frequent visits, they become inhabited by cultural memory. The evocative nature of such spaces is inherent to the fact that the sentiment (emotional and/or cultural) is felt precisely, but cannot be expressed accurately in language. It is a language-resistant space.

To consider *Die Stem* as collective memory depends on this metaphorical understanding of music in general, and of a specific work in particular. This is not a perspective that demands clarification of the song's history. C.J. Langenhoven's poem is only the foundation of this place. M.L. de Villiers's melody is only the outer walls thereof and Hubert du Plessis's official orchestration only the interior decorating.<sup>3</sup> Questions on memory and remembering and of how these things relate to this particular text, are not questions about historiography. The imagination in search of memory has to find more poetic avenues to knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> The full title of the anthem is *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika*, officially translated into English as *The Call of South Africa*. Throughout this essay the anthem will be referred to only as *Die Stem*.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the discussion on the rhetoric of tonality in Brian Hyer's 'Tonality', in: T. Christensen (ed.), *The Cambridge history of Western music theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 726-752, esp. p. 733.

<sup>3</sup> This essay is not about the history or the ideological context and meaning of *Die Stem*. More can be read about these aspects in S. Muller, 'Exploring the aesthetics of reconciliation: rugby and the South African national anthem', in: *SAMUS* 21, 2001, 19-38; See also W. Lüdemann's 'Uit die diepte van ons see: an archetypal interpretation of selected examples of Afrikaans patriotic music', in: *SAMUS* 23, 2003, 13-42.



Figure 19.1 David Goldblatt's photograph with the description 'Die Heldeakker, The Heroes' Acre: cemetery for White members of the security forces killed in "The Total Onslaught", Ventersdorp, Transvaal, 1 November 1986'.<sup>4</sup>

## II

The closing phrase of *Die Stem* is literally displayed 'triumphantly' (the character indication in the music) as meaning-giving banner over this demarcated space. It lends definition to the space of the military cemetery. Does the reader hear it? The two security force members buried there are lifted up by the contour of the melody: B flat-A-G-B flat-D-E flat. The dotted rhythmical introduction to the phrase, undergirded by the secondary dominant harmony, assuages doubt, presses forward, aims towards the solution at the end of the phrase. The end is comforting as an end. It brings us home.

Goldblatt's photograph dates from 1986. It is understandable if one hears *Die Stem* in this time as a military song; the contours and rhythms and harmonies sound like bulwarks against the enemy, as encouragements to those who would doubt the final victory. However, for André P. Brink, *Die Stem* is also the song of torture in the seventies:

... every time the rebel leader is arrested, and tortured, and killed, leading to new protest, and to new martyrs; this goes on until a deadly silence remains, lasting an agonising eternity, a silence out of which, almost inaudible at first, the national

<sup>4</sup> D. Goldblatt, *South Africa: the structure of things then* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998), 154 en 243.

anthem rises while a group of folk dancers in white masks begin to dance on the bodies of the martyrs.<sup>5</sup>

It is also this 'Stem' that, at the end of J.M. Coetzee's *Age of iron*, provides the sound track to the author's nightmarish vision of hell. 'I am afraid', says the dying Mrs Curran, 'of going to hell and having to listen to Die stem (sic) for all eternity'.<sup>6</sup> *Die Stem* that accompanies the coffin of Milla Redelinghuys into her grave at the end of Marlene van Niekerk's *Agaat* has a different tenor. When the Grootmoedersdrift farm is taken into possession by the coloured woman, Agaat, who was formed by the white woman who loved and rejected her, it is *Die Stem* that articulates ambiguously change and continuity:

Gaat making people by the graveside sing the third verse of *Die Stem*: ... When the wedding bells are chiming, Or when those we love depart. And then all eyes on me for: ... Thou dost know us for thy children ... We are thine, and we shall stand, Be it life or death to answer Thy call, beloved land! Wake up and smell the red-bait, as Pa would have said. Poor Pa with his ill-judged exclamations. Did at least make a note for my article on nationalism and music. Thys's body language! The shoulders thrust back militaristically, the eyes cast up grimly, old Beatrice peering at the horizon. The labourers, men and women, sang it like a hymn, eyes rolled back in the head.

Word-perfect beginning to end. Trust Agaat. She would have no truck with the new anthem.<sup>7</sup>

But how did historical reception develop the fascistic timbre that characterized performances and receptions of *Die Stem* in the 1980s, so apparent in the quotation above? Surely there was a time when *Die Stem* was a freedom song for Afrikaners, an alternative text for collective musical mobilization to *God Save The Queen*. This essay wants to connect the cited examples of fiction-mediated memories of *Die Stem* to the historical process represented in FAK (Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge, directly translated as Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies) archival documents from the 1950s.

In 1952, five years before *Die Stem* became the only official anthem of South Africa, the Afrikaanse Kultuurraad (Afrikaans Culture Board) of Pretoria launched an initiative to elicit 'opinions by three authorities regarding suitable occasions when an anthem should be sung or played'. From Stellenbosch, Dr C.G.S. (Con) de Villiers wrote as follows:

I am of inclination and education extremely conservative, particularly when it concerns the holy things of our volk. And Die Stem has become one of those. I even lamented it bitterly that Die Stem was sung and played at the end of rugby football matches in England ... There is for me only one indicator to justify singing it: does the meeting possess poids et majesté in the Calvinist sense? Then Die Stem can be sung!<sup>8</sup>

De Villiers's answer can only be quoted in part. In the rest of the letter he also expresses opposition against the singing of *Die Stem* at political meetings because, as a member of

<sup>5</sup> A.P. Brink, *Looking on darkness* (London: W.H. Allen, 1974), 308.

<sup>6</sup> J.M. Coetzee, *Age of iron* (London: Penguin, 1990), 181.

<sup>7</sup> M. van Niekerk, *Agaat* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball and Tafelberg, 2006), tr. Michiel Heyns, 675.

<sup>8</sup> Compare file PV 202 2/4/1/3/1/4, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author.

the National Party, he would find it ‘sad if the Sappe [South African Party] viewed *Die Stem* as the calling card of the [National] Party’. For De Villiers the most terrible violence against *Die Stem* constitutes ‘a young lady who goes to sit at the piano and makes her own, apocryphal harmony to the tune’.<sup>9</sup>

It is clear that by 1952 *Die Stem* had already become for De Villiers one of the ‘holy things’ of the Afrikaner, a place of worship. His dislikes point to possible contaminating influences: sport, politics and ‘young ladies’. With regard to the latter, the danger of contamination is located specifically in the harmony and not any of the other musical parameters. Historically (one thinks here of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Council of Trent), this fear can be connected to a philosophical and ideological privileging of the word, the clarity of which is endangered by complicated vertical musical activity. More about this later.

For De Villiers, *Die Stem* as holy space is a space of good taste and of higher things in life. These political and gender biases expressed as pseudo-aesthetic judgements can also be found in his published writings. Mussolini’s signed portrait displayed in his lounge linked with his Verdi worship, the influence of English songs that clung like a bad odour to his past, the memories of the ‘passionate, barbaric Gypsy folk dances that the young Jew played for the modest, civilized Afrikaner family’;<sup>10</sup> coordinates aiding the reconstruction of De Villiers’s camp ‘poids et majesté’. *Die Stem* as ‘soete inval’.<sup>11</sup> Dr H.C.E. Bosman, then secretary of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns [South African Academy for Sciences and Arts], writes on 16 June 1952 that *Die Stem* might be sung at ‘occasions where the feeling of the nation is naturally expressed’. For him, this includes ‘general national festivals [Volksfeeste], Dingaan’s Day festivals [16 December], Union Day [31 May], Hero’s Day [on Paul Kruger’s birthday, 10 October], Van Riebeeck’s Day [6 April], parliamentary events, functions where the provincial and city administrations are involved’.<sup>12</sup> Bosman does not deem *Die Stem* inappropriate at big political meetings, and is of the opinion that it can also be sung at ‘cultural events, camping-out gatherings [laertrekke], folk dances, big events for the young, international matches or events’. Excluded from his list are ‘weddings, dances, cocktail parties, cinemas, camps, plays, concerts and picnics’. He justifies these exclusions by saying that such performances would be continuing ‘the English practice, which is in part monarchical-traditional, and in part deliberate imperialist propaganda’.<sup>13</sup> *Die Stem*, therefore, is an anti-British space, but even more: it occupies the places of the state. In this emerging discourse, *Die Stem* as symbol is no longer a space being occupied, but an object with a place.

For Prof A.N. Pelzer of the University of Pretoria, a national anthem [Volkslied] is

... an elevated utterance of the fixed aspirations that live deep in the soul of a nation. It indicates the longing that nation and State should continue to exist and serves to unite the nation into an indivisible whole and to strengthen it in realising the high

<sup>9</sup> Compare file PV 202 2/4/1/3/1/4, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author.

<sup>10</sup> Compare *Soete inval: nagelate geskrifte van Con de Villiers* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1979), 26-27 en 50-51. Also see *Die sneeu van anderjare* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1976), 72. Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author.

<sup>11</sup> De Villiers’s flat was situated in a block called Soete Inval, approximately translated as ‘gentle strains’.

<sup>12</sup> File PV 202 2/4/1/3/1/4, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author.

<sup>13</sup> File PV 202 2/4/1/3/1/4, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author.

ideals expected for nation and state. It rises above what is temporary and points to everlasting and imperishable values.<sup>14</sup>

*Die Stem* is thus a metaphysical space of aspiration and idealism. According to Pelzer it can only be honoured by performing it at ‘events where the aim of the event is not limited to the event itself, but points to the cultivation of values that will be meaningful to the future’. He also fears that *Die Stem* could be misused by subjecting it to the same ‘lowly treatment of the English anthem’.<sup>15</sup> The transcendental, we are given to understand, is not an English space.

The intervention of the Afrikaans Culture Board of Pretoria on this important matter forced the FAK to conduct a further investigation. Asked about their opinion, the South African Teachers’ Union (SATU) recommended the singing of the song at school functions in order to ‘create amongst the youth of our country healthy love for the fatherland’.<sup>16</sup> After all this consultation, a decision was taken at a meeting of the FAK’s Music Commission on 25 April 1953:

The meeting recommends to the FAK that the following be propagated to the nation:

- a) That ‘Die Stem’ be sung only at events where the value of representing the country is evident;
- b) that care should be taken to prevent ‘Die Stem’ being used in the same way as [God save] ‘The Queen’;
- c) that where ‘Die Stem’ is played, it is played as a whole and not only in part;
- d) that, at the end of events, other songs, like *Afrikaners Landgenote*, be sung.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to articulate clearly what was happening here: control, anti-British sentiment, the propagation of a museum aesthetic alienated from ordinary people, the creation of a perception that *Die Stem* was not just a song, but a mystic key to the independence of the Afrikaner nation. It is therefore not surprising that in 1957, when *Die Stem* was proclaimed the only official anthem of the Republic, no superlative sufficed to express the joy amongst the song’s supporters in the FAK. A telegram of congratulations was sent to the prime minister, J.G. Strydom:

To: The Honourable Prime Minister, House of Assembly, Cape Town

The declaration recognizing The Call of South Africa as the official and only anthem of South Africa is for everyone of the thousands of members of the FAK a source of the highest ecstasy. With this act, an old national ideal has been accomplished and one of the most important milestones on our road to full nationhood has been achieved. Having achieved this, the last of the former conqueror’s symbols that have towered over us, has disappeared. We honour Your Excellency personally, and also every member of the government.

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<sup>14</sup> File PV 202 2/4/1/3/1/4, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author.

<sup>15</sup> File PV 202 2/4/1/3/1/4, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author.

<sup>16</sup> See the letter of 14 February 1953, PV 2/4/1/3/1/4, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein.

<sup>17</sup> Compare the minutes of the meeting by the Music Commission, 25 April 1953, PV 202 1/2/3/4/2/2/1, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author. Also see Appendix to the agenda of the Music Commission meeting of 6 July 1954, entitled ‘Verslag van die FAK-kommissie insake “Die Stem” soos gewysig deur die Afrikaanse Nasionale Kultuurraad’ [‘Report of the FAK-Commission regarding “Die Stem” as modified by the Afrikaans National Culture Board’], PV 202 1/2/1/4/2/2/1, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein.

From: Secretary FAK<sup>18</sup>

Highest ecstasy! One of the most important milestones on our road to full nationhood. *Die Stem* had become the Afrikaner score to nationhood. Three days after this telegram was dispatched, the Chairman of the FAK, Prof H.B. Thom, wrote a congratulatory letter to J.G. Strydom in which he formulated the importance of *Die Stem* as follows:

You have led the Afrikaners, and indeed the whole of South Africa, to advance an important step on the road to full, unqualified spiritual independence, which is such an indispensable prerequisite for real economic and political independence. I am convinced that History will one day acknowledge the outstanding contribution of your leadership in connection with our national hymn.<sup>19</sup>

Full, unqualified spiritual independence. This is one way of articulating the meaning of this song in the ears of Afrikaners of that time. But even after *Die Stem* was adopted as the only national anthem of the republic, the desire of the Afrikaner leadership to control it did not abate. Spiritual independence is, alas, no substitute for good taste. Not only was the melody required to remain the property of the volk, but the cancerous corruption against which Con de Villiers had warned – deviant harmony – also had to be removed from *Die Stem* as alien to the volk. The minutes of a FAK Music Commission of 12 March 1960 documents the following discussion:

Mr A. Hartman reported that the SABC wants to record and market a LP of Gideon Fagan's arrangement of *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika*, and then to request that the Government approve this as the accepted official arrangement. The Music Commission did not view this arrangement as acceptable, especially since it radically changes the harmony. The Commission favoured the arrangement of Rev M.L. de Villiers.

Mr A. Hartman also mentioned that Dr F.C.L. Bosman, Chairman of the South African Music Board, had consulted Prof [Friedrich] Hartman (sic) of the University of the Witwatersrand about this matter. The opinion of the latter, written in English, was read to the Commission. From this it transpired that he attacked Rev De Villiers's arrangement on technical points.

Mr A. Hartman's opinion was that the stamp of approval should be given to that which fits with our national tradition ['volksradisie'] and not necessarily to the best technical arrangements.

Dr G.G. Cillié pointed out that Prof Hartman (sic) had praised the arrangement of Gideon Fagan in such superlatives and rejected that of Rev M.L. de Villiers so radically, that they could emphatically conclude that this was not an objective and scientific opinion, making it possible to reject it in its entirety.<sup>20</sup>

On 14 March 1960, a letter was sent on behalf of the Music Commission of the FAK to Prof H.B. Thom, presumably written by the secretary of the FAK. In this letter, an

<sup>18</sup> See telegram of 3 May 1957, PV 202 2/4/1/3/1/4, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author.

<sup>19</sup> Letter of H.B. Thom to J.G. Strydom, 6 May 1957, PV 202 2/4/1/3/1/4, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author.

<sup>20</sup> Minutes of a meeting by the FAK Music Commission, 12 March 1960, PV 202 1/2/3/4/2/2/3, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author.

‘urgent matter’ was raised, namely the SABC’s planned recording of *Die Stem* on LP. The source of unhappiness was the Fagan ‘four-part arrangement’, so lavishly praised by Prof Friedrich Hartmann:

We have also seen the (English) remarks of Prof Hartman. Briefly, the contents thereof comes down to the fact that the M.L. de Villiers arrangement is hopeless and the Fagan arrangement faultless. The Music Commission is of the opinion that such an absolute condemnation of the one and absolute extolling of the other cannot be accepted as a scientifically objective judgment.

This was followed by the coup de grâce:

The tempo of 60 crotchets per minute of the Fagan arrangement is unacceptably slow and seemingly an imitation of the tempo of God Save the Queen.<sup>21</sup>

*Die Stem* is thus anglicized by making it sound more like a hymn and less like a march. But the antagonism against everything English, from the character of the English anthem to the continuing references to the negative remarks being made ‘in English’, makes it clear that these motives are strongly anchored in nationalist discourses. The existence of an underlying mistrust in ‘the best technical settings’ is clear, and the possibility that this mistrust could be located in the (unconscious) confirmation of the Afrikaans word as potentially vulnerable to ‘alien’ harmony, is a rich idea. The writer of the letter to Thom explains the petty Afrikaner politics behind this polemic step by step. In short it constitutes a ‘devious plan’ by the ‘enemies of the volk’ to install Gideon Fagan as the principal conductor of the SABC, instead of appointing the chairman of the Music Commission of the FAK (Anton Hartman). Whether Friedrich Hartmann’s opinion could be motivated musically or not, was not deemed relevant:

The opinions they canvassed are exclusively from people who are not part of our Afrikaner nation’s ideals. If folk songs and the harmonization of such songs were to be judged purely on musical merits, *Die Stem* would never have been adopted in the first place.<sup>22</sup>

Subsequently, the FAK also sent Dr H.F. Verwoerd a letter with an appeal to the effect that the M.L. de Villiers setting be recognized by the government as official arrangement.<sup>23</sup>

### III

What can be deduced from the pitiful politics about harmonization, the suitability of places and events, the discourses on dignity and gravitas? At least the fact that there is

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<sup>21</sup> File PV 202 2/4/1/3/1/4, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author.

<sup>22</sup> Letter to H.B. Thom, 14 March 1960; File PV 202 2/4/1/3/1/4, INEG, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author.

<sup>23</sup> The letter is dated 21 March 1960. The Prime Minister’s Office acknowledged receipt on 28 March 1960 and a comprehensive answer was sent to the FAK by the secretary of the Prime Minister on 25 May 1960. In this letter the government wisely decided to remain neutral and not choose sides with regard to ‘all harmonisations or arrangements of the composition for orchestra or voices or anything else’, with the understanding that such arrangements should ‘stay within the framework of the acknowledged composition and be performed with dignity and devotion at suitable occasions’. Translated from the Afrikaans by the present author.

nothing neutral about this song, and that the political ballast weighing down *Die Stem* is not only of our time, imagined retrospectively by the ‘enemies of the Afrikaner’, but that it has been historically conceived and understood by Afrikaners themselves. Also that the restrictive control that would characterize the Afrikaner Republic would stunt this song in self-glorified mediocrity. Finally that music, too, could not escape the machinations of the secret Broederbond.

*Die Stem* as Afrikaans place of memory: Goldblatt’s tragic emptiness, Brink’s martyr’s dirge, Van Niekerk’s set-piece on the burial of the Republic, Coetzee’s version of hell, Con de Villiers’s ‘poids et majesté’, Anton Hartman’s national tradition, H.B. Thom’s ‘spiritual independence’. Different conflicting memories, representing different histories.

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## ‘In ferocious anger I bit the hand that controls’<sup>1</sup>: The Rise of Afrikaans Punk Rock Music

Annie Klopper

I

On a night in 2006, a Cape Town’s night club, its floor littered with cigarette butts, plays host to an Afrikaner (sub)cultural gathering. Guys with seventies’ glam rock hairstyles, wearing old school uniform-like blazers decorated with a collection of pins and buttons and teamed up with tight jeans, sneakers and loose shoelaces keep one eagerly awaiting eye on the set stage and another on the short skirted girls.

Before taking to the stage, the band, Fokofpolisiekar,<sup>2</sup> entices the audience with the projection of their latest music video for the acoustic version of their debut hit single released two years before and entitled ‘Hemel op die platteland’.<sup>3</sup>

In tune with the melancholy sound of an acoustic guitar, the music video kicks off with the winding of an old film reel revealing nostalgic stock footage of a long gone era. Well-known images make the audience feel a sense of estrangement by means of ironic disillusionment: the sun is setting in the Cape Town suburb of Bellville. Seemingly bored, the five members of Fokofpolisiekar hang around the Afrikaans Language Monument. Against the backdrop of a blue-grey sky, the well-known image of a Dutch Reformed church tower flashes in blinding sunlight. Smiling white children play next to swimming pools in the backyards of well-to-do suburbs and on white beaches while the voice of the lead singer asks:<sup>4</sup>

can you tighten my bolts for me? / can you find my marbles for me? / can you stick your idea of normal up your ass? / can you spell apathy? can someone maybe phone a god / and tell him we don’t need him anymore / can you spell apathy?

(kan jy my skroewe vir my vasdraai? / kan jy my albasters vir my vind? / kan jy jou idee van normaal by jou gat opdruk? / kan jy apatie spel? kan iemand dalk ’n god bel / en vir hom sê ons het hom nie meer nodig nie / kan jy apatie spel?)

<sup>1</sup> Quoted and translated from Fokofpolisiekar’s song ‘Tiny Town’ from the album *Lugsteuring* (2004).

<sup>2</sup> Translated: fuck off police car.

<sup>3</sup> Translated: ‘Heaven on the platteland’. The word *platteland* cannot be literally translated as it is very much a South African concept. At best, platteland can be translated as countryside, country(-districts), backveld, rural parts or rural area. These descriptions however conjure up many connotations not relating to the original concept of platteland. Platteland is the Afrikaans word for land, or areas separated from the city or densely populated areas and being mainly farmland or small towns situated around the farms traditionally owned by white Afrikaans speakers.

<sup>4</sup> All Fokofpolisiekar’s lyrics are in Afrikaans and are translated into English for this chapter.

And whilst the home video footage of a family eating supper in a green aced backyard is sharply contrasted with images of broken garden chairs in an otherwise empty run-down backyard, the theme of the song resonates ironically in the chorus: ‘it’s heaven on the *platteland*’ (‘dis hemel op die platteland’)<sup>5</sup>.

On the dirty floor of the night club, a young white Afrikaans guy kills his Malboro cigarette and takes a sip of his lukewarm Black Label beer, watching more video images of morally grounded suburb, school and church and relates to the angry words of the vocalist: ‘regulate me [...] place me in a box and mark it safe / then send me to where all the boxes/idiots<sup>6</sup> go / send me to heaven I think it’s on the *platteland*’<sup>7</sup> (‘reguleer my, roetineer my / plaas my in ’n boks en merk dit veilig / stuur my dan waarheen al die dose gaan / stuur my hemel toe ek dink dis in die platteland / dis hemel op die platteland’). As the video draws to a close, the young man sees the ironic use of the partly exposed motto engraved on the path to the Language Monument: ‘This is us’.<sup>8</sup> He has never visited the Language Monument, but he agrees with what he just saw and because he feels as though he just paged through old photo albums (only to come to the disillusioned conclusion that everything has been all too burlesque) he puts his hands in the air when the band takes to the stage with the lead singer commanding: ‘Lift your hands to the burlesque [...] We want the attention / of the brainless crowd / We want the famine the urgent lack of energy / We are in search of the search for something / We are empty, because we want to be’ (‘Rys jou hande vir die klug [...] Ons soek die aandag / van die breinlose gehoor / Ons soek die hongersnood die dringende gebrek aan energie / Ons is op soek na die soeke na iets / Ons is leeg, want ons wil wees’.<sup>9</sup>

## II

Since the band’s conception in 2003, the controversial Afrikaans punk rock group who named themselves Fokofpolisiekar, sent a series of shock waves through the remnants of conservative Afrikaner Nationalism. This was especially evident in the polemic consequences and media frenzy sparked off by the bassist Wynand Myburgh writing the words ‘Fuck God’ (instead of an autograph) on the wallet of a young fan after a show the band played. Fokofpolisiekar however claims not to be anti-Christian but rather see themselves as heathens.<sup>10</sup> Sceptic heathens bore forth from the Afrikanervolk during the uncomfortable aftermath of Christian National education.

As Afrikaans rockstar-heathens, they would challenge things like the ‘tradisiemasjien’<sup>11</sup> in their lyrics. Fed up and bored with the vicious cycle of mediocre Afrikaans Christian life in white middle class suburbs (dubbed by them as small beige

<sup>5</sup> The original version of ‘Hemel op die platteland’ (‘Heaven on the platteland’) is recorded on Fokofpolisiekar’s debut EP *As jy met vuur speel sal jy brand* (2003) and the acoustic version on the EP *Brand Suid-Afrika* (2006). Also see footnote 3.

<sup>6</sup> The original Afrikaans word used here, *doos*, can be translated as box, but is also a derogatory term used to describe an idiot or bad person.

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 3.

<sup>8</sup> The whole motto reads ‘Dit is ons erns’ (‘We are very much in earnest’) and in the video only the fragment ‘Dit is ons’ (which can at best be translated as ‘It is us/our’) is exposed.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted from ‘Die grootste gaping’ (‘The largest gap’) from Fokofpolisiekar’s album *Lugsteuring*.

<sup>10</sup> H. Retief, ‘Ons is nie anti-Christene nie, net heidende’, in *Rapport*, 26 Maart 2006, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Literally translated as ‘tradition machine’. Taken from the song ‘Tygerberg Vliegtuig’ (‘Tygerberg Aeroplane’) by Fokofpolisiekar, this term is used to describe the Afrikaner’s traditional concept of God as religious automatisation. The song is recorded on the band’s first EP, *As jy met vuur speel sal jy brand*.



Figure 20.1 Fokofpolisiekar’s Wynand Myburgh and Francois van Coke (Photo: Annie Klopper)

palaces on the outskirts of Cape Town),<sup>12</sup> they chose music as a means to not only lash out, but also to question.

Exploding onto the South African music scene, Fokofpolisiekar sang of the time bombs left in the gaping holes of their upbringing.<sup>13</sup> These time bombs started ticking when the Afrikaner Nationalist establishment actively strove to sanction any ‘volksvreemde’<sup>14</sup> influences that might carry any subversive messages to the Afrikaner. During the late 1960’s it was proven elsewhere in the world (especially in the USA and Britain) that rock music can play an instrumental role in the challenging of the status quo. Afrikaner cultural entrepreneurs saw rock music as a dangerous threat to the sober, wholesome Afrikaner culture they advocated. They feared it might bring the Afrikaner youth to moral demise and labeled it communist (ironic, considering the USSR was trying just as hard to withhold Western music from the ears of the Soviet youth).

Until 1975 rock music could still make its way to many a South African ear via short waves. LM Radio broadcasted from Mozambique and played (among other music) contemporary American and British rock and pop. With the FRELIMO liberation movement taking over in Mozambique that year, LM Radio was closed. By this time the Broederbond held most of the senior positions in the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) from which they could play an active role in repressing any possible subversive musical notes.<sup>15</sup> They also saw the closing down of LM Radio as a perfect opportunity to launch South Africa’s own rock radio station, Radio 5. With the rigid censorship maintained by the SABC, this station however failed to be much more

<sup>12</sup> They sing of the ‘bose kringloop’ (vicious cycle) and the mediocrity of the small beige palaces on the outskirts of Cape Town / shit city (‘klein beige paleisies aan die buitewyke van kakstad’) in the song ‘Sielswartgat’ on the album *Lugsteuring*.

<sup>13</sup> ‘[D]aar is tydbomme in gapings van opvoeding gelos’ from the group’s song ‘Tonnelvisie’ (‘Tunnelvision’) on the album *Lugsteuring*.

<sup>14</sup> Not indigenous to the Afrikaner.

<sup>15</sup> P. Hopkins, *Voëlvy: The movement that rocked South Africa*. Cape Town: Zebra Press 2006, 51.

than a pop station.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the same strict control of the airwaves was maintained when television broadcasts started in South African households in 1976.

### III

The dictation of the Afrikaner's musical tastes and preferences commenced with the inception of Die Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge<sup>17</sup> (FAK) in 1929. The FAK was functional in judging whether music was 'volksvreemd' or 'volksvriendelik'.<sup>18</sup> One of the aims of the first publication of the FAK *Volksangbundel* (folk songbook) in 1937 was to probe the Afrikaner youth into proudly singing Afrikaans 'lekkerliedjies' at picnics, in choirs and at school. Songs with words to the likes of:

And do you hear the mighty rumbling? / Over the veld (field) it comes widely soaring: / the song of a volk's awakening that makes hearts shiver and tremble. / From the Cape up to the North the chords rise thunderously loud: / It is the SONG of Young South Africa.

(En hoor jy die magtige dreuning? / Oor die veld kom dit wyd gesweef: / die lied van 'n volk se ontwaking wat harte laat sidder en beef. / Van Kaapland tot bo in die Noorde rys dowerend luid die akkoorde: / Dit is die LIED van Jong Suid-Afrika.)<sup>19</sup>

The legacy of these Afrikaans volksliedjies (of which the melodies was often imported from foreign folk songs) set the precedent to, and paved the way for trite and conformist Afrikaans lyrics lacking the questioning of convention that still resonates in Afrikaans music today.

By the late 1970s, while most Afrikaans singers were still echoing the love of 'volk' and 'vaderland'<sup>20</sup> and not contesting norms and convention in their lyrics (keeping to the unchallenging Afrikaans folk song), a small revolution hit mainstream Afrikaans music. By this time, the Afrikaans youth was far more intent on listening to the music of foreign English speaking artists and groups. It was also believed that Afrikaans was far too guttural a language to be used in the creation of rock & roll.<sup>21</sup> A major shift in this belief would occur with the release of Anton Goosen's debut album *Boy van die suburbs* in 1979 and the accompanying phase in Afrikaans music dubbed *Musiek en Liriek*<sup>22</sup> lead by Goosen and Laurika Rauch. *Musiek en Liriek* managed to renew the traditional folk song and successfully replaced the 'lekkerliedjie' with songs of a somewhat more challenging nature, especially with regard to the lyrical content. However, clear-cut social and political commentary was still lacking.<sup>23</sup> Where elements

<sup>16</sup> P. Hopkins, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Translation: The Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies.

<sup>18</sup> P. Hopkins, *Voëlvry: The movement that rocked South Africa*. Cape Town: Zebra Press 2006, 35.

<sup>19</sup> Anonymous, 'Die lied van jong Suid-Afrika', in: *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge, FAK-Volksangbundel*. Johannesburg: Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge 1979, 59.

<sup>20</sup> 'Volk' and 'vaderland' may be translated as the 'Afrikaner nation' and the 'land of the forefathers'.

<sup>21</sup> Compare A. Grundlingh, 'Rocking the boat' in South Africa? Voëlvry music and the Afrikaans anti-apartheid social protest in the 1980's, in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 37(3), 2004, 491.

<sup>22</sup> After a television program with the same name, broadcasted by the SABC.

<sup>23</sup> P. Hopkins, *Voëlvry: The movement that rocked South Africa*. Cape Town: Zebra Press 2006, 56-57.

of protest could be detected in the lyrics of Goosen, the songs in question was banned outright by the SABC or received only very limited airplay on the radio.<sup>24</sup>

It would only be due to the culmination of the sobering fall of apartheid, the state of emergency of the 1980s and the international condemnation of the South African government that a group of youths would take up their instruments in a rock & roll protest<sup>25</sup> against the order of the day. With Johannes Kerkorrel (pseudonym of Ralph Rabie), Koos Kombuis (also known as André Letoit) and Bernoldus Niemand (alias of James Phillips), and with Dagga-Dirk Uys as manager, the Voëlvry<sup>26</sup> movement saw the light in the late 1980s with the Voëlvry Tour as highlight in 1989.

The members of Voëlvry came from respectable middle class households where they grew up with the SABC, Sunday School, ‘Whites Only’-signs and censorship. They realized that the time was ripe for change and that Afrikaans rock music could be the weapon of choice in attacking the already weakening Afrikaner Nationalism. With sharp Afrikaans lyrics satirizing and parodying well-known Afrikaner cultural elements, this weapon could hit straight to the spot where the impact would have the greatest effect: the eardrums of the Afrikaner youth.

The Voëlvry anthems encapsulated themes like conscription, patriarchy, racism, the evils of apartheid, the ignorance of the white middle class and the ever waving index finger of P.W. Botha. The impact of the message was strengthened by the fact that they were performing in Afrikaans, thereby giving this language a fresh identity. Afrikaans became cool. Cooler even than Anton Goosen’s *Boy van die suburbs*, Laurika Rauch’s soulful voice and David Kramer’s Boland Blues began to make it in the early eighties.

Afrikaans music would cease to be the same after Voëlvry. With their biting socio-political commentary, Voëlvry rejected a formal Afrikaner identity whilst reformulating what it meant to be Afrikaans, with the creative implementation of music.<sup>27</sup> Realizing new possibilities in Afrikaans music, it became evident that there shimmered more in Afrikaans music than Bles Bridges’ sequenced waist coats and the red plastic roses he so liberally handed out. Afrikaans rock legends of later years like Valiant Swart and Karin Zoid were given footsteps to follow – as did many Afrikaans punk rock bands that would ultimately still shake South African stages – but in the meantime the 1990’s had to happen.

At about the same time as the musical tsunami called Voëlvry was rocking the Afrikaans community, Apartheid was abolished and steps were being taken towards the introduction of a democratic South Africa. These political currents caused the tsunami to subside and the wave of protest music retreated, leaving behind a silent but still somewhat fertile ground as legacy. Koos Kombuis and Johannes Kerkorrel each embarked on solo careers together with a few other rock musicians like Paul Riekert (of the band Battery 9) and Valiant Swart who would keep the remnants alive at the music and cultural festivals that became one of the characteristic elements of the nineties South Africa. But the *Afrikaans* rock revolution started losing steam as the conscience

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<sup>24</sup> M. Andersson, *Music in the mix: The story of South African popular music*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press 1981, 91-92, 150.

<sup>25</sup> Although Voëlvry marks the first rock protest in Afrikaans, obvious protest elements were also evident in Afrikaans cabaret music earlier in the eighties with lyrics by writers like Hennie Aucamp and Etienne van Heerden. It is worthwhile to explore the possibility that protest cabaret might have impacted on some level the rise of the Voëlvry movement.

<sup>26</sup> Voëlvry can be translated as ‘free as a bird’.

<sup>27</sup> A. Grundlingh, ‘Rocking the boat’ in South Africa? Voëlvry music and the Afrikaans anti-apartheid social protest in the 1980’s’, in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 37(3), 2004, 484, 494-495.

of the Afrikaner. James Phillips died after a car crash in 1995. Kerkorrel would go on to expand his solo career to the Netherlands and Belgium where he spent extensive time performing until his suicide on 12 November 2002. The South African political landscape was changing at a rapid pace with the country's transition to democracy. There was no longer a finger waving PW to condemn and, moreover, in its vast oversaturation, the Afrikaans music industry was beginning to develop an ever worsening identity crisis. The Afrikaans rock and metal band K.O.B.U.S.!<sup>28</sup> sums it up as follows in a 2004 song:

We are hostages in one big cultural festival tent / entertained by people with more self confidence than talent / Every Tom, Dick and Harry has a CD on the shelf / we are choking on the 'hits' however ridiculous or poor.

(Ons is gyselaars in een groot kulturfesentent / word vermaak deur mense met meer selfvertroue as talent / Elke Jan Rap en sy maat het 'n CD op die rak / ons verstik aan al die 'treffers' hoe belaglik of hoe swak.<sup>29</sup>)

Meanwhile South Africa was no longer closed off to musical influences from the outside. On the contrary, with the abolition of apartheid, sanctions and boycotts South Africa was open to international influences to come pouring in. Influences of grunge and metal could be heard in many a suburban garage where every second Jan, Francois and Arno was starting a band. Usually these bands were singing in English because Kerkorrel was sounding quite old school compared to Kurt Cobain who together with many other internationally acclaimed English bands were influencing the musical styles of the South African music scene and youth. On the bedroom walls of teenagers from Bellville to Melville, posters of South African rock bands like Springbok Nude Girls, Just Jinger and Wonderboom were appearing next to those of international acts like Nirvana, Metallica, Bon Jovi, Counting Crows, Pearl Jam, Greenday and Smashing Pumpkins. In 1997 journalist Ilda Jacobs reported in the Afrikaans magazine *Die Huisgenoot* on a new rock explosion in South Africa:

One can barely count on one hand the amount of South African pop and rock artists who has been successful locally or internationally a couple of years ago [...] But in the new South Africa a wave of inspiration is sweeping through the country. The fingers of two hands are no longer enough to count all the up 'n coming stars. For an evening of live entertainment, you can choose from a whole range of groups who play new, original music. And more and more people are getting together to listen to them on a regular basis.

(Die Suid-Afrikaanse pop- en rock-kunstenaars wat tot 'n paar jaar gelede oorsee of voor hul eie mense hond haar-af gemaak het, kan jy amper op een hand tel [...]. Maar in die nuwe Suid-Afrika is dit asof die inspirasie soos 'n golf oor die land spoel. Twee hande vol vingers is nie meer genoeg om al die opkomende sterre af te tel nie. Vir 'n aandjie se lewendige musiek kan jy kies uit 'n tros groepe wat nuwe,

<sup>28</sup> The band's name was originally spelled as Kobus!, then as KOBUS! and (with the release of their third album *Swaar Metaal* in 2007) the name was changed to K.O.B.U.S.! as an acronym of a line in the title track that reads: 'Konings Oor Besete Uitverkore Siele'.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted from the song 'Kulturfesentent' (Cultural festival tent) from KOBUS's second album *100% Skuldgevoelvry*.

oorspronklike musiek speel. En ál meer mense ruk gereeld op om na hulle te luister.<sup>30</sup>)

But despite the rock explosion the ‘cultural festival tent’ K.O.B.U.S.! sings about was becoming increasingly crowded. In a 2004 interview, veteran musician Piet Botha comments on the Afrikaans music industry:

The industry is being run by people who know nothing about music but a lot about money. The whole market is saturated with Bokkie<sup>31</sup> songs and braaivleis tunes<sup>32</sup> and such irrelevant nonsense [...] The world is morally bankrupt. The youth of today will start seeking more depth in music than what they find in the rubbish they are currently being fed with.

(Die bedryf word gerun deur mense wat niks weet van musiek nie, maar baie weet van geld. Die hele mark is besaai met Bokkie songs en braaivleis tunes en sulke irrelevante nonsens [...]. Die wêreld is moreel bankrot. Die jeug van vandag gaan meer diepte in musiek soek as die snert wat hulle nou gevoer word.)<sup>33</sup>

And they did.

The same Afrikaans teenagers whose parents still sent them to Sunday school in the nineties, slowly but surely became irritated by the atmosphere in the ‘cultural festival tent’. Moreover, they started wondering about the sins of their fathers and the demons of the past. It was these very same teenagers of the late nineties who, with their torn jeans, walked around with skateboards, went to music festivals and had mixed tapes with Nirvana on side A and Springbok Nude Girls on side B playing in their walkmans. To them the Dutch Reformed Church started looking all the more like an oppressing artifact from the apartheid era and they wanted nothing to do with an oppressing organization of any kind. English charismatic churches gave some of them a momentary sense of belonging. It was in an English charismatic church that the members of Fokofpolisiekar would find each other. Two of the members (the two lyricists), Francois Badenhorst (who later changed his surname to Van Coke, most probably in the interest of his father, a Dutch Reformed minister) and Hunter Kennedy were members of the English Christian rock group New World Inside whilst the other members (Jaco ‘Snakehead’ Venter, Johnny de Ridder and Wynand Myburgh) were also involved in other gospel bands (22 Stars and 7<sup>th</sup> Breed). But they turned their backs on the church, probably because in their existential anguish, they came to the conclusion that they did not need the god of their forefathers, or any god for that sake, anymore.<sup>34</sup> Whatever their reasons, they longed for the emancipation from the institutions and ideas that were forced on them by their ancestors and ‘in ferocious anger bit the hand that controls’<sup>35</sup> by means of a punk rock protest.

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<sup>30</sup> I. Jacobs, ‘Hiert vir Boomslang en die Blinkende Kokkerotte’, in: *Die Huisgenoot*, 23 January 1997, 126.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Bokkie’ is a common Afrikaans pet name used for a loved one and might be translated as ‘Baby’.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Braaivleis’ = barbecue.

<sup>33</sup> N. Engelbrecht, ‘Nonsens sonder diepte’, in: *Noord-Son*, 6 February 2004, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Compare the song ‘Hemel op die platteland’ off the EP *As jy met vuur speel sal jy brand* where it is declared that a god is not needed anymore.

<sup>35</sup> Translated from Fokofpolisiekar’s song ‘Tiny Town’ off the album *Lugsteuring*. In the original Afrikaans the words are: ‘in wrede woede het ek die hand wat beheer gebyt’.

## IV

Biting the hand that controls has the purpose of taking the leash from this hand<sup>36</sup> and thereby appropriating an own identity (or merely expressing the search for this identity). In this regard the youth's relationship with (and use of) music plays an imperative role. After the Second World War the American youth, for example, used rock music as a means whereby the status quo could be challenged and at the same time a sense of solidarity could be expressed.<sup>37</sup> This solidarity is gained and expressed by the identification with the music maker(s), the music's content or message as well as with the fellow fans. This gives a sense of belonging and at the same time it creates a space within which there can be struggled with old identities and new ones can be appropriated – even if the identification is with a common *lack* of identity, as it is worded in the lyrics of Fokofpolisiekar's song 'Sporadies Nomadies' ('Sporadically Nomadic'): 'Come let's agree / We are all confused' (Kom stem saam / Ons is almal deurmekaar).<sup>38</sup>

Evidence of the confusing period and experiences the Afrikaans youth (especially those in the suburbs) could relate to, can be found in the diverse sources of inspiration that Fokofpolisiekar listed in a press release of their debut EP *As jy met vuur speel sal jy brand* in 2003:

Thundercats. God. Three years intensive church attendance. Doug. Pornography. Punk. Cigarettes. Worship leading. He-man. Bellville. Durban. Cape Town. Stellenbosch. *Airwolf*. Growing up. *Knightrider*. Rugby. Biltong. Spirit. *Bitterkomix*. Skateboarding. Toy Machine. Metal. Rock. Tygerberg Hospital. Rodney Seale. McDonalds. Post-apartheid. Mandela. De Klerk. Internet. Spiderman. X-men. Punk shows. Weed. Cigarettes. Johannes Kerkorrel. City. Farm. CD's. Safety bubbles. Alcohol. Reggae. The Oudtshoorn police station. Dad. Minister. Uncle. Head of the ACSV. Student body. David Iche. Friends. Girlfriends. TV. Mr Video. *Orkney Snork Nie*. Koos Kombuis. Pets. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Chat-rooms. Mr Nice. *The world according to Garp*. Europe. America. MTV. Imaginary personality restrictions. Psychology. Sound. Satanism. Nkosi Sikelela. Die Stem. Jeugsangbundel (Youth Song Book). Fashion. Ernest Movies. *Beetle Juice*. Tim Burton. *Waking Life*. Photo albums. Coffee table books. Art school. School. Headmaster. *Vetkoekpaleis*. Weed. *Egoli*. *Loving*. Democracy. Red wine. Afrikaans alternative. AWB. ANC. NNP. PAC. NP. PAGAD. Republic. Soweto. Rage Against the Machine. *Wayne's World*. Playstation. Doom. Death metal. Children. Eye drops. Home. Joystick games. *Streetfighter*. Zimbabwe. Rape. Camps. Osama. Warcraft. Hansie Cronje. Naas Botha. Tolla van der Merwe. Casper de Vries. David Kramer. Alex Jay. *No Jacket Required*. The 80's. Ferrari's. War. Tadpoles. Silkworms. Dirty socks. Spiders. Bionic Six. GI Joe. Duke Nukem. *Wielie Walie*. *Liewe Heksie*. Swartkat. Borrie van Swartkat. *Dawson's Creek*. All those fucking American College movies. Acid. Bob Dylan. Willem Samuels. Valiant Swart. Tamagotchi. BB guns. Airgun. *A-team*. Mannemarak. Swear word. Fokofpolisiekar!<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Compare the line from 'Tiny Town' which reads: 'Dis nou ek wat die leiband lei' ('It's now I who hold the reins').

<sup>37</sup> R. Sardiello, 'Deadhead subculture' in: J.S. Epstein, *Youth culture: Identity in a postmodern world*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers 1998, 123.

<sup>38</sup> From the album *Lugsteuring*.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted from E. Grundling, 'Fokofpolisiekar: 'n dosis rebelsheid in Afrikaanse musiek', LitNet, 2 Desember 2004, <http://www.oulitnet.co.za/klank/polisie.asp> (Downloaded: 28 Oktober 2008).



Figure 20.2 Fokofpolisiekar (Photo: Annie Klopper)

Fokofpolisiekar was the first commercially successful punk rock band in Afrikaans becoming one of the many voices (and speaking to) a youth who had to find their marks in a transitional phase of a country with a problematic history. The sometimes angry lyrics, dripping with underlying themes of nihilism and uncertainty, advocated purification or regeneration by means of destruction, as in the songs ‘Destroy yourself’ (‘Vernietig jouself’) and ‘Burn South Africa’ (‘Brand Suid-Afrika’). At the same time, it gave a liminal Afrikaner youth, longing to shout their frustrations from the rooftops, something to relate to. The members are also clever musicians with an exceptional knowledge of marketing to boot. After the band’s debut in 2003, the full length album *Lugsteuring* (2004) was released, followed by the EP’s *Monoloog in Stereo* (2005) and *Brand Suid-Afrika* (2006), the full length *Swanesang* (2006) and the EP *Antibiotika* (2008). The impact the musicians had as rebellious rockers is obvious when one looks at the way the band was perceived and portrayed in the media. To quote but a few headings:

It’s enough to make one grey: Afrikaans punk is sweeping everything flat; Fokofpolisiekar: a dosage of rebellion in Afrikaans music; With their back on the church, ‘Afrikaner mentality’; Afrikaans rockers challenge the status quo; Straight to hell; Fokofpolisiekar rocks church; Fokof divides church; Rebel Rockers; Polisiekar in trouble after member blasphemes; Anger because school asks scholars to boycott Fokofpolisiekar; Controversial Afrikaans band suffers Christians’ wrath; Outcry over band’s invitation to fest; Keep Polisiekarre away from KKNK – church authority; Stayaway-polisiekar; Dutch Reformed Church asks for calm in struggle over Polisiekar; ‘Karre pop prophets; Borders, Christians and the ‘Karre; Commission asked to give constitutional direction with regards to Polisiekarre ...

The flood-gates were now opened far too wide to ever be closed up again. Many anAfrikaans rock and punk rock group took to the stage listing Fokofpolisiekar as their number one inspiration. Just as the Sex Pistols stand out as iconic marker in British punk, Fokofpolisiekar became an undeniable beacon in the Afrikaans music industry: a point of reference still fresh in the memory of a youth who would now more than ever refuse to keep quiet about the crises of their time. The song of young South Africa was rewritten. The social observing K.O.B.U.S!<sup>40</sup> words it as follows in the song ‘N.J.S.A. (Lied van die Nuwe Jong Suid Afrika)’ which can be translated as ‘Hymn of the New Young South Africa’ :<sup>41</sup>

Famine, Aids death  
Homeless, Jobless, Despondent, Frail  
Presidentia in Absentia  
Mismanagement, Purgatory, Monsterous pleasure

Orania, Azania  
Early morning Venom spewing, Culture-bomb fuse  
Obsession, Depression  
Youthslaughter, School-rape, Dead Expectation

Oh yeah, Oh yeah we refuse to carry the sins of your parents  
Oh yeah, Oh yeah The Hymn of the New Young South Africa

Cybersex, SMS  
Pentium-Jugular, Stork-Computer  
Soul stolen, Pain dulled  
Dark days, Thunderclaps, Narcotics

Heavy Metal, Anti-Social  
Critic-school, Word-Conjuring, KOBUS! Hyperbole  
Guiltcomplex, Mudpool  
Pain unlearn, Dispense with, Distantiate

Oh yeah, Oh yeah cut our wings and we grow another pair  
Oh yeah, The Hymn of the New Young South Africa

Oh yeah, Oh yeah cut our wings and we grow another pair  
Oh yeah, The Hymn of the New Young South Africa  
Oh yeah, South Africa  
Oh yeah, South Africa  
Oh yeah, Oh yeah, Oh yeah  
The Hymn of the New Young South Africa

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<sup>40</sup> As a metal band who already debuted in 2002 with experimental Afrikaans rock, this band is not successors of Fokofpolisiekar, but are quoted here because of the social commentary in their lyrics which is evident of the renewal in Afrikaans rock, metal and punk.

<sup>41</sup> The song is taken from the band’s third album *Swaar Metaal*. The translation of the lyrics was done by the lyricist, Francois Breytenbach Blom, on the website <http://volkvanmain.freehostia.com> for English fans, but the site states that this is merely a lithe translation.

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