Rave New World

Trance-Mission, Trance-Nationalism, and Trance-scendence in the “New” South Africa

Stephanie Marlin-Curiel

In one of his most famous speeches to the South African nation, D.F. Malan, the first apartheid-era Prime Minister, said, “Seek in the past every-thing that is good and clean and build thereon your future” ([1948] 1961). Malan was quoting Paul Kruger, the legendary founder of Afrikaner nationalism and leader of the Boer struggle against the English at the turn of the 20th century. By evoking Kruger, who believed that the Boers were the “chosen people,” Malan legitimized his “purity” campaign, which not only excluded an alliance with the English but also became the core of the apartheid (“apartheid”) system.

Today, in the “new” South Africa, DJ Heine du Toit, borrowing the name of Afrikaner poet D.J. Opperman as his stage name, mixes Malan’s words with trance music for a young, Afrikaans-speaking crowd. Along with samples of Malan’s 1948 speech, he cuts in the voices of a familiar Afrikaans storyteller, a well-known rugby commentator, and several other Afrikaner nationalistic icons of his generation’s youth, embarking on a journey at once critical, celebratory, and healing. As the featured act at a party in December 1999, Du Toit/Opperman triggered not only aural memories, but also visual memories. He projected symbols of Afrikanerdom onto huge screens that served as a backdrop for the dancers. The streaming images included mostly monuments, memorabilia, figureheads, and logos, but significantly, this “family photo album” also included the tragic image of the dead 13-year-old Hector Peterson being carried in the arms of his classmates. This image of the first student killed in the 1976 uprising against Afrikaans instruction in the black township of Soweto was projected at the point in Malan’s speech where he says the goal of his new government is “om billikheid, reg en geregtigheid aan albei twee blanke taalgroepe te laat geskied, asook teenoor die nie-blanke bevolking van ons land” (to achieve what is right and fair for both the white language groups and the non-white people of our country). As the images sped up they fell out of sync with the music. In this dizzying combination of aural and visual
stimuli, Du Toit/Opperman succeeded in submerging the revelers in the
dream space of their youth, while propping one eye open to a sardonic vision
of the past.

I witnessed Du Toit’s act at no ordinary party, but one billed as an Afrikaans
rave “that will put Afrikaans in a whole new context” (Matthews 1999).
Bringing together Afrikaans-speaking musicians from varied racial and cultural
backgrounds, the rave effectively repositioned Afrikaans from its place as
the language of the oppressor to the lingua franca of cutting-edge sound. “The
implication is that Afrikaans is now no longer God’s holy chosen language,
but a versatile, modern, and extremely adaptable communication tool [...] uniquely positioned to be symbolic of how achievable unity is in South Af-
rica,” said Manie Spamer (1999), my host for the evening. To emphasize this
inclusive flexibility, the event combined the hardcore deejay music, the sub-
versive tone, and the drugs-and-dance aesthetic common to raves, with the
mind-bending techno trance music, the rustic outdoor space, and the hippie
aesthetic common to trance parties. The young Afrikaners who organized the
rave hoped it would propel a new movement redefining Afrikaner identity
in the wake of apartheid’s demise. To that end, my presence as a foreigner was
most welcome—Afrikaners rarely have an opportunity to improve upon their
less-than-favorable international reputation.

I arrived at the party, which was held at Barn Celos, a converted abandoned
barn in Melkbosstrand (located about 40 minutes outside of Cape Town), at

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Student Essay Contest Winner

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the Tisch School of the Arts/NYU in Spring 2001. She teaches in the
Undergraduate Drama Department at Tisch. Her dissertation, “Performing
Memory, Rehearsing Reconciliation: The Art of Truth in the
New South Africa,” analyzes cultural responses to the Truth and Reconcil-
iation Commission in South Africa. Marlin-Curiel’s fieldwork in
South Africa is the basis not only of her dissertation but of her **TDR
Student Essay Contest** winning entry. Her other articles on related sub-
jects are forthcoming in **South African Theatre Journal** and **Sounds and
Gestures of Recollection: Art and the Performance of Memory**, edited by Ri-
chard Candida Smith for Routledge.

**The MA and PhD programs in Performance Studies at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts** cover a full range of performance, from theatre and dance to ritual and popular entertainment.
Courses are both intercultural and interdisciplinary, drawing on the arts,
humanities, and social sciences. A broad spectrum of performance—in-
cluding postmodern theatre, political demonstrations and rallies, capoeira,
kathakali, Broadway, festivals, and shamanism—is documented using field-
work, interviews, and archival research and is analyzed from a variety of
perspectives. As a discipline of “inclusion,” performance studies focuses
on the traditions of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as well as those of the
many cultures of North America. Areas of concentration include contem-
porary performance, dance, folk and popular performance, postcolonial
theory, feminist and queer theory, and performance theory. Graduates
work as university professors, in museums, foundations, nonprofit organi-
zations, in theatre, in publishing, and numerous other professions.
around 10:30 P.M. The atmosphere at the bar was casual, and the tripped-out dancers never left the floor, even between bands. For those not interested in drink, drugs, or dance, there was an upstairs loft space where people could sink into soft chairs. Or, one could go outside and purchase more wholesome refreshments, which included the famous Afrikaner fried-dough pastry, *koeksisters*. With all these options, the meager crowd of a couple hundred young, white, Afrikaner city “volk” spread even thinner into several intimate clusters.

The sparse turnout suggests the relatively low intensity of politicized Afrikaner cultural identification in Cape Town as compared with Pretoria, the historic capital of Afrikanerdom. In Pretoria, Afrikaner youth took to the streets to protest the opening of the English-style News Bar with placards saying “Dit is kak” (This is shit). They much preferred the Boerebar, a hangout decorated with Afrikaner memorabilia that celebrates local Boer culture and features alternative Afrikaans musicians, including Piet Botha, the son of apartheid-era Foreign Affairs Minister, Pik Botha. In 1995, as a response to the onset of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, Gilda Swanepoel opened the bar as a sign of her refusal to be shamed by her Afrikanerness. The bar stands for the idea that “we are not responsible for what our parents did and we do not have to throw away who we are” (2001). While the nation is distancing itself from its past, these Afrikaner youth are embracing it.

Swanepoel was recruited to help organize the rave. Though she was dubious about the response they would get in Cape Town, she agreed. Spamer, an ex-lawyer and the co-organizer of the rave, does not believe that Afrikaners in Cape Town are apathetic. He explained to me that the low publicity budget was partly responsible for the low turnout. The sparseness of the crowd did not worry him as this was only the first of what he hoped would be a series of parties staged in several major cities around the country to spread the message that it was time for Afrikaners to reclaim their personal and cultural identity. The seeds had already been planted; many of the bands and DJs performing that night were already established and were keeping Cape Town on the map of new alternative Afrikaans music. Nevertheless, not only was the budget low for this event, so were the revenues. After being flatly turned down for a government grant, Spamer and his cohorts had to give up on organizing further.

1. *Transmissie* ravers gyrate before the image of Paul Kruger, the founder of Afrikaner nationalism, during DJ Opperman’s multimedia title performance, *Transmissie*, Barn Celos, Melkbosstrand, 17 December 1999. (Photo by Stephanie Marlin-Curiel)
parties. Swanepoel now works as a marketing manager for IMAX and Spamer has gone back to law and has opened his own firm. He says the rave “got some of my existential angst exorcised, so I’m ready to face reality again” (2001).

By the time I arrived at the party, I had just missed the first act of the evening. It was a short film called *Fobofobie: Die Vrees om Bang te Wees* (Phobophobia: The Fear of Being Afraid) by underground painter and sculptor MJ Louwrens. Spamer introduced me to Louwrens even though I had missed the film. I gathered that the film was a surrealist montage reflecting Afrikaner lives ruled by Calvinist-instilled fear. As the young filmmaker spoke to me in drug-inflected nonsensical phrases, a jazzy trumpet riffed over drum ’n’ bass. After the set, the trumpet player took up the accordion and joined his other band, Gramadoelas. This group juxtaposed specifically Afrikaans genres: *goema* music from the “Cape Coloured” community with Afrikaner *boeremusiek*.

By now it was nearly 1:00 A.M. and time to clear the floor for the hip-hop dancers, who spun on their heads and anything else they could use as an axis, while the hot Cape Flats group, Brasse Vannie Kaap (“Brothers from the Cape” [BVK]), rapped in *gamtaal* (“gangster” Afrikaans) and the white folks bopped demurely at the sidelines. Very few people of color were in the audience, beyond the immediate friends and family of the performers. I danced most of this set with the 60-year-old mother of one of the performers. She was dressed as she would have been for any other evening out, in a modest paisley dress and a necklace of large Comet-green beads. After dancing, I went outside and got to talking with some of the BVK performers. By the time I got back inside I had missed most of DJ Overdose spinning Afrikaans *kwaito*. Kwaito, a home-grown version of American house music, is considered the music of South Africa’s black youth. By inviting DJ Overdose, the organizers were underlining the fact that most kwaito is chanted in a street slang strongly based in an Afrikaans dialect called *tsotsitaal*. Even the name, kwaito, comes from the Afrikaans slang word, *kwaii*, meaning, “those house tracks were [so] hot, that they were kicking”—in other words, “phat,” or “cool.”

Including black Afrikaans music pushed the limits not only of the Afrikaans language, but of Afrikaans consciousness. How would the Afrikaans-speaking community reconcile itself with the past and the deep divisions within it? How could black Afrikaans speakers come to trust white Afrikaners? How will the younger generation of white Afrikaners find themselves again after witnessing their parents’ broken promises and unfulfilled dreams? These questions are too difficult to solve in one night of dancing. As the evening faded into dawn, the remaining partiers were still lost in Du Toit’s intoxicating multimedia memoryscape.

**Searching for a New Identity:**

**The Groot (Great) Trek II**

The rave evoked the past even as it proposed a new and different future, establishing an identity for Afrikaners that is simultaneously Afrikaans and African. The party acknowledged black speakers of Afrikaans as both possessing the historical roots of Afrikaans and holding the power to guarantee its future as a recognized South African language. Such an alliance potentially benefits black as well as white speakers of Afrikaans. Separated under apartheid by race from the Afrikaners and by language from the “Africans,” the “Coloureds” have historically been relegated to an in-between space where they remain today. “Coloureds” suffer political stigma for supporting the National Party, whereas Afrikaners suffer moral stigma for the crimes of apartheid.

Feelings of marginalization, criminalization, and general nervousness about their place in the new South Africa are common among Afrikaners, from the
right-wing extremists to the progressives or verligte (“enlightened”). During 1999, the centenary of the Anglo-Boer War, the renegotiation of Afrikaner identity became a highly visible issue. In the Anglo-Boer War, the Afrikaners unsuccessfully defended themselves against the English, losing many men on the battlefield, and many women and children to disease, overcrowding, and starvation in English concentration camps. The war was recently renamed the “South African War” in acknowledgment of the many black Africans who died along with Afrikaners in the camps. For some Afrikaners, sharing this memory of martyrdom, which has long been a source of nationalistic pride, means the erosion of Afrikaner culture and history. For others, the reexamination of this central nationalistic myth “put things right” by providing a means of securing Afrikaners a place in the “new South African” history.

In addition to feeling displaced, Afrikaners living under a black-led government have had to contend with the negation of their sense of righteousness. The Boer War experience along with Calvinist doctrine had furnished the core of a moral justification that fueled their battles against British colonialism, African “contamination,” and the African National Congress’s “communism.”

The political changes of the second half of the 20th century gradually reshaped the romanticized notion of the Boer agrarian past at the base of Afrikaner volk identity. From the 1950s to the early 1990s, the escalation of a broad-based multiracial resistance campaign compounded growing class and ideological factionalism within Afrikanerdom, finally leading to the demise of apartheid. As pressures built in the 1980s, the National Party began to bend, making concessions to the national and international anti-apartheid movement. The Afrikaner volk became right-wing radicals who branded the leaders of the National Party as traitors. By the end of the 1980s, Afrikanerdom, however defined—as a national destiny, a white supremacist regime, or a path-builder to economic success—unequivocally had failed. When Nelson Mandela and his African National Congress (ANC) at last gained power in South Africa’s first democratic elections in 1994, Afrikaners felt their rights and self-determination to be in jeopardy.

In 1996 the ANC instituted the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), whereby perpetrators of gross human rights violations could receive amnesty in exchange for public confessions, further confusing Afrikaner sense of selfhood. Six months prior to the beginning of the amnesty hearings, victims were given the opportunity to tell their stories in public in order for the TRC to perform its function of “rehabilitating and restoring” their “human and civil dignity” (TRC 1995). This nationally and internationally broadcast performance irrevocably turned the tables on Afrikaner claims to moral righteousness. Despite efforts toward evenhandedness, the TRC, in the eyes of Afrikaners, staged a moral drama pitting mostly black victims against mostly white Afrikaner perpetrators (Verwoerd 1996:67). Although there were many exceptions to this scenario, the TRC hearings effectively invalidated the cherished Afrikaner martyr role established by the Boer War. Afrikaners were instead shown to be the authors of calculated, evil methods used to terrorize and obliterate so-called enemies of the state.

Within a new South African society that allows freedoms of speech and press, Afrikaner youth are encountering histories that flatly contradict the versions they learned in school and at military training bases. For many young Afrikaners who never took much of an interest in politics or who were successfully shielded from it by their parents and institutions, this new knowledge has been a harsh awakening.

In this context, the title for the rave, and the potential new movement, Transmissie, has special significance. “Transmissie” signifies both communication and an automobile gear-shift. This younger generation is not only “shifting gears” away from the lies they grew up with and away from their parents, but
they are also shifting away from the overtly political *alternatiewe* (alternative) movement of the late 1980s. The alternatiewe, a dissident group of Afrikaans-speaking writers and musicians, deliberately tried to attack the Afrikaner establishment by twisting the holy and “pure” Afrikaans language. In contrast, *Transmissie* was about freedom and fun, not resistance and rhetoric. According to the rave organizers, the time for politics is over: “Whatever needed to be said has already been said. It is time for people to simply enjoy their freedom” (Spamer 1999). Part of this freedom means freedom from thinking about politics.

While this generation recognizes that they were fed lies as part of an indoctrination process, they are reluctant to condemn the pleasant memories of their youth. Their memories of the poems, stories, and music they experienced as children are happy ones and “they don’t want to have to feel guilty about it” (Spamer 1999). Even the political speeches, which served as a source of inspiration during apartheid, are still a source of strength (Du Toit 2000a).

While the TRC was serving up hard-hitting truths and administering high doses of shame directed toward Afrikaners, the *Transmissie* revelers wanted to reconcile themselves with their past in a way that would allow them to salvage their self-esteem. In Du Toit’s words:

> The concept really is the Truth Commission. It’s about taking truths from the past and making peace with them. That is the whole idea of the Truth Commission. But in this case it was more fun, it was taking politics [...] and dealing with it in a fun, laughing way, in a light way instead of people sitting there and having to ask those questions, “Why did you...?” “Why was the...?” As opposed to, “This is what happened.” Take rugby. It reflects on culture then. It brings back good memories instead of bad memories. That’s the whole point. Good memories as opposed to bad memories. I hope I didn’t contradict myself. (2000a)

Du Toit’s search for a positive sense of identity has some parallels with the behavior of second-generation post–WWII German youth who have also been described as avoiding politics and substituting “object-ties of a more clinging nature” to reestablish their self-esteem (Mitscherlich 1975:221). Du Toit’s multimedia piece spun a web of ambiguity around nostalgic objects displaced in time and space. This sense of ambiguity accurately reflects the present historical moment, which finds Afrikaners, young and old, still reeling from the shock of having their world turned upside down.

It became evident to me as I participated in the rave and spoke to Du Toit later that finding pleasure in memories that are part of a system from which you are trying to disassociate yourself is a psychologically challenging endeavor. I tried to clarify this issue with Du Toit:

**MARLIN-CURIEL:** And are the political speeches good memories or bad memories?

**DU TOIT:** I think essentially it’s bad memories but there was a certain nationalism in it. They were protective and the anthem was sung. I still cannot help it, but I get goose bumps because I played in a military band. The thing is forceful. It was driving. Like marching music. Marching music is positive, forward, energetic, and I think one thing that those speeches were all about is determination. ’Cause they were determined. They were really determined to get the Republic and they got it.

**MARLIN-CURIEL:** So how do you make peace with that?

**DU TOIT:** How do I make peace with that? Em... I think what it means to me personally is that with determination, things get done. You can reach your
goals. If you are determined to do so. [...] But it was more about recognizing the ridiculousness of it all. It was about the ideology that was so blindly followed that in the end crashed. [...] Determination was the main thing that was achieved and that was also a personal goal for me with this party. I never knew that I could make music. It was always a dream. I knew that I was going to do something sooner or later. There were lots of ups and downs and but I just kept on going and going and it happened. (2000a)

The bad memories disrupt his good memories, like the Hector Peterson photo that turned up in his “family album.”

Now that the contradictory worlds that the Afrikaner system took such great pains to keep separate are coming together, it is possible for Du Toit to consider political speeches such as Malan’s as both good and bad memories. The indoctrination process imposed upon Afrikaner youth was more than propaganda. It was a complete artificial environment enforced by a powerful “behind the scenes” network called the Broederbond (brotherhood). As Peter Lambley discusses in his book, The Psychology of Apartheid, the Broederbond made it “possible for the Afrikaners to raise its [sic] children as if its views on reality are in exact accordance with reality” (1980:198). The Broederbond ensured that there were Afrikaans versions of every social network and facility for both children and adults—everything from the Boy Scouts to the Automobile Association. In 1948 when the National Party came to power and gained control of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Afrikaners were subjected to the incessant broadcasting of nationalistic programming on state-sponsored media, and warnings from the Broederbond against the dangers of non-Afrikaans movies, books, and music. Together, the Broederbond and the government attempted to insure that Afrikaners did not encounter any reason to doubt that they were “superior, Godly, [...] descendent[s] of brave men and women who fought for their beliefs and values” (Lambley 1980:198).

As Lambley explains, travel, cosmopolitanism, and other experiences outside this closed system were vehemently discouraged and construed by the state as threats (1980:217). Afrikaners therefore had some awareness of other worlds without ever coming into direct contact with them. Such a thorough segregation created the conditions that today result in nostalgia for the “good old days.”

This may account for the enduring admiration many Afrikaners have for their childhood heroes, even after becoming aware of their participation in a brutal, totalizing machine that programmed every aspect of their lives. Some of these heroes were rugby players; rugby served as a training ground for Afrikaner machismo, discipline, and anti-English sentiment (Nauright 1997:87). Du Toit compares his affection for rugby commentator Gerhard Viviers to the American affection for Howard Cosell.

Dana Niehaus, a children’s storyteller whose voice is also heard in Du Toit’s mix, was for storytelling “what Gerhard Viviers was for rugby” (Du Toit 2000a). Du Toit muses on Niehaus’s voice: “[...] I mean again [it is] instantly recognizable. You hear his voice, you revert back to those days where you sat in front of the record player and he took you away. He took you to la-la-land” (2000a). For Du Toit the memories of his childhood are all “good
clean stuff”—or in the words of Malan’s immortal speech, the “good and clean from the past to build thereon a future.”

On the surface, the Nichaus story included in the mix seems similar to stories I read as a child. A jackal tricked a wolf into going through a hole in a fence, fed him so much he couldn’t get back out, and then called the farmer over to kill the wolf. In the context of Afrikaner ideology, Du Toit said, “the stories have a serious edge to them [...] they were a way of tricking you into buying into the system” (2000a). Somewhere inside him, Du Toit knows that this is not the “good clean stuff” he wants to believe it is.

Du Toit includes images of black children in his show as brief reminders, flashbacks of the unsavory aspects of Afrikaner nationalism. He includes a photo of a group of black secondary school students and comments that these photos, as well as the Hector Peterson photo, were included “as a reflection of the fear that was invoked by the national party” (Du Toit 2000b). Although the faces of the black students in this latter photograph display no fear, their association with the tragedy of the Soweto revolts characterized them, in Du Toit’s mind, as “symbolic” of fear. Burying the image of Peterson’s death in the depths of his subconscious, Du Toit verbally acknowledges the oppressiveness of Afrikaner power but not the loss of life. He sees the fear in the eyes of the schoolchildren, but not their defiance.

A Return to Innocence

The carnivalesque atmosphere of the rave presents a natural counterpoint to the rationalizing, nationalistic context in which nostalgia historically has been performed in South Africa. As “a purified past, exempt from claims and contradictions of everyday experience” (DaSilva and Faught 1982:53), nostalgia has often been used by Afrikaners to “create a sense of cultural security during a loss of political, and possibly cultural, power” (Nauright 1977:165).

The rave as an “alternative” social setting implies an intention to “critique the dominant social order” (Martin 1999:87). If such a critique was embedded in Transmissie, it came in the form of a seemingly incongruous mix of the identification with Afrikanerness and the deconstruction of that Afrikanerness by means of “campy” techniques common to raves (85). By using icons of Afrikanerdom, Du Toit traces the degree to which social conditioning controlled Afrikaners
from birth. His nostalgic longing is not for power, but for innocence. The “good old days” are not so much associated with prosperity as they are with security. Without the burden of responsibility and self-reflection that came with the national ritual of the TRC, Afrikaners had no reason to question the values they were being taught. Those who traveled abroad when they grew up saw racial hierarchy as a norm wherever they went and regarded the international condemnation of apartheid as outright hypocrisy (Du Toit 2001).

The mocking critique of the Afrikaner icons in Du Toit’s visual sequence is more like the jibes of a rebellious adolescent than the protests of a revolutionary. Paul Kruger acquires a hastily drawn cigarette and several shapes of glasses during the course of the loop. Multiple P.W. Botha’s and old National Party logos scroll by in rapid succession like the frames at the end of an old-fashioned film, or cover the entire screen like a souvenir necktie or tablecloth.

Du Toit’s nostalgic use of album covers and monuments is as much tongue-in-cheek as it is genuine. Knowing that several of his friends and their parents collected such albums—of rugby games when the South African Springboks were triumphant, of political speeches by Afrikaner national leaders, and of mothers pining for their soldier sons on “the border”—Du Toit asked his friends to lend him their collectables for his piece. The unmediated memories of the sounds came face-to-face with their constructed memories as memorabilia; sound selections were not only meant to be recognizable in and of themselves, but were also meant to refer to their collectability.

With the commemorative album of mothers yearning for their brave sons on the border, however, unmediated memories and constructed memories collided painfully. These maternal praises, which Du Toit underlay with ever-escalating drum rolls, were both an ironic critique and a sincere plea meant to purge the incredible anxiety he associated with his own military experience. The military was not a “good and bad” memory, just a bad memory.

Serving in the South African Defense Force (SAFD) was obligatory for young white men under apartheid. Service was enforced by refusing students permission to write their exams until they signed up. The military service constituted the first time these young men had ever ventured outside their secure environment. Contrary to their mothers’ fantasies and despite the honors bestowed posthumously upon those who died, the young men on the border did not feel brave or manly. They felt unprepared, frightened, and betrayed.

One of their “preparations” for military service was a popular photocomic, Grensvegter (Border Fighter), featuring hero Rocco de Wet (Rocco the Law). Stationed on “the border,” de Wet protected Afrikaner farm families from “communist terrorists.” Some woman would inevitably fall in love with Rocco, but his duty to his country always came first. The apartheid era government used cold-war rhetoric to further enhance their moral justification for fighting the ANC and other Southern African independence movements both outside and inside South Africa’s borders. Images of blacks never tainted the pages of these comic books. Instead, the Cuban and Soviet troupes assisting the independence movements stood in for the black “communist enemy”—Angolan, Namibian, or South African.

A parody of this photocomic and others like it turned up at the rave to challenge the pretenses of Grensvegter. The new version, Koertz Kotze en die Vrouekolonie (Koertz Kotze and the Women’s Colony), distributed as a party favor, was far from an unadulterated bit of nostalgia. The parody explicitly emasculated the stereotypical macho characters that filled previous photocomics. Conceived by Gilda Swanepoel as a promotion for her Boerebaas, the story is about a detective who must solve the murder of a man who died from having his penis cut off. He discovers the Vrouekolonie where women are drugging men to give them hard-ons and then having their way with them. When the
women are tired of one of their captives, they kill him by cutting off his penis. Inevitably, the detective meets the same end. While Swanepoel denies being a feminist or being angry when she wrote Koertz Kotze, the story confirms that the first step to debunking Afrikanerdom is to castrate Afrikaner masculinity. (It may also bring to light the urges generated by years of repression under Afrikaner patriarchy.)

This photocomic, which wields daggers at Afrikaner masculinity, is not the first of its kind. Bitterkomix has been shattering the Afrikaner value system since 1992. Bitterkomix, like Koertz Kotze, often uses scenes of sex and violence to break the taboos of Afrikaner Calvinist culture and also attempts to deal with the identity crisis that is the inevitable consequence of this dismantling of traditions. Like Du Toit’s parody of rebelliousness, Koertz Kotze was also a satire on Bitterkomix, created for its comedic rather than its shock value. Still, it constituted a more forthright critique of Afrikaner values than Du Toit’s sèance, which invoked the psychological power of major figures in Afrikaner national history. White bodies gyrating in front of their spiritual ancestors is as exorcistic as it is celebratory. Yet, as Fabio B. DaSilva and Jim Faught note, nostalgia loses its capacity to serve as a critique the more it encourages an audience’s “experien-tial emersion [sic] in the data” (1982:51). Raves foster group cohesion rather than individuated experiences conducive to a critical approach to the material.

How challenging a task is it to reconcile oneself with what is “good and clean”? What kind of reconciliation is encoded in the subtext of Transmissie? What does it mean for young Afrikaners to celebrate their patriarchs who, in the national moral reckoning of the past, are being condemned as criminals? Was the rave nothing more than an escape from the present by means of a reversion to a more stable, familiar Afrikanerness? Is this inclusive interracial Af-
rikaans alliance just an Afrikaner fantasy? Or will Transmissie prove to be a model of successful reconciliation without remorse?

Shifting Gears, Edging Forward: The New (?) Alternatiewe Movement

It is difficult to know at this stage whether we are witnessing the end of an old alternatiewe movement or the beginning of a new one. The effort to destabilize the ideologically limited range of signification possible within Afrikaans began in the late 1980s with an alternatiewe literary movement by black Afrikaans writers in the Western Cape. These were writers who, while labeled “Coloured” under apartheid, identified themselves politically as black. Nevertheless, the desire to write in Afrikaans was a departure from the radical politics of the 1976 Soweto student uprising when black students took to the streets to protest compulsory instruction in Afrikaans (they preferred English). More than an anti-Afrikaans movement, however, the Soweto uprising, inspired by the black consciousness movement, was ultimately a movement of self-determination. It empowered blacks to choose their language of expression; black writers in the Cape chose to reclaim their mother tongue, which was Afrikaans (Gerwel in Willemse 1990:375). Writing in Afrikaans was also a way of identifying with the class struggle, as Afrikaans was the language of the rural black working class (373). This alternatiewe literary movement attracted white Afrikaans writers interested in distancing themselves from the Afrikaner establishment. Most black Afrikaans writers focused less on outright protest than on reflecting their own experiences in their own language. White Afrikaans writers, as much as the censors allowed, used the Afrikaner language as a language of 5. A scene from the photo comic book, Koertz Kotze en die Vrouekolonie (Koertz Kotze and the Women’s Colony). Translation: “Yes, yes! Wives of generals, ministers, rugby captains, ministers, doctors, dictators…you know, bigwigs.” “Everyone comes to pick from the forbidden fruits of the House of Blavatsky!” “Aarghh.” (Conceived and directed by Gilda Swanepoel; photography by Daniel Erasmus; courtesy of Stephanie Marlin-Curiel)
protest to counteract its history of oppression. As a whole, the movement focused on the Afrikaans language as the key to breaking down the racist exclusivity of Afrikaner national identity, which laid claim to a “pure” Afrikaans language (Barnard 1992:80).

The question of whether young, white Afrikaners’ recuperation of words and images from the architects of apartheid, even in an altered form, simply provides an escape into an unreal fantasy, or offers a way of acknowledging the wrongs of the past, echoes the debate within the alternatiewe literary movement over the use of Afrikaans. The debate centered on whether writing in Kaaps (Cape Afrikaans) or Kombuis (Kitchen Afrikaans)—which wreaked havoc with standard rules of grammar and spelling—re-entrenched race-class stereotypes (Willemse 1990:393), constituted an opposition to the Afrikaner establishment, or merely endowed Afrikaans with more flexibility and strength (Barnard 1992:87). So the same question may be posed about whether the late-20th-century focus on creating a new Afrikaner identity will spawn a new nationalism that will be counterproductive to the cause of democracy.

Since the old Afrikaner establishment tried to expand its base of support by constructing a cultural identity inscribed within the Afrikaans language, identity and language were natural avenues of subversion for the 1980s alternatiewe movement. However, Ian Barnard argues that during the 1980s, efforts to effect change in Afrikaner consciousness through formal experimentation with the language failed (1992:91). Somer II (Summer II, 1983) the punk novel by Koos Kombuis (the stage name for André Letoit), for example, “mixes genres, confuses chronology, relates incidents from various narrative threads seemingly at random, [and...] gleefully discards the notion of language purity in favor of the Afrikaans that is actually spoken today” (Barnard 1992:84, 86). Nevertheless, it fails to be truly subversive because it does not manage to create a tension between reality and fiction in its narrative (92). Reminiscent of Du Toit’s comment that the presence of the Hector Peterson photo and the photos of other black students in his work represent the “fear instilled by the National Party,” Barnard points out that there is “no outrage” (88) in Somer II against the apartheid reality, simply acceptance.

A mostly white alternatiewe music scene paralleled the ’80s alternatiewe literary scene and also attacked Afrikaner hegemony by deconstructing its language and identity. While 1980s “mainstream” Afrikaner musicians sang of idealized, romantic landscapes which reinforced a hegemonic false consciousness about the “rural” history of the Boers (Jury 1996:2–3), alternatiewe musicians deconstructed those images through plays on words in Afrikaans or English. Many of their stage names, for example, used words that were either sacred or profane according to Afrikaner values, such as Koos Kombuis—the author of Somer II, who is also a musician—which translates as Jack “Kitchen.” Others include Bernoldus Niemand, or Bernoldus “Nobody”; Valiant Swart, “Black Prince”; and Johannes Kerkorrel, John “Church Organ.” Although some of the musicians’ names make reference to non-white speakers of Afrikaans, their lyrics overtly protested their own reality—particularly military conscription—but never directly addressed apartheid as experienced by their non-white compatriots. In alternatiewe music, experiments in sound proved to be even more subversive than experiments in language. The alternatiewe Afrikaans music movement culminated in the 1990 Vo’l’ry (outlaw or fugitive) music tour, which was a confrontational attempt to fracture white Afrikaner power politically and culturally. The Vo’l’ry musicians set Afrikaans lyrics protesting apartheid and military conscription to 1950s American style rock and roll. Although by 1990 rock was no longer revolutionary, the Vo’l’ry musicians knew their music would provoke the wrath of the conservative Afrikaner Nationalist government.
The Vo‘lvry musicians used the postmodern aesthetic techniques of juxtaposition and montage to deconstruct an inherited tradition, but they did so in order to generate historical dissonance more than to recover from it. Although Transmissie’s “new” alternatiewe Afrikaans musicians inherited much from the Vo‘lvryers, they refuse to engage in political polemics. Du Toit’s iconoclastic multimedia performance using futuristic music parodied both the power these musicians had over young minds as well as his alternatiewe predecessors’ transgressive rebellion against this power. Twenty-first century alternatiewe Afrikaans musicians experiment more with sound than with language. This is an effort to distance themselves from an older generation of alternative Afrikaners, such as the Group of 63, who seek to protect the place of Afrikaans in South African culture by intellectual means.

Some cross-cultural experiments with sound, such as the kind Gramadoelas performs, were already taking place in the 1980s. Symphony orchestras were playing “ethnoclassical” music, and popular music artists played “afro-rock” or “afro-jazz” (Byerly 1998:15). Boeremusiek, which had been enjoying a revival since the early ’80s, combined with mbaganga music, a black township musical style, to form boereqanga, which reinforced a utopian “rainbowism” and gained a reputation as “the music of national unity” (Rhashavan 1995). By combining two Afrikaans musical traditions that had most likely begun as one and then split apart, Gramadoelas aims to repair the fissures in Afrikaans culture.

If Du Toit’s piece was about revisiting the myths of Afrikanerdom, Gramadoelas “is about telling the truth” (Van Heerden 1999). The music attempts to recuperate the history of cultural exchange between Boers and Africans. As Gramadoelas’ leader Van Heerden recounted, “the real Afrikaans culture was not white” (1999). The Afrikaans language developed among Khoisan (bushman) slaves attempting to learn the Dutch spoken by their European masters. For years, Afrikaans was regarded by the Dutch Afrikaner settlers as a coarse language spoken only by poor whites and “Coloured.” Not until their defeat in the Boer War did white Afrikaners appropriate and standardize this “coarse” language, making it into their “national language” in an effort to define themselves as a nation separate from Europe, especially from Britain (Barnard 1992:79).

Gramadoelas, meaning “outback” or “sticks,” combines two musical types that share closely related origins and rhythms: Afrikaans boeremusiek, and goema music, which is associated with the annual minstrel-style festival known as the “coon” carnival. While the rhythm of both is the same, the cultural iconography of the two types of music differ radically. The instrumentation, tempo, and dance steps have evolved along separate lines due to apartheid, which kept white Afrikaners apart from those they labeled “Coloured.” Named for the ghummy drum (and played on drums, sax, trumpet, banjo, guitar, and percussion instruments such as rattles and tambourines), goema is a faster, more sprightly version of vastrap, an Afrikaner dance rhythm usually played on concertinas and accordions. The term vastrap means “to step firmly,” referring to the stamping technique used to create a floor out of cow dung, which the Boers learned from the Khoisan (Van Heerden 1999). Goema and vastrap share a repertoire of melodies, including Dutch, Afrikaner, and “Coloured” music such as the langarm, the Bushman’s dance, which Van Heerden likens to a polka.

This history of the relations between Afrikaners and “Coloureds” parallels the personal experiences of many younger-generation Afrikaners who grew up on farms employing “Coloured” workers. While I was having a drink at the bar on the night of the rave, one university student told me how as a child he played with the “Coloured” children working on his father’s farm, but after the age of 12, his parents prohibited him from associating with them as equals. He went to the University of Cape Town, an English university, to
try to forget he was an Afrikaner, but once he was in an English setting he realized he was different and had to face up to who he was. He said that at this party, white people were being introduced to the “new” South Africa.

Afrikaners long to feel safe and at home in South Africa again. They want to be accepted by non-white Afrikaans speakers but do not want to take on their problems. By focusing on commonalities and inclusiveness they avoid addressing “the tension” of apartheid’s continuing material legacies.

Ready or Not:
Brothers from the Cape Will Not Stop

The inclusion of the Cape Flats rap group Brasse Vannie Kaap in a rave that self-consciously focused on the post-apartheid reformulation of Afrikaner identity must be looked upon with a mixture of hope and skepticism. BVK’s lyrics demonstrate that apartheid is still very much present in the Cape Flats. Their songs about life in the poor, drug-infested, and gang-ridden areas of Cape Town celebrate their survival under terrifying conditions.

Beyond playing good dance music, BVK’s mission is to empower the Cape Flats community with the knowledge that drugs and gangsterism are not their own creation but part of the plan fomented by the apartheid regime’s security police. Ready D, the DJ for BVK, cautioned, however, that this mission is a delicate one:

[H]aving the information so you can have a better understanding of what is going on around can help you elevate yourself further as an individual. So in one sense it is keeping me enlightened. But in another sense part of that information you have to give to people in reasonable doses. I would say because if you give it to people all in one go, it’s too mind-blowing, people won’t understand. They will think it’s a bunch of bull. They’ll think we’re smoking some shit. (1999)

He also recognizes that politics is “passé” in South Africa:

We don’t want to go out there preaching. That kind of stuff goes over people’s head. They don’t want to listen to that. They think apartheid is over. They’re all happy. We use humor to get the message across. (1999)
The humor lies in the punning and rhyming of gamtaal, the “gangster” language spoken in the Cape Flats. For example, one of their raps describes a teenager who becomes a gangster to be “the man,” but ends up being thrown into jail and sodomized. In English, one of the lines of this rap translates as “if you want something, you gotta lay.” Using gamtaal, the rappers invert the words and play on internal rhyme to communicate a serious message in a humorous way. To illustrate how different gamtaal is from standard Afrikaans, Ready D explained that a white Afrikaner and his Cape Flats compatriots listening to the same sentence will come away with completely different interpretations.

Despite the real possibility that white Afrikaners understand only a fragment of the lyrics, they make up most of BVK’s audience. The majority of BVK’s performances take place at what are essentially white Afrikaans festivals. Inheriting an attraction for the innovative use of language from the alternatiewe movement of the previous decade, white alternative-thinking Afrikaners see gamtaal a means of lifting themselves out of their cultural isolation and stagnation. By performing for white Afrikaans audiences, BVK hopes to legitimize gamtaal and erase the class bias attached to its stereotypical image. In the eyes of their own communities, they are out to prove that “gamtaal is legal and that you can get a positive message across without slipping into the feel-good ‘héppie coons’ trap” (Haupt 1998).

Like Afrikaans, gamtaal’s search for normalization will end when acceptance replaces stigma. Gamtaal will have to achieve its legitimacy as an oral rather than a written form. Ready D explained that writing a dictionary of gamtaal would be impossible because the language changes every day. Gangsterism, arising from apartheid divisions even within Cape Town’s “Coloured” townships, creates the necessity to continually revise the in-group code language. Gamtaal develops not only on the streets, but also in the prisons. By isolating people from their own communities and throwing them together with people from other areas, the prison system creates new factions that form their own languages. When these people return from prison, they find that the language in their communities has changed and they are forced to learn new meanings for old words.

Like the “new” alternatiewe Afrikaners who prefer positive self-expression to political protest, BVK avoids the pitfalls of the alternatiewe literary movement by avoiding confrontation with the white Afrikaner establishment. Aiming for acceptance rather than change, BVK seeks to enable non-white Afrikaans speakers to decolonize their minds; in other words, to dispense with the apartheid mentality of conforming to white society by speaking its language.

On the basis of events like Transmissie, Ready D sees the possibility of destigmatizing gamtaal in his own community, as well as “de-othering” gamtaal among white Afrikaans speakers. In Ready D’s words, “Once white people start clicking into it, a lot of people will be much more open to speak and to basically just being themselves” (1999).

Are white Afrikaners accepting non-white Afrikaans speakers on their own terms or as a means of healing their own fractured identity? Are white Afrikaners really hearing BVK’s lyrics as a “reality” that might challenge their nostalgic revisitation of their past, or is BVK’s performance at the Transmissie rave just another experimentation in form that potentially legitimizes Afrikaner citizenship in the new South Africa?

Despite a veneer of progressivism, Afrikaners would prefer that the “African” in President Thabo Mbeki’s “African Renaissance” be spelled “Afrikaan.” Max du Preez, a progressive Afrikaner journalist, wrote a column in the predominantly liberal Mail and Guardian newspaper in which he asked for assurance of the inclusion of Afrikaners in Mbeki’s African Renaissance. This piece sparked a heated public debate over whether or not Afrikaners could call themselves Africans.
Protected by the prevailing ANC discourse of reconciliation, unity, and “South Africanness,” the collaboration of Afrikaans speakers across color lines may look like progressive politics. Unfortunately, such intentions are tainted by the tired tactics of the old National Party’s enfranchisement strategies of offering advantages to “Coloureds” in order to garner their votes.

What I have just outlined is a skeptical interpretation of the meaning of BVK’s performance for young white Afrikaans speakers at the Transmissie party. The hope is that the TRC had an impact on the moral sensibilities of “new” South Africans and that more than a few will feel the responsibility to improve the quality of life for all the nation’s citizens.

Truth: The Road to Reconciliation?

In the throes of their current identity crisis, Afrikaans speakers, black and white, share many of the same dilemmas as their brethren of a decade ago. In reevaluating these dilemmas, it is important to recognize that while the 1980s alternatiewe movement fought against the purity of the Afrikaans language as a symbol of Afrikaner power, the current alternative Afrikaans movement is fighting against the stigmatization of Afrikaans. Fighting for cultural survival in a nascent democracy is not the same as fighting an oppressive regime. Rather than serving as a means of moving beyond the past, dealing with a crisis of identity may reinforce the factionalism from the past.

Taking a critical approach to the past is part of the reason the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established. The aim was to discover “the motives for and circumstances in which gross violations of human rights have occurred, and to make the findings known in order to prevent a repetition of such acts in future” (TRC 1995). The final report was written to make recommendations to the government based on a critical assessment of the Commission’s findings. However, the heavy media coverage of the proceedings of the TRC and the “rainbow nation” image have too readily linked the politics of memory and identity with the cause of societal transformation, such that the very gesture of revisiting the past can be considered a step toward reconciliation.

Can nostalgic acceptance be a productive step toward reconciliation? I would sooner expect that reconciliation with the past implies finding in the South African past not what is “good and clean,” but what is corrupt and unjust and fighting to eradicate corruption and injustice in the present. To succeed, the new alternatiewe movement must critically reconcile with the past in order not to repeat it. A cooperatively created movement made up of white and black Afrikaans speakers holds great potential if it encourages dialogue, rather than representation, and if it is truly an Afrikaans rather than an Afrikaner construct. On the other hand, if a unified, democratic Afrikaans cultural group does emerge, it will show that admitting who you are rather than apologizing may be a more successful road to reconciliation.

Notes

1. This speech was included on a commemorative album, Die argitekte aan die woord (The Architects and Their Words), released just prior to the foundation of the Republic of South Africa on 31 May 1961. Translation by Heine du Toit; all translations throughout the article are by Heine du Toit and Manie Spamer.

2. It is not incorrect for the journalist, Michelle Matthews, who wrote the publicity article for the Mail and Guardian to have referred to this event as a rave. As an indoor dance party that involved drugs, took place in an abandoned building on the outskirts of the city, and lasted only one night, it was closer to a rave than to a trance party, which typically in-
volves camping out in the open air for a few days, playing games, eating good food, and tripping out on music, not drugs. Trance parties descended from the 1960s beach parties in Thailand and Goa and have become an equally popular aspect of South African, particularly white South African, youth culture. The rave and trance scenes in South Africa, however, often blend together in what is sometimes simply referred to as a festival.

3. Despite its name, iconography, and music, the Boerebar is not just for Boers. In one of the many paradoxes of race relations in South Africa, the Boerebar has an all-black staff (one of whom appears in a non-racialized role in the Koertz Kotze photocomic discussed later) and many black patrons who drink beer beneath pictures of the architects of apartheid, like Hendrik Verwoerd or D.F. Malan, displayed prominently on the walls.

4. BVK is topping the charts in South Africa and in Europe. Gramadoela’s hybrid boeremusiek has become accepted by the Afrikaner mainstream; they play regularly at Afrikaner establishment functions. The drum ‘n’ bass band, ELX, has come out with a new CD, and Du Toit continues to develop and personalize the sentiments of Transmissie in different multimedia formats. He is on his way to becoming a cult figure in the underground art scene.

5. Drum ‘n’ bass evolved from jungle music, which originated in London (“the concrete jungle”) and was named for a specific club called “Jungle.” It consists of a looped asynchronous rhythm (otherwise known as breakbeat) consisting of a fast drumbeat and distinct bassline. The overlays can range from jazzy to electronic trance. The form has been in existence since about 1994 and is epitomized by Roni Size. Drum ‘n’ bass is usually produced electronically, but here it was played acoustically.

6. American house music was born in Chicago around 1985. The DJ dance music consists of spinning soul and disco tunes and overlaying them with a machine-generated 4/4 beat.

7. Tsotsitaal is another “gangster” tongue like the gamtaal that BVK uses, but tsotsitaal is from the black townships of Gauteng, while gamtaal is from the “Coloured” townships of Cape Town.

8. This quote from well-known kwaito artist, Mdu Masilela, appears on several kwaito websites. See <http://www.megweb.uct.ac.za/www/students/RRKROB001/roots.htm>.

9. The majority of “non-white” Afrikaans speakers are “coloured,” but many who supported the African National Congress and not the National Party identify themselves politically as black and would still favor this term over the term “coloured.” The term “non-white” should be avoided because it indicates that white Afrikaans speakers make up the majority while in actuality more than half of Afrikaans speakers in South Africa are black.

10. In this article, I use the term “Coloured” with a capital “C” when the reference is during the apartheid period and “coloured” with a lowercase “c” for references in the “post-apartheid” period. In either case I use quotes around the word in order to recognize its contested status in the past and present. See note 12 for more on the use of these terms and their implications. Most black Afrikaans speakers generally belong to the group designated “Coloured” in apartheid terminology. They were distinguished from “African” because they were perceived to have lighter skin and straighter hair, the result of mixing between Dutch settlers and the Khoisan peoples in the 1600s.

11. Because whites are a minority in South Africa, the National Party depended on “Coloured” support for survival. Although “Coloureds” were gradually divided politically as opposition to apartheid grew, the National Party managed to hold on to a significant contingent of “Coloured” support. The apartheid regime afforded “Coloureds” a better material existence and greater freedom than “Africans” as part of the construction of a race-class system that equated lighter skin with “civilization.” In the first democratic elections in 1994 the National Party successfully secured the majority of the “Coloured” vote by considering them full-fledged Afrikaners and warning them that they would be alienated and made insecure materially by a black majority government. This is a condensed version of an extremely complex and fluctuating history. For a more detailed account, see Giliomee (1995).

12. The terms “Coloured” and “Afrikaner” are used in South Africa today with much more discomfort than the terms “white” and “black.” The terms white and black have become common signifiers to describe the economic and ideological disparities of the historic and current political landscape. However, the lowercase “c” in “coloured,” does not succeed in normalizing the term in post-apartheid South Africa. The term is not supported by global alliances as are white and black identities, but instead leaves “coloureds” behind in the
apartheid past. Some have tried to reappropriate the term to construct a self-determined identity that would prevent them from slipping through the cracks between black and white, but most politically savvy “coloureds” I spoke to feel that the term cannot escape its negative associations. They prefer to identify just the region or neighborhood they are from: “I am from District Six”; “I am from Manenberg”; “I am from the Cape Flats,” etc. When talking about themselves in a politicized context, blacks and whites frequently say they are “black South African” or “white South African.” “Coloured South African,” however, does not exist in public discourse. “Coloured” still represents the abject past. There is no consistency in post-apartheid terminology but, generally, academic and journalistic discourses use the term “coloured” by itself with or without quotes, or with a regional designation like Cape Coloured in order to recognize a distinct local culture.

In today’s political climate, Afrikaners also feel themselves to be a minority that is losing its language, and therefore losing its voice. Increasingly, they are eschewing the term Afrikaner in favor of “Afrikaans,” to designate not only the language but also an identity inclusive of “coloured” and even black Afrikaans speakers. However, I have again chosen to use the more historical term, Afrikaner, without quotes because it is a self-determined national identity. It is also clearer, particularly for non-South African readers, if I use the term Afrikaner to refer to the identity and Afrikaans to refer to the language. Finally, it is more expedient to be able to say Afrikaner, as opposed to white Afrikaans speakers. Race is relevant here for many reasons, not the least of which the inclusive term, Afrikaans, reflects the self-determination of enlightened Afrikaners but not necessarily that of all Afrikaans speakers.

Many of Paul Kruger’s successors promoted strong cultural identity as a tool for economic and political survival in the face of English industrial enterprise in South Africa. By the time the Afrikaner National Party gained power in 1948, industrialization had prompted a large-scale urban migration of rural Africans that threatened Afrikaner racial purity and economic hegemony. The Afrikaner anti-imperialist platform was redirected with vehemence against non-white racial groups. Apartheid was as much an oppressive economic system based on race as it was a means of ensuring white political supremacy.

Victims as defined by the TRC meant only victims of gross human rights violations. This did not include victims of forced removals, Bantu education, pass laws, and many of the other abuses of power levied against “non-white” South Africans, particularly black Africans.

These organizations did not exclude the English, but the English generally avoided them because of language issues, and so as not to be seen as supportive of the system.

The British brought rugby to South Africa. Afrikaners first participated in it as an expression of Europeanness and, following the Boer War, as a space to continue their fight. Nelson Mandela’s strategic appearance at the 1995 Rugby World Cup has been interpreted as the moment that “united” South Africa and as a gesture of reconciliation (see Nauright 1997). It can also be seen, however, as an attempt to break down the exclusivity of what had been a playground for Afrikaner nationalism.

English predominates in South Africa despite the fact that there are 11 constitutionally recognized languages. The SABC carries programs in English and Afrikaans, as well as Zulu, Xhosa, and occasionally Sotho, but other languages are rarely heard in public forums.

As mentioned earlier, these were people labeled as “Coloured” but who identified politically as black.

These languages were appropriated and “standardized” by the Afrikaners who wanted to abandon Dutch along with their European identity in order to differentiate themselves from the English. In time, however, they came to be viewed within Afrikaner nationalist culture as bastardizations of “pure” Afrikaans.

In the years before “democracy,” the Afrikaans literary agenda was first defined by the power struggles between the Afrikaners and the English and later between verligte (enlightened) and verkrampte (conservative) elements within Afrikanerdom. During the intensification of the struggle against apartheid in the 1970s and ’80s, dissident Afrikaans writers, white and black, focused their efforts on freeing the language from the control of the National Party (Barnard 1992:83).

The Group of 63 is a “bipartisan” coalition assembled in May 2000 and was comprised of Afrikaner conservatives and dissidents seeking constitutional protection for the Afrikaans language and cultural rights. Individual rights are protected under the constitution but
these do not necessarily translate to group rights. The Afrikaans-speaking community wants to be assured of their own cultural space within the larger society (see Barrell 2000).

22. For a history and explanation of the cultural influences and politics of the “coon” carnival see Jeppie (1990).

23. For both his work with BVK and his other band, Prophets of the City, Ready D has extensively researched how apartheid was at the root of the drugs and gangsterism that ravish the Cape Flats today. For this reason, much of Prophets of the City’s music has been labeled controversial and been banned by the SABC.

24. The Klein Karoo festival is one of these. Supposedly “alternative,” it has been judged by critics as falling back on in-group white alternative politics year after year.

25. Coon refers to the “coon” carnival celebration of urban working-class “coloureds” (see note 22). “Héppie” mimics the Cape Flats pronunciation of “happy.” A “héppie coon” is the stereotypical happy-go-lucky “Coloured” who is too busy drinking and singing to worry about the fact that he is being oppressed.

26. Fostered by the apartheid system, strong classist sensibilities within “Coloured” communities led many to try to pass as white.

27. For a summary of this debate see Matshikiza (1999).

28. The press shamelessly reinforces this party line. A review of the Grahamstown National Arts Festival commented that the combination of Afrikaner Boer music and African mbaganga being played by a band in the middle of town was “the music of national unity” (Rhagavan 1995).

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