<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda du Preez</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cinema of Willie Esterhuizen: the quest for sex and hegemonic masculinity</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Broodryk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spectatorship of screen media; land of the zombies?</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landi Raubenheimer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian-Afrikaans women under construction: an analysis of gender ideology in <em>Finesse</em> and <em>Lééf</em></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hettie Mans &amp; Jenni Lauwrens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sublimation and reversibility: technologies of vision, the X-ray, and looking at paintings</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Sey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuns en die verwerking van die verlede</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita Swanepoel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting and popularising the asylum: photography and asylum image-making at the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum, 1890-1907</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rory du Plessis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review <em>(Picturing change: Curating visual culture at post-apartheid universities)</em></td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Brenda Schmahmann</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lize Kriel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial policy and guidelines</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail submissions and correspondence</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial board</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory board</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this issue of Image & Text the topics range from zombie-like spectatorship to the asylum. The media covered includes magazines, film, photography, art installation and digital interfaces. The South African cultural landscape is particularly framed with contributions on the local film industry and women’s magazines, the archive and remembrance. In an attempt to make the transition from a print-based journal to an exclusively online version, readers may notice a slight change in the layout and look of this issue of Image & Text. The new appearance, which will be finalised in the next issue, enhances the topics and themes covered by the journal. The six articles presented, although varying in tone and approach, confirm the quality of contemporary and local research in visual cultures.

The first article, ‘The cinema of Willie Esterhuizen: the quest for sex and hegemonic masculinity’ by Chris Broodryk sets the scene for a critical discussion of how the populist films by Willie Esterhuizen explicitly present an affirmative heteronormative hegemonic masculinity despite the possibilities readily available to destabilise, even queering, dominant masculinity. Broodryk reads Esterhuizen’s films in terms of their consistent safe-making of homoerotic possibilities by investigating his comedies: Lipstiek Dipstiek (1994), Poena is Koning (2007), Vaatjie Sien Sy Gat (2008) and Stoute Boudjies (2010). In his analysis Broodryk presents a provocative interpretation of post-apartheid white masculinity and how threats to heteronormative masculinity are consistently trumped by hegemonic masculinity.

In Landi Raubenheimer’s ‘Spectatorship of screen media; land of the zombies?’ the cinema is exchanged for an investigation of spectatorship of screen media. Raubenheimer challenges the assumption that the advent of digital media has re-formulated spectatorship as more active than earlier screen spectatorship in terms of meaning making. The main argument put forward is that screen spectatorship is not in fact as active as it appears to be. In fact, Raubenheimer suggests that spectators are often performing what she terms ‘dialectical zombie-like spectatorship’, which may appear active but in fact is more distracted. She proposes that active spectatorship is in fact simulated and to some extent just as programmed and as reliant on sensual over-stimulation as the antiquated ‘cinema of attractions’ was.

The third article by Hettie Mans and Jenni Lauwrens, ‘Christian-Afrikaans women under construction: an analysis of gender ideology in Finesse and Lééf’, explores the nature of a particular kind of femininity, which they coin as ‘Christian-Afrikaans femininity’. Lauwrens and Mans propose that the
rise of glossy magazines over the last two decades, specifically post-apartheid, aimed particularly at Christian-Afrikaans women in South Africa, may be linked to a so-called crisis of cultural identity facing (white) Afrikaans speaking people. They narrow their focus on the way in which ‘Christian-Afrikaans femininity’ is constructed in Finesse and Lééf. The article ultimately exposes the naturalised and normative construction of Christian-Afrikaans femininity by these magazines and so contributes to the growing field of research on the relation between Afrikaans and national Christianity.

James Sey exposes another type of obfuscation in ‘Sublimation and reversibility: technologies of vision, the X-ray, and looking at paintings’, by examining the use of X-rays in art. His analysis moves beyond the mere revealing of layers of paint and other materials during the process of restoration of paintings to suggest a more complex layer of meaning making. Sey suggests that the X-ray also reveals a temporal dimension to the works, by showing that which has gone before and this unseen dimension may ultimately become part of the painting’s meaning. He inquires: ‘Is what we see when we look at the works the primary image, or can the obscured image recaptured by the machine come to replace the ‘finished’ work in terms of time, space and meaning?’ By making the link between the different time layers, Sey problematises the link between vision and aesthetic meaning itself.

The local political and cultural landscape is addressed in Rita Swanepoel’s, ‘Kuns en die verwerking van die verlede’ (Art and coming to terms with the past), the fifth article in this edition. Swanepoel assesses the state of the South African democracy after apartheid and the continued burden of a past characterised by racial tension. She then tasks herself to explore the role art could play in order to make peace with a difficult past, by interpreting two works of Willem Boshoff, namely Panifice (2001) and Writing in the Sand (2000). The theoretical assistance of Paul Ricoeur and his plea for a new perspective through an imaginative engagement with history, as well as on Giorgi Verbeeck’s insights on looking at the past from a contemporary perspective and milieu, are called upon to enable her analysis.

Finally, Rory du Plessis shares his research on the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum under the medical superintendency of Dr Thomas Duncan Greenlees (1890-1907), in ‘Promoting and popularising the asylum: photography and asylum image making at the Grahamstown lunatic asylum, 1890-1907’. Du Plessis cleverly explores how Greenlees promoted and popularised the asylum in order to gain custom from private patients. He does this by showing that one way in which Greenlees created patronage was through the cultivation of a public image of the asylum as ideally suited to the care of middle class patients as well as promising restoration and recuperation from insanity. This means the image making of the asylum provided a vital tool to counter public fears and stigma. Greenlees’s image-making could probably on some level be interpreted as creating an iconology of the insane, which adds to Du Plessis’s engagement.

As all editors probably know, getting an issue ready is no easy task. In this case there are two angels who assisted in bringing this issue together, they know who they are. My sincerest gratitude.
The cinema of Willie Esterhuizen: the quest for sex and hegemonic masculinity

Chris Broodryk
Lecturer in the Drama Department, University of Pretoria
chris.broodryk@up.ac.za

ABSTRACT

In this article I critically discuss how Willie Esterhuizen’s films explicitly present an affirmative heteronormative hegemonic masculinity despite numerous queer, destabilising possibilities that threaten such dominant masculinity. I read Esterhuizen’s films in terms of their consistent safe-making of homoerotic possibilities. To show how hegemonic heteronormative masculinity features across Esterhuizen’s film oeuvre, his comedies Lipstiek Dipstiek (1994), Poena is Koning (2007), Vaatjie Sien Sy Gat (2008) and Stoute Boudjies (2010) will be investigated in this regard.

In this investigation, I will discuss how Esterhuizen’s films:

- present a narrative foregrounding a quest for sexual intercourse as an integral part of post-apartheid white masculinity;
- utilise notions of anality (as mostly based in farting and verbal references to defecation) in relation to masculinity;
- point to a masculinity of (bodily) control;
- present various moments of homosociality and even homoeroticism in the relationships between male characters that threaten heteronormative masculinity but are, in the end, consistently trumped by hegemonic masculinity.

Keywords: Anality, control, hegemonic masculinity, sex, Willie Esterhuizen
Introduction

Willie Esterhuizen’s directorial film debut Lipstiek Dipstiek (‘Lipstick Dipstick’) arrived on South African movie screens in 1994, the year South Africa formally became a democracy after decades of apartheid. In Lipstiek Dipstiek (1994), Esterhuizen presented a picture of white South Africa struggling to cope with the forces of political change in a decidedly different manner: suddenly, Afrikaners were swearing and having sex on screen, and the local minister, long a symbol of Calvinist puritanism and a figure closely associated with theologically motivated social policy, turned out to be a cross dresser. This depiction was quite a rupture of the masculine Afrikaner often characterised by ‘heterosexuality and political conservativism’ (Du Pisani cited by Vincent 2006:355).

As Vincent (2006:350) explains, South Africa’s political transition was not a once-off event contained to 1994, but a continuing process located in numerous locations and cultures throughout South Africa. Looking at Esterhuizen’s films, it emerges that one of the ways in which Esterhuizen deals with issues of change and transformation, political or other, is located in his constructions of masculinity. This paper aims to critically discuss the notion and markers of masculinity as it is constructed in the cinema of Willie Esterhuizen, with reference to his films Lipstiek Dipstiek (1994), Poena is Koning (‘Poena is King’) (2007), Vaatjie Sien Sy Gat (‘Vaatjie Falls Flat on his Ass’) (2008) en Stoute Boudjies (‘Naughty Bum’) (2010). I will show how these films associate masculinity with a visible quest for sex, notions of control and social interactions characterised by the scatological notion of anality.2

Esterhuizen places the narrative focus on the male teenager or post-adolescent male. Similar to American celebrations and inversions of juvenile masculinity such as Jackass (2002) that ‘[present] a spectacle of emasculation that is also a reassertion of the masculine’ (Brayton 2007:69), Esterhuizen’s focus on the younger white male allows an exploration of the varieties of white anxiety and masculinities that attempt to establish themselves in a country that it perceives to be innately hostile to them. It is in lieu of this post-transitional socio-political hostility that Esterhuizen’s young male characters seem to substitute pursuits of a political nature with a quest for sex. Even if these young white males cannot obtain employment, as they verbally state, they can get sex. Brayton (2007:58) explains that ‘some white men have adopted a marginalised positionality in an effort to reclaim the tacit social privileges of being white, heterosexual and male’. One should be cautious to align with these characters’ claims of disempowerment, as Vincent (2006:356) points out that traditional hegemonic white masculinity may in all likelihood continue to ‘control the hegemonic center even in the transitional context’. Throughout his films, Esterhuizen still assigns power and control to the heterosexual male, privileging the traditional hegemonic centre of white hegemonic masculinity as a space of safety and assurance.

As Walker’s (2005) study demonstrates, the political shifts of 1994 have called into question traditional roles designated to South African men. The 1990s have been said to foreground possible shifts
in gender politics; yet, ‘the later films examined [in the study] seek to recuperate an older story of masculinity rooted in mythology and a highly fetishized account of history’ (Bainbridge & Yates 2005:313). While Esterhuizen's films do not fetishise history as much as revel in its relative absence, there is a resilience in gender related stereotypes that needs to be explored as part of the film’s story. Gender refers to ‘the socially constructed correlate of sex’ (Dozier 2005:298) and the performance of gender expresses sexuality through the body. Heterosexual intercourse, itself a gendered performance, can symbolically demonstrate ‘social inequalities between men and women’ (Dozier 2005:311). The representation of sexual intercourse on screen can indicate gendered power relations where gendered inequality is somewhat of a given in dominant mainstream cinema (see Hayward 2006:156-165). While Afrikaans cinema can be said to be traditionally conservative in terms of the representation of sex, Esterhuizen's films, through their depictions of sex and sexuality, require investigation.3

Esterhuizen's protagonists are all Afrikaans and white and verbalise their perceived social positions as politically disadvantaged. As Weis (2006:263) explains, ‘in changes that hit the former industrial proletariat (read: largely white men) the hardest, the remaking of class is tied in key and critical ways to issues that swirl fundamentally around masculinity, as well as the wages of whiteness’. Esterhuizen’s films construct whiteness as a burden, and not as a marker of middle class privilege. Indeed, the films at least superficially appeal to a sense of racial melancholia in two ways: the Afrikaner white male characters recognise the limitations of their whiteness, along with a betrayal of the ideal of whiteness (Straker 2004:409). Here, whiteness signifies ‘an experience of loss, and it is this experience that is associated with melancholia’ (Straker 2004:411) and ‘dislocation’, where social change (such as the transition from apartheid to democracy) result in ‘the previously unseen or denied being made forcibly visible’ (Steyn 2004:150), a process that implies the renegotiation of the social imaginary. In a South African context, as in many other contexts that have experienced an emergence from colonial fixation, whiteness is part of the social imaginary that needs to be interrogated and re-imagined. Esterhuizen’s Afrikaner white male protagonists seem to occupy a position of arrested political development as the melancholia following the loss of political power and the sense of dislocation that accompanied the political transition have not translated into an interrogation of their white male subject-position. Instead, Esterhuizen's characters, as discussed below, rather appeal to a sense of victimhood. As Steyn (2004:148) explains, ‘the constellation of the victim has been highly salient in the discourses of Afrikaner whiteness’; indeed, Brayton (2007:58) explains that the white male both disavows and embraces victimhood. This sense of victimhood as verbally articulated by the protagonists in the selected films, reflects anxieties about racial and cultural identity, of being ‘[a]liens in a now foreign and disintegrating land’ (Steyn 2004:153, 156). The young white males in Esterhuizen's film all perceive themselves as bearing the brunt of an unequal system of employment and search validation in the pursuit of sex instead.4 The films’ emphasis on sex, as I will show, centres on a tension between heteronormative behaviour and homosocial activity as exhibited by the characters. In Esterhuizen's films, sex serves to confirm heteronormative masculinity at the expense of alternative forms of masculinity.
Measuring masculinity

With reference to the changed socio-political status of the Afrikaner male, Sonnekus (2013:36) explains:

Female, black and gay South African citizens benefit from unprecedented rights that promote equality, but simultaneously place Afrikaner masculinity under immense strain to reassure itself (and others) of its legitimacy. Its main ideological pillars, whiteness and heterosexuality, are therefore constantly reiterated as monolithic and unimpressionable, ultimately prompting heightened levels of homophobia and racism.

Here Sonnekus foregrounds the compromised status of Afrikaner masculinity, which is renegotiated in light of major socio-political and cultural change. In their interrogation of the notion of masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005:830) note that the much contested notion remains meaningful in discussions of power, violence, sexuality and social change. The authors note that ‘the combination of the plurality of masculinities and the hierarchy of masculinities’ (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005:846) remain the fundamental feature of the notion of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity exists on three levels. Firstly, the local level refers to families and immediate communities. Secondly, the regional level relates to constructions of masculinity on broader cultural and national levels. Finally, the global level refers to the masculinity construction in ‘transnational arenas such as world politics and transnational business and media’ (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005:849). Esterhuizen’s films present masculinities that operate on a local (community-specific) and regional (cultural) level while constructing gender hierarchies in which heterosexual masculinity is hegemonic and homosexuality (or any suggestion thereof) is not considered masculine. In agreement with Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), this article supports the notion that there is no unitary masculinity but rather multiple masculinities. It follows that hegemonic masculinity can have various meanings in different discursive practices. While the hegemonic masculinity in Esterhuizen’s film is consistently characterised by the quest for sex, I will indicate the hegemonic masculinity in each Esterhuizen film.

Schippers (2007:86) suggests that masculinity is a social location as well as a set of practises and characteristics collectively understood as ‘masculine’. There are key cultural and social effects to these practises. Indeed, hegemonic masculinity, in Connell’s view, ‘legitimates men’s domination over women as a group’, but, importantly, over subordinate masculinities as well (Schippers 2007:87). Specifically, as Schippers (2007:94) suggests, hegemonic masculinity is ‘the qualities defined as manly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to femininity’ (emphasis in original). Garlick (2009:608) adds that hegemonic masculinity is further characterised by notions of control. Throughout the trials and tribulations of life, the male who is in control will navigate these challenges with considerable success to affirm a sense of control and agency. Speed (2010:829) explains that the testing of socio-cultural boundaries underpins certain traditions pertaining to the achieving manhood, where manhood is characterised by a sense of obtaining and exercising control.
Most teen comedies in Speed’s (2010) discussion use the road trip trope to signify a transition not only from one space to and through others, but also of boyhood to manhood, with manhood suggesting the epitome of control (and, with that, a sense of an ‘ending’ to a process, as if the male-in-manhood has finished a project that requires no further attention). Although there are no road trips per se in Esterhuizen’s cinema, the final light aircraft escape in Vaatjie Sien Sy Gat and the trip to Durban for Hardus and Vaatjie in Stoute Boudjies qualify as moments that mark masculinity as the completion of a series of crucial decisions that lead to clear narrative resolution. In addition to teen comedies, Esterhuizen’s films can also be described as ‘lad flicks’ (Hansen-Miller & Gill 2011), a combination of buddy films and romantic comedies about ‘the trials and tribulations of a young man as they grow up and make their way in the world’, a social negotiation in which masculinity is central (Hansen-Miller & Gill 2011: [sp]). These films, like Esterhuizen’s, depict masculinities that are characterised by a sense of ‘heterosexual domesticity’ where the characters’ middle class masculinity is constructed as ‘fallible, damaged and distinctly unheroic’ (Hansen-Miller & Gill 2011: [sp]). Strikingly, these ‘lad flicks’ foreground heterosexual male bonding, solidarity and homosociality, albeit accompanied by homophobic humour (Hansen-Miller & Gill 2011: [sp]). Indeed, Sonnekus (2013:27) observes that masculinity is occasionally signified through homophobia given that difference and denial historically indicate the pre-eminence of heteronormativity. With reference to homophobia, Clarkson (2006:200) refers to Kimmel’s notion that homophobia is the fear that males will be revealed to not be ‘real men’, suggesting that homophobia is haunted by a sense or perception of inadequacy. Esterhuizen’s films evidently borrow from various internationally recognised and recognisable western tropes, conventions and types to shape its narratives, and there is a definite homophobia to the four films discussed in this article.

In Esterhuizen’s films, the male protagonists often (momentarily) straddle attempts at male control and an indulgence in behaviour that deviates from socially consensual norms. The latter seems to provide the male characters with opportunities for bonding as formative of a sense of kinship and solidarity. As Kiesling (2005:696) defines it, male solidarity refers to ‘a given bond among men’ according to which men ‘want (and need) to do things with groups of other men, excluding women’. For Whitehead (cited by Kiesling 2005:698), masculine ontology concerns the masculine subject’s search ‘for an authentic self’. Notably, such a pursuit requires a constant engagement with ‘performing acts recognised in cultural discourses as being associated with the self’ (Kiesling 2005:698) and with being masculine, as one sees in Esterhuizen’s films. The male characters use sex to solidify their subject position as one that is masculine and can be described as ‘in control’.

Looking at the interactions between the male characters in the films concerned, and the emphasis on the homosocial dimensions thereof, it becomes clear how ‘[t]he discourse of homosociality is a desire to return to that golden age’ of male friendship located in the early teenage years before the insertion of the female into male social life (Kiesling 2005:702). Esterhuizen’s characters for most part succeed in returning to this ‘golden age’ of homosociality: since their manhood is asserted...
through heteronormative sexual intercourse, they can afford to privilege homosocial relationships for much of the film.

I regularly refer to the notion of anality in the below discussion. The notion has enjoyed a privileged status due to its prominence in the psychology of Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson (Gardiner 2000:253). With reference to Shakespeare, Saunders (2004:150, 158) evokes the figure of Iago in *Othello* as demonstrating an anality which ‘[links] the concept of properly handled waste to ideals of personal conduct’; anality here marks the difference between civilization and barbarism. In cinema, Charlie Chaplin built a popular image of social resistance and non-conformity on a persona that utilised anality; as Gunning (2010:239) describes, ‘Chaplin not only recalls the child who has not yet been thoroughly housebroken, but the “natural man” whose urges and bodily needs outweigh the demands of society and his own attempts at dignity’. Bodily functions here have socially subversive possibilities. Esterhuizen’s films do not use anality as mechanism of subversion. As I will show, anality mutes homoerotic possibilities and confirms masculinity as heterosexual. For Gardiner (2000:252), it is an ‘expulsive anality that … is related to the ambiguities of men’s roles and identities in consumer society’. Expulsive anality is often accompanied by an ‘aggressive delight in ‘grossness’ where anality marks masculinity as ‘explicitly childish’ (Gardiner 2000:258). For the purposes of this article, anality refers to bodily functions of the anus and stomach as visible (and audible) in Esterhuizen’s films. Here, anality is less concerned with ascribing a civilised-barbaric binary and more with maintaining a heterosexual-homosexual binary that is incongruous with contemporary conceptualisations of masculinity (as in Connell and Messerschmidt [2005]).

*Lipstiek Dipstiek* serves as a prelude to what I read as Esterhuizen’s later films’ emphasis on homosociality and even homoeroticism. This homoeroticism is repeatedly neutralised in favour of heteronormative masculinity. As Sonnekus (2013:32) asserts, gayness and hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity are irreconcilable.

*Lipstiek Dipstiek* (1994)

Esterhuizen’s feature debut, *Lipstiek Dipstiek*, earned R6.3 million in 1994 at the South African box-office (Burger 2010:[sp]), the top-earning Afrikaans film for well over a decade. It introduces viewers to the young, virginal Poenie (Francois Coertze) who, on the threshold of marriage, burns his crotch with a welding rod and falls in lust with a blonde female psychologist. With Poenie, *Lipstiek* introduces viewers to the template for masculinity that echoes through Esterhuizen’s entire cinematic oeuvre. Not only is Poenie’s masculinity associated with the ability to resist inappropriate temptation, an indicator of control, Esterhuizen’s construction of masculinity is also related to overt sexual behaviour where the definition of sex is limited to include only penetration. Intercourse, and nothing else, constitutes sex. Even when Poenie starts groping a nurse’s breasts, his behaviour is seen as naïve and sweet, not sexually offensive. Finally, Poenie’s quest for sex leads to a prolonged, gratuitous
climactic sex scene with the psychologist, thereby solidifying his masculinity. The climactic sex scene is followed by a brief final scene of the psychologist’s former lover who is suddenly, and without any previous cues, revealed as gay. The affirmation of missionary hetero-sex, complete with soft lighting, Vaseline lense and soft-core instrumental soundtrack, is juxtaposed with the two male lovers meeting up outside their home in a mundane replication of earlier scenes with the psychologist and her fiancée meeting up. This suggestion that masculinity is visibly contrasted with sanitised, domesticated homosexuality is significant for the rest of Esterhuizen’s oeuvre as the heterosexual standard (or default) for hegemonic masculinity is consistently confirmed.

Poenie is the forerunner for Poena, the sex-starved protagonist in Poena is Koning. Esterhuizen seemingly without irony refers to Poena as a ‘humourous ethnic minority film’ devoid of propaganda (Dercksen 2008:sp). Poena is Koning also foregrounds heterosexual sexual behaviour as indicative of masculinity.

Poena is Koning (2007)

Poena is Koning concerns two male best friends’ attempts at losing their virginity by the time they leave school. As such, the film draws on an American narrative tradition manifest in films such as Porky’s (Clark 1981) and Fast Times at Ridgemont High (Heckerling 1982). Like its American correlatives (see Speed 2010:825), Poena is also ‘profitable, low-budget and formulaic’; however, where Porky’s freely indulged a voyeuristic desire to reveal fully nude women to its viewers, Poena is Koning only has a few fleeting nude shots, none of them full frontal. Instead, Poena locates much of its sexual activity discursively in dialogue and symbolism, and not primarily in naked on-screen bodies.

The verbalised sexual activity remains coarse and explicit throughout the film: ‘although sexuality seems to be about bodies, it’s not really about bodies. It is how bodily activity is reported in words’ (Žižek cited by Fiennes 2006). The lack of an abundance of visual sexual activity should not be read to indicate an absence of sexuality but should serve to amplify the presence of sex and sexuality. The spoken word articulates and drives the quest for sex.

The pleasure of sex, whether visualised in the film or articulated in sexually explicit language, is foregrounded early in the film. Poena’s high school friend Vaatjie (Andre Odendaal) mentions that he is ‘addicted to pleasuring himself’. When one character hears that their attractive teacher, Juffrou (Perle van Schalkwyk), shaves her pubic area, he observes that if he does not lose his virginity soon, his ‘balls will explode’. Such imagery is the basis of masculine sexual activity in the film: men are in constant pursuit of sexual release, running the risk that a failure in this regard will render them eunuchs. Many of the tensions introduced by Lipstiek Dipstiek are present. For example, the film suggests that a heterosexual virgin is possibly a ‘moffie’ (‘faggot’). Only the act of deflowering will make the male’s heterosexuality evident; without intercourse, such a man may possibly become homosexual, thereby compromising his masculinity.
The film’s construction of masculinity becomes increasingly problematic. In one convoluted plot development, Poena is forced to hide a golden necklace by hanging it from his penis. This necklace becomes a key part in a transaction involving sexual rewards, where the necklace becomes a currency for sexual activity. This transactional quality to sexuality marks Esterhuizen’s heterosexual masculinity as rooted in sexual conquest where sex and masculinity can be bought. Upon returning the golden necklace to its owner, Juffrou, grateful for the return of her property, seduces Poena. During foreplay, Juffrou’s husband Vleis (Francois Coertze) arrives home unexpectedly, forcing a panicking Poena to flee naked over the apartment balcony. Poena finds refuge in a gay couple’s next door apartment. Poena and one of the gay neighbours eventually listen to Juffrou and Vleis having sex – a naked heterosexual and effeminate homosexual bearing affirmative witness to the heteronormative sex act.

In addition to the quest for sex and the appreciation of the heteronormative sex act, there is an emphasis on anality in Poena is Koning. When Vaatjie farts in the exam venue, Poena is on hand to quickly explain that Vaatjie simply sneezes that way. As such, Vaatjie’s public anality is completely normalised and there is no need to make an excuse for it. Soon after, both boys are in the headmaster’s office, where he compares the ANC government’s ineptitude to the experience of anal pain. Anality is here associated with discomfort and failure: a sexual failure but also a political impotence. Later in the film, Theunis van Rooyen (the late Andrew Thompson) is taken to hospital after he lodges stationery in his anus during a moment of sexual self-exploration. Here Esterhuizen has taken to humiliate those characters with an expressed anal activity or interest, especially insofar as it may be said to suggest latent homosexual experimentation.

Humiliation, especially of a socio-sexual nature, is key to reading the masculinity of these characters; as Speed (2010:827) explains, the vulgar teen comedy often focuses on punishing hedonistic behaviour, at least in the short term. For Esterhuizen, hedonistic behaviour associated with anal expulsion or insertion must be punished: Vaatjie goes to the principal’s office, while Theunis is hospitalised. By now the film has clearly located masculinity as an identifiable difference between heterosexuality and homosexuality (the former possesses it while the latter lacks it) and its respective gendered performances, as well as in the frustrated attempts to obtain intercourse – with the understanding that eventually sex will be successfully obtained. If sex is obtained, the threat of homosexuality dissipates even as safe homosociality remains.

In addition, Esterhuizen’s film identifies masculinity with the visibility of the penis. As in Lipstiek Dipstiek, male sexual arousal is visible and observed by female characters. In Poena is Koning, it is Poena’s own mother who acknowledges her son’s erection. The mother’s affirmation of her son’s penis is not simply an affirmation of masculinity, but also foregrounds female appreciation of the visible penis to counter the moments of anality and homosociality. For Hirdman (2007:160), the power of the heterosexual phallus is located in its invisible presence; yet, as ‘one of the last Western cultural taboos with the ability to shock’, the penis has become more visible in popular visual culture.
The Lacanian conception of the phallus already contains ejaculate ‘as the constitutive metaphor for the phallicity of signification. The veiledness of the ejaculate as the vital flow reiterates the discursive imagery of heterosexual coitus which is presumed to impregnate meaning by “striking”, or fucking, the so-called passive, feminine signifiable’ (Cakirlar 2011:93). As Del Rosso (2011:705) explains, the external visibility of the penis makes it an immediate part of any discussion of masculinity in that the erect penis’s association with power and dominance comes into play.

The visible penis must be seen by other film characters; they must bear witness to its potency. ‘Phallus’, says Žižek (1989:254), ‘designates the juncture at which the radical externality of the body as independent of our will … joins the pure interiority of our thought’. The penis is the paradoxical combination of male control associated with masculinity and its failure. As Žižek (1999:471) explains, the ‘erection is one of the last remainders of authentic spontaneity, something that cannot be thoroughly mastered through rational-instrumental procedures’. A man who cannot produce an erection, this symbol of power raised by mere thought, is a manifest disappointment. Indeed, the ‘male’s potency functions as a sign that another symbolic dimension is active through him: the “phallus” designates the symbolic support which confers on [the] penis the dimension of proper potency’ (Žižek 1999:472). In this instance, castration anxiety is not about the loss of the penis but about the loss of male authority that accompanies its hoisted appearance. Esterhuizen must make his characters’ erections visible to the audience (which he does not explicitly visually do) by making it visible to other characters and so confirm their heteronormative masculinity: the visible penis is never witnessed by another male character, although male characters do comment on anal actions such as farting and cramps. The erect penis is restricted to the heterosexual domain. The heterosexual penis is made visible as homosexual connotations are muted.

In many American comedies, the homoerotic tension between male characters is often acknowledged and named, such as one character calling another ‘fag’ after a brief hug (Troyer & Marchiselli 2005:270). Troyer and Marchiselli (2005:273) point out that it is possible for ‘the precarious intimacy of homosocial relations [to topple] into the homoerotic’, citing how in Dude, Where’s My Car? (Leiner 2000), for example, ‘Chester’s knowledge about his friend’s gastronomic functions and the overt anality of the scene make clear the screenwriter’s intentions’. Halberstam (2011:58-59) refers to films such as Dude, Where’s My Car? as ‘male stupidity films’ featuring ‘witless white males’. Though I would be cautious to suggest some reductive link between anality and homosexuality, the positioning of anality in heteronormative narratives where masculinity is constructed as the domain of heterosexuality serves to elevate the heteronormative at the cost of any alternative, such as homosociality even. In fact, in Vaatjie Sien Sy Gat, I read anality as formative of heterosexual hegemonic masculinity is accentuated once more.
Vaatjie Sien Sy Gat (2008)

Vaatjie Sien Sy Gat’s main protagonist is the physically soft, bulbous and domesticated figure of Vaatjie. The name ‘Vaatjie’, a diminutive word for a wooden vat often filled with alcohol, is already suggestive of larger size. While Mosher (2005:61) correctly asserts that overweight males receive mostly ‘limited narrative attention’, Esterhuizen has given narrative prominence to such an individual. In this spin-off feature, Vaatjie and Theunis van Rooyen have exchanged their statuses as supporting characters to leading man and sidekick. Visibly absent from this film is the Poenie/Poena character, the male who most visibly conforms to normative ideas of physical appearance. Here the audience has no choice but to follow the character trajectory of the obese Vaatjie. Since fatness and flaccidity signify a failure of patriarchal potency (McPhail 2009:1026), Esterhuizen bases this film on a character already assigned to impotence, to failed masculinity.

Since the main character is a constantly eating, obese male, the film’s emphasis on the anal is evident from the very start as the film opens with Vaatjie literally farting himself awake. Immediately after, he steps in dog faeces. Within minutes, his family has referred to him as ‘poephol’ (asshole) and ‘dikgat’ (fat ass). Blapsie, Vaatjie’s sister, at one stage refers to him as a ‘magneet vir kak’ (shit magnet). These suggestions of anality are closely associated with disclosures of sexual excitation and a palpable homoerotic tension. Theunis communicates with Vaatjie via a computer video chat programme, stating: ‘You’re naked! Is this a bad time?’, followed by Vaatjie’s response that he has an ‘enormous boner’. Here the presence of the erection is verbally stated, but not visually affirmed: while male characters may verbally describe their genitals and state of sexual excitation, only female characters bear affirmative witness to the penis. As with interactions between male and female characters in Esterhuizen’s films, eroticism between male characters is limited to the discursive realm.

In the absence of the hegemonic masculinity exemplified by Poenia/Poena, Theunis and Vaatjie seem to pursue a relationship that leaves space for playful homoeroticism evident in the way the two males discuss their genitals and share their accounts of attempts at obtaining sex. Note that the type of male who engages in such a relationship is defined by failure: not only does Vaatjie struggle to contain his eating habits, he has already failed in a different way to control his body. Furthermore, it was Theunis who in the previous film had stationery lodged in his anus. But homoerotic desire is abject, rupturing and disrupting notions of normative masculinity (Brayton 2007:67); indeed, the white male in this context is depicted as ‘an abject individual’ (Brayton 2007:58).

Therefore, before this homoerotic playfulness threatens to disrupt narrative safety and comfort, Theunis and Vaatjie share in a striptease at the Lollipop Ranch. The important aspect here is the shared experience of the striptease as an opportunity for bonding, male solidarity and a demonstration of control; the male consumption of the female form has to occur in public to emphasise the visibility
of and validate the characters’ interest in naked women. So invested in this project are Vaatjie and Theunis that they even cry together when the stripper does not remove her panties. The film spends more time on their crying than on the naked woman performing the striptease. Indeed, when Theunis goes on a date with Blapsie, Vaatjie’s sister, Theunis is more concerned about Vaatjie’s recent expulsion from cooking school than his date.

Again the homoerotic interest between Vaatjie and Theunis must be made safe by the explicit confirmation of heterosexual interests. Like Poenie and Poena before him, Theunis vehemently denies the fact that he is a virgin (the idea of sexual inactivity is anathema to dominant notions of masculinity) until Blapsie frames his virgin status as something positive in the sense that she would be honoured to participate in his deflowering. Later in the film, the post-coital Theunis smokes and drinks in bed to celebrate sexual conquest. This moment is echoed in *Vaatjie Sien Sy Gat*, where Vaatjie (who is never shown smoking) lights a cigarette in the time honoured Hollywood fashion of celebrating triumphant intercourse after making a sperm bank donation. Seemingly whether a man has sex with a woman or with himself, it deserves to be celebrated.

Once Vaatjie is expelled from cooking school, he and Theunis visibly share in Vaatjie’s grief by crying together and consoling one another. By now, these moments of male bonding and solidarity have been stripped of their threat to heteronormative masculinity as it is clear that both Vaatjie and Theunis are so invested in the female form that it brings them to tears. Men are allowed share emotional moments insofar as they occur in the pursuit of hetero-sex. Vaatjie visits a local video store looking for a French film that can teach him to speak French. Vaatjie explains that he is not looking for smut, but that he is not a ‘moffie’. As in *Poena is Koning*, a male can only be one or the other: in the practice of masculinity, you are either an oversexed heterosexual male or a queer. In addition, there is again the usual emphasis on the protagonist’s disabling whiteness, Max du Preez’s (2003) ‘pale native’ who recognises and verbalises that history is against him. I read the quest for sex and its associations as a form of compensation for the repeated motif of white disenfranchisement in Esterhuizen’s films.

It is, however, anality that is most emphasised in *Vaatjie Sien Sy Gat*. Here, anality also enters the family sphere to serve as a prominent bond between father and son. Both Vaatjie and Wors, his father, find that their stomachs get upset in times of stress and excitement and have to empty their bowels as a manifestation of their excitement over Vaatjie’s eventual personal triumph at being selected to go overseas for further training. Wors even references the mother, Mollie, into the practice of anality, stating that good news will cause Vaatjie’s mother to ‘shit herself’. Referring to scatological comedy in films such as *Austin Powers in Goldmember* (Roach 2002), Bonila (2006:20) explains how the obese, hirsute male character Fat Bastard’s ‘faeces … are for him proof positive of his continued being’. The act of defecation, and the tangibility of its product as well as the visibility of its by-products, is evidence of the male’s existence and foregrounds anality as constitutive of masculinity in comedy.
Shared father-son anality eventually manifests in this film as a so-called ‘Visagie photo’: Vaatjie and Wors pull down their shorts, moon the nosy female neighbour and fart in her general direction. The neighbour topples from her balcony onto the lawn. Given her propensity for spying on Vaatjie’s family, this scene makes it clear that the bodily manifest male will not be looked at; the male, in control of himself and his environment, does the looking. The suggestion of the ‘photo’ here suggests the flash of nudity and the impermanence – not the preservation – of the neighbour, whose last moment in the film is as humiliated female. Ostensibly this results in a closer bond between father and son as the two men celebrate the moment.

In the absence of the male protagonist’s constant quest for sex, Vaatjie Sien Sy Gat foregrounds the homoerotic bonds between certain characters, and emphasises the centrality of anality to Esterhuizen’s idea of masculinity. The character of Vaatjie speaks, nearly (but not convincingly) subversively, to another form of masculinity: bear masculinity. As Hannen (2005:26) explains, “[b]ears reject the self-conscious, exaggerated masculinity of the gay leatherman in favor of a more “authentic” masculinity that frames the socio-physical appearance of this gay male as indicative of the heteronormative “regular guy”’. The bear can be seen as a gender performance that aligns with a straight-acting masculinity in opposition to stereotypical constructions of feminised homosexuality (Clarkson 2006:192). The bear is much like the heterosexual male in his daily pursuits, but he is gay. Consider Vaatjie and Theunis’ moments of shared emotion: ‘in staking their claim to gay masculinity, Bears challenge hegemonic assumptions about male sexuality by introducing what feminists have identified as an “ethic of care” (Gilligan 1982) into an objectified sexual culture perceived as alienating’ (Hennen 2008:98). Contained in the trope of male bonding, solidarity and shared experience, Vaatjie is a considerate bear figure in the face of what I read as Theunis’ precarious bisexuality. Vaatjie remains the most narratively prominent character though: as Coles (2007:31) explains, men who distance themselves from the ideal of hegemonic masculinity, men like Vaatjie, operate in other contexts where they are still in some way superior to other men (in this instance, Theunis). The more traditional heterosexual hegemonic male ideal reappears in Stoute Boudjies.

**Stoute Boudjies (2010)**

In Stoute Boudjies, the male characters’ focus on sex becomes even more overt than before, with the main character, Hardus Vogel (which can be loosely translated as ‘Hard Cock’). Again this oversexed white male complains that the job market is not open to him because of his whiteness. The only recourse to power and agency – to control – if not through work, is through sex. The film opens with Hardus and Vaatjie in a tent adrift on the ocean during a thunderstorm. In an inverted Brokeback Mountain (Lee 2005) moment, Hardus mentions that something’s bothering him. A concerned Vaatjie replies: ‘Your cock?’ Soon after the characters verbally surmise that they are being punished for their primary sin: they masturbate too much. Schneider (2005:379) explains the
act of masturbation as ‘a sexual act that both waylays and encourages reproduction and qualifies in an admittedly thin sense as homosexual’. Schneider (2005:381) points to the paradox of masturbation where the act indicates entrance into puberty and pleasure while simultaneouslysignifying immaturity. He refers to the ‘up-and-down-penis’ as the flaccid-to-erect-to-flaccid penis that is both awesome and comical (Schneider 2005:391), as seen in Forgetting Sarah Marshall (Stoller 2008) where the male protagonist’s nakedness and flaccid penis humorously suggest psychological vulnerability and masculine fragility (see also Stephens 2007). While Stoute Boudjies avoids full frontal nudity, the film makes the relationship between male experiences of pleasure and shame palpable. As stated earlier, male hedonism is often punished through humiliation.

Masculinity is again located as the domain of the heterosexual, as Hardus remarks to romantic interest Petro (Angelique Pretorius) that ‘only a fag would say no to sex’ with her. Hardus more than compensates for the lack of the masculine ideal in Vaatjie Sien Sy Gat. In fact, here again the father-son relationship is foregrounded. Whereas Vaatjie comes from a close-knit nuclear family, Hardus’s father has left his mother and taken a girlfriend. When Hardus’s quest for sex becomes visible, his mother remarks that he is ‘his father’s child’. Whether you have recently emerged from adolescence or whether you are middle aged, the quest for sex remains the key marker of masculinity for Esterhuizen. Unsurprisingly, the film shows us Hardus’s father receiving oral sex not once, but twice.

Troyer and Marchiselli (2005:276) discuss teen comedies as coming of age films with an emphasis on masculinity, where

> everything must be a rejection of what is old or past (i.e. no longer fashionable) and an embrace of the new and the now, a rejection of abstract paternal authority. To bond with one another, and to reject the father and everything he has, the boys in [so-called] dude films attempt to incorporate and justify homosocial relationships with homoerotic desires; to re-claim for themselves the trajectory of masculinist, Western history and its projected futures.

Esterhuizen’s male protagonists do incorporate homosocial and homoerotic tension into their framework of masculinity and in addition incorporate the father as paternal authority: a model who is emulated in thought and behaviour, as manifest in the characters Poena, Vaatjie and Hardus.

Like his forebears, virginal Hardus vehemently denies his virginity, and is grateful for the sex he has with Petro, a sexologist. Hardus thanks Petro three times for the sex; far from an intimate moment, sex was a social transaction and rite of passage for the benefit of Hardus’ status as masculine. Garlick (2003:158) recounts how, for Lynne Segal, the practice of sexual intercourse ‘confirms a sense of ineptness and failure and that it is through sex that men experience their greatest uncertainties and dependence in relation to women’. The successful completion of the sex act gives Hardus reason to be less anxious about his masculinity, hence his gratitude to his partner. Again the emphasis is on penetration – no other sexual activity is framed as sexual. The penis – invisible but manifest in the dialogue – takes centre stage: when Petro’s boyfriend Os is chasing after him, Petro consoles
Hardus by informing him that he is better endowed than Os, who is a motorcycle aficionado. ‘The larger the bike, the smaller the wiener’, remarks Hardus, engaging with the colloquial view of a large motorcycle as a proxy for an inadequate sense of masculinity.

Later in the film, Os experiences what another character describes as a ‘a cramp in [his] asshole’, and the context of the scene is intriguing: while locating Os in the machismo of biker culture, complete with leather jackets and revving engines, the film shows him experiencing anal discomfort. The scene seems to have no other purpose other than to have Os pass gas painfully. In this scene, anality subdues Os as the overt heterosexual hegemonic masculine ideal by humiliating him. Žižek (2011:260) explains: ‘[I]n relation to another person’s body we know very well that he or she sweats, defecates and urinates, but we abstract from this in our daily relations – these features are not part of our fellow man.’ Yet Esterhuizen chooses to highlight the male body – and only the male body – as producer of waste. Masculinity is tied to bodily excess but also, in another chasm between the male protagonists and their female intercourse interests, to the potential for excess in other strata: the experience of jouissance or ejaculation. Far from only subduing the macho male as discussed above, I read this as a strategy to locate the masculine at the intersection of pleasure and pain (femininity, in its comparative absence, is not shown to have this range of physical possibilities.)

As seen in the above, Poena, Vaatjie and Stoute Boudjies foreground moments of anality as much as they do the quest for sex. I used anality throughout to include all references to bodily expulsion, excess, farting and also narrative references to the anus. Gardiner (2000:252) argues that ‘an expulsive anality is related to the ambiguities of men’s roles and identities in consumer society’; as Estherhuizen’s films demonstrate, masculinity is simultaneously demystified and constituted through anality. Anality can have certain positive, productive associations. Gardiner (2000:254) refers to Bakhtin, for whom ‘the democratic spirit of folk humor contests authority and turns established hierarchies on their heads by using imagery from what he calls the “material body lower stratum”’, which would include a ““slinging of excrement”’ [signifying] destruction and debasement’ (Bakhtin cited by Gardiner 2000:254), yet retaining, as with urine, a notion of renewal and welfare (Gardiner 2000:254). Such a subversive dimension to anality is absent from Esterhuizen’s films, and possibilities of homoerotic tension are muted. Across the three films discussed in this article, the pattern of heteronormative hegemonic masculinity as the only acceptable masculinity is confirmed.

Conclusion

Esterhuizen pays little heed to traditional narrative models, eschewing the dominant Western three act narrative structure for a two act model where little regarding plot, especially the heteronormative element of the plot, is addressed. Instead, the first act of Esterhuizen’s films focus on maleness, masculinity and homosociality. The second act, as if cautious that the homosocial might become dominant, quickly and oddly inserts a heteronormative plot component into the narrative. Consider
how, in *Vaatjie Sien Sy Gat*, the protagonist falls in love with the pretty video store clerk who appears in three scenes in the entire film and serves as the heteronormative salvation of the male. In Vaatjie's case, it is especially urgent to confirm the traditional masculinity and heterosexuality of the male protagonist as Vaatjie is not only obese, but also involved in domestic activities such as cooking and baking, which are traditionally associated with femininity.¹²

The characters of Poena, Vaatjie and Hardus in their performance of masculinity speak to the notion of the Lacanian fool, a figure who ‘believes in his immediate identity with himself [and is] not capable of a dialectically mediated distance towards himself’, much like a king takes his being-a-king as his immediate property ‘and not as a symbolic mandate imposed on him by a network of intersubjective relations of which he is a part’ (Žižek 1989:46). In elaboration, Žižek (1998: [sp]) explains that the fool is ‘a simpleton … who is allowed to tell the truth, precisely because the “performative power” (the socio-political efficiency) of his speech is suspended’ (emphasis added). The characters’ masculinity and their quest for sex are a given that simply needs to be confirmed, not deconstructed. Masculinity and the quest for sex occur simultaneously and in a complementary manner. The practice of social and self-control as well as the demonstration and near intuitive understanding of anality operate in the quest for sex as near-subversive markers that in the end confirm heterosexual hegemonic masculinity. Once sex is obtained and the narrative space has been made safe from threatening homosexualities, appropriate homosocial bonds are confirmed (*Stoute Boudjies*).¹³ While none of the protagonists in Esterhuizen’s films self-identify as gay, many do exhibit homosocial and even homoerotic tendencies. However, the selected films continue to represent gay subjects by ‘[re-inscribing] the dominance of heterosexuality’ in often ‘stereotypical form based on the assumption that everyone, or anyone worth representing, is straight’ (Sonnekus 2009:41). Hegemonic masculinity is, again, exclusively heterosexual.

The characters Poena, Hardus and even Theunis all personally capture the moment preceding or following a sexual conquest on camera, as if preserving (and in one instance, sharing) these sexual experiences add further legitimacy to their masculinity. Significantly, these characters manage to bed their primary female interest halfway through the film already, and not only at the climax (with the exception of *Lipstiek Dipstiek*). The quest for heterosexual intercourse drives these characters: they do their best to obtain idealised female company, and eventually, after some trial and error, they succeed. With its emphasis on sexual intercourse, (lapsing) control, anality and homoerotic tension, the hegemonic heteronormative masculinity portrayed in Esterhuizen’s films is exclusive and intolerant of alternative masculinities that threaten its stability. Overall, the quest for sex exists to narratively foil the homoerotic tensions in all of Esterhuizen’s films.
NOTES

1. A preliminary version of this article was presented in paper form at the Work/Force: South African Masculinities in the Media conference, Stellenbosch University, South Africa, 13-14 September 2012.

2. I am not positing that there exists a binary opposite where one is either heterosexual or homosexual – gross categorisations that cannot endure in a consumerist environment – but that the male characters in Esterhuizen’s films pursue heteronormative masculinity as a mechanism to undermine possibilities of homoerotic tension between them. I am also not reading the strategic neutering of homoeroticism through the quest for sex as something that was intended by Esterhuizen, or that he personally condones one form of gendered performance over another. Instead, the narrative elements that constitute Esterhuizen’s consistent fictions (characters, plot, dialogue) guide my reading of the director’s films as a particularly problematic exploration of masculinity. To refer to Esterhuizen’s films as exploring masculinity would be problematic, since his approach to masculinity is affirmative rather than explorative.

3. South African censorship regulations during the apartheid era were notoriously strict and forbade the representation of a variety of themes and contents; see Tomaselli (1989:15-18; 25-28) on Jimmy Kruger’s Calvinist-inspired criticism of seminal Afrikaans films in the 1960s as well as South Africa’s less stringently Calvinist attitude in the 1980s.

4. On certain culture focused blogs, users refer to how ‘common’ Afrikaans movies can be, and Esterhuizen’s films, with its emphasis on sex and the body, are singled out as ‘common’ movies (Duskant Sutherland 2007:[sp]).

5. While the American teen comedy American Pie (Weitz 1999) is relevant to discussions of cinematic comedy tropes, conventions, sexuality and masculinity, as Stephens (2007:91) indicates, the film is closer in form and theme to Bakgat! (Pretorius 2008) than to Esterhuizen’s films and as such does not feature as a textual reference point in this article.

6. This moment would later be referenced in the first Bakgat! (Pretorius 2008) film when, after the male antagonist fails to complete the quest for sex, is shown to consider homosexuality as an alternative to heterosexual conquest. Esterhuizen’s idea that the male protagonist obtains sex while his competition does not evidently came to inscribe later Afrikaans comedy.

7. The name ‘Vleis’ translates as ‘meat’, and can be read to refer to this male character’s interest in consuming flesh (in the sense of nourishment as well as sexual pleasure). The name can also indicate a male with limited intelligence who is physically tough and no-nonsense, as in ‘meat head’.

8. Judith Halberstam (2011) discusses failure in a positive sense. It is failure that ‘allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behaviour and manage human development with the goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods’ (Halberstam 2011:3). Failure preserves a sense of anarchy which interrupts the ‘supposedly clean boundaries between adults and children, winners and losers’ (Halberstam 2011:3). Esterhuizen’s films do not use failure in this productively subversive sense.
9. Foucault (1984) would explain that the hospital is a space to correct deviance, and that Theunis’s hospitalisation is not simply to tend to him medically, but to normalise him, to retrain the body to perform certain actions and to avoid other, ‘abnormal’ ones.

10. Stephens (2007:89, 91, 92) suggests that the increased visibility of the penis resulted in the spectacularisation of the penis, and comments that the visible penis regularly indicate the perceived failure of the penis to measure up to the phallus, thereby compromising masculinity. In a South African context, such compromised masculinity made headline news with the painting *The Spear*. As Smith (2012) reports, Brett Murray’s painting positioned the visible penis as centrally visible, and as an entry point for discussing the political and sexual failures of South African president Jacob Zuma.

11. Žižek draws on Lacan to inform his conception of the phallus. For Lacan, the phallus is a signifier, an ‘insignia’, an ‘organ without a body that I put on, which gets attached to my body, but never becomes an organic part’ (Žižek 2006:34); in elaboration, the phallus is ‘an excessive feature … that generates the illusion of another hidden reality’ (Žižek 2006:116).

12. Given how firmly established Judith Butler’s ideas on gender performativity are, as primarily detailed in *Gender Trouble* (1990), I will not rehearse those ideas here due to limited space. Butler provides insight into the repetition of gender performances in establishing notions of gender, but this article’s interest is less in the performance of gender or masculinity and more in how Esterhuizen’s narratives neutralise homoerotic potentials by continually re-affirming hegemonic masculinity as heterosexual.

13. In this sense, *Vaatjie Sien Sy Gat* is admittedly the odd one out, given that the perpetually sexed-up Vaatjie here assumes a more domestic and less rambunctious role. The acquisition and practise of sexual intercourse is an afterthought to his culinary achievements. The homosocial motifs from the other Esterhuizen films are even more visible in the absence of the Poenie/Poena character.

REFERENCES


Spectatorship of screen media; land of the zombies?

Landi Raubenheimer
Lecturer and course coordinator in Contextual Studies and Design Studies at the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (FADA), University of Johannesburg
landir@uj.ac.za

ABSTRACT

This article investigates spectatorship of screen media. Early screen media is often thought to necessitate passive spectatorship, with thinkers such as Siegfried Kracauer (1987) and Walter Benjamin (2004) focusing on film. Such theories are later supported by critiques such as those by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (2003) on the mass media, and Laura Mulvey’s (2004) text on the gaze in film, along with ideas around the flaws of the Cartesian position as spectatorship formulated in aesthetics. More recently, with the advent of digital media, spectatorship has been re-formulated as more active in terms of meaning making. Following earlier theorists, I argue here that screen spectatorship is not in fact as active as it now appears to be, and that spectators are often performing dialectical zombie-like spectatorship; appearing active when spectatorship is more distracted than before. Overwhelming spectacle catering to the ‘eye lust’ (Gunning 2004:871) and interactive elements convince spectators that they are acting with agency, but as I aim to show, also lead to an exacerbated collapse of contemplative distance, which paradoxically often renders spectatorship uncannily zombie-like. When spectatorship reveals itself as a strangely passive activity, it may be understood as uncanny in the manner that Freud (1955) formulated it.

Keywords: Uncanny, Zombie, Active spectatorship, Passive spectatorship, ‘Curiositas’, Interactivity,

Active and passive spectatorship of screen media

Early film has been historically critiqued by authors such as Siegfried Kracauer (1987) and Walter Benjamin (2004), as leading to spectatorship of distraction, as opposed to the absorption associated with the spectatorship of art (Gunning 2004:871). Critical thinkers of the Frankfurt School such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (2003), as well as feminist theorists such as Laura Mulvey (2004), later critiqued both film and television as facilitating a passive mode of spectatorship, in a sense imposing representation on spectators in a way which did not encourage them to question such representations. On the other hand, contemporary spectatorship of screen media is also often seen as more active, with spectators participating in the process of constructing meaning from representation. This supposedly challenges the model of the passive Cartesian spectator of art history, to whom the world is administered through ready-made representation. There are many
theories on how digital media allows the spectator to become an author and how meaning is created in a more interactive manner (Daly 2010:81-98; Haraway 1991; Mitchell 1992). The spectator or user is thought to participate in a process rather than to receive an end product, because the digital medium allows for input at many stages of spectatorship. Spectatorship is thus often seen as having shifted from a passive position through the ‘decentering’ of the Cartesian subject in various strategies employed by digital screen media (Oudshoorn & Pinch 2003:1-14). ‘Decentering the subject’ is not limited to the spectatorship of screen media, it is extensively theorised in the spectatorship of contemporary art, found in numerous postmodern interpretations of spectatorship including those relating to semiotic models, and many deconstructionist and critical approaches to understanding the visual world; challenging the modernist notions of Cartesian rationalism (Kando 1996). Stuart Hall (1973), John Fiske and John Hartley (2003:1-20) and David Morley (1993) have argued for the active spectatorship of visual culture (which includes but is not limited to screen media). Thus the notion of spectatorship is much wider than the spectatorship of screen media and it is entrenched in and often struggling against aesthetic notions of the Cartesian subject.

Throughout this article reference is made to screen-based media or screen media, as well as spectatorship related to these categories, which are to be understood as including projected screen media, analogue or broadcast screen media such as television, and digital screen media of many kinds, such as digital televisions, computer displays and mobile phones, and the newer touch screen phones and ‘tablets’. Often spectatorship of screen media is seen as participatory, or active, implying agency and even authorial aspects. In this article this is implied when the words participatory or active are used. Passive spectatorship refers to a model where the viewer receives fixed and manufactured meaning, such as the Cartesian position implies.

Contrary to some of the positions I have mentioned above, which advocate active spectatorship of screen media, I would like to argue here that spectatorship is not as emancipated as it would seem in the context of various ‘new media’, and that many of the points made by Benjamin and Adorno remain more valid than they are generally thought to be, although these authors were not writing about digital screen media. Spectatorship seems to be less about the spectator actively making meaning, than him or her being sensually overwhelmed and distracted, although these devices allow him or her to feel active. A dialectical approach, such as the one followed by Kracauer and later Adorno, allows one to think of screen media spectatorship as potentially uncanny. While the concept of the uncanny is usually linked with new (strange) technologies of looking, such as Benjamin, according to Miriam Hansen (1987:179-224), Hansen and Tom Gunning (2004:36-60) do, or with the content of screen media, such as horror films (Allen 1993:21-48; Mitchell 2005:55), I want to argue that aspects of screen spectatorship as practice may be seen as uncanny. A popularised fear of screen media is that they dehumanise spectators (Williams 1988:381-394), or turn them into ‘zombies’.2 Even though digital media appear to refute that fear and allow for an overall spectatorship that is more participatory I aim to show that the result is often the dialectical opposite, which is passive or zombie-like spectatorship.
The zombie is an uncanny motif and as such is useful for explaining how a viewer performs spectatorship. Such a zombie is not based on African voodoo or Santeria, but on popular screen culture, beginning with George Romero’s (1968) films. The motif is currently very popular in films and television series, such as *The walking dead* (Darabont 2010), and other media including phone applications and the like. This article is not an account of the horror genre, but I apply the zombie as a metaphor, to spectatorship of screen media in general. Ironically, screen spectators may often find themselves looking at content on screens that are about zombies in the horror genre, such as those examples mentioned above. This makes for an interesting parody of their situation in those cases, but this article is not about those cases either. The argument is rather focused on the passivity of spectatorship of screen media. Despite the fact that there are aspects of spectatorship that appear active, as a zombie appears alive or even human, spectatorship seems to remain a set of automatic and ‘programmed’ reactions.

Although I have mentioned the uncanny above, this aspect of spectatorship is only revealed in the moment the spectator sees himself as passive, notices he is passive, and becomes conscious of his passivity. Such a moment is not conceived of as part of spectatorship, and it only occurs by mistake. In this moment of spectatorship (or the interruption or rupture thereof) there is repulsion from one’s physical body, from the programmed brain which seems not to belong to oneself, from the screen as an object, and from the passive body as an object. In order to avoid this confrontation with oneself behaving like a zombie one needs to be distracted from it. Cinemas (and other screens) create the conditions necessary to avoid this moment. The irony is that these conditions such as darkness, sitting still, looking and listening rather than moving, the suspension of disbelief and so forth, in turn enhance a more passive mode of spectatorship. These conditions are therefore hidden by other effects, such as affective spectator response brought on by extreme sensual stimulation (Gunning [2004:862-876] calls this ‘curiositas’), and interactive interfaces, allowing for choices in spectatorship. The viewer is not encouraged to consciously consider their effects as there is a lack of contemplative distance between the spectator and the screen (Virilio 1997:29-32). Many films and television series even go so far as to deconstruct the notion of authorship, revealing plot structure, making editing visible, or supplementing the film with websites, blogs, and even mobile phone applications (Daly 2010:81-98). These rather postmodern devices (Kando 1996) simulate spectator participation to an extent, allowing the spectator to feel empowered, but I would like to argue that these devices often result in a more passive mode of spectatorship.

**Figure 1**: Screen shot from *Night of the living dead*, directed by G Romero. 1968. (Wikipedia 2013).
Which screens?

Screen media are diverse and as Andrew Darley (2000:188) points out there are distinct differences between the kinds of spectatorship they engender. What I aim to investigate here are the things that they have in common, namely the passive aspects of spectatorship. Cinema or film screens, which are projected, as well as analogue television screens, and the current proliferation of digital screens all engender a spectatorship which appears in some aspects more participatory than passive, but which I argue, conceal the fact that the spectator is expected to behave in very specific ways, quite automatically and distractedly, within the limitations of the medium or the context of the content represented.

The argument here is not one which seeks to individually discuss each of the media mentioned before. Nellie Oudshoorn and Trevor Pinch (2003) begin to do so, and Friedrich Kittler (2012) writes about the evolution of what he calls ‘optical media’, and the power relationships they facilitate, create or are influenced by. This paper does not consist of such a detailed analysis, but I rather focus on the nature of seemingly participatory spectatorship which applies in part to most screen media. Many media reference each other in their appearance and content. Kittler (2012) and Anne Friedberg (2004:914-926) both argue that the content of each screen medium is really another medium, referring to Marshall McLuhan’s ‘the medium is the message’. Lev Manovich (2001) also discusses digital screen media as referencing film, and film referencing theatre. In this manner it has been argued that television, and digital screens, reference the projected screens of cinema, and to my mind the spectatorship it engenders follows suit.

Felicity Colman (2009:1-3) writes about the cinematic condition in society which shapes experience and forms of knowledge. She applies this condition to many technological forms that are screen media, such as mentioned above. While one cannot generalise a condition of spectatorship to all of these screens, as I have said, it is important to note that there is a contemporary ‘screen-ness’ even in representations that are not displayed on screens. Paul Virilio (1997:45) writes about this condition as related to kinematic energy; or image energy. He says that images transmitted through electro-magnetic means have altered reception of both analogue and digital media. For him digital screen media have changed the conditions of perception as a whole. In concurrence with this my understanding of spectatorship of screen media is that it is influenced by and influences non-screen based media in turn, and that it exists as a condition of perception which is related to passive spectatorship.

A dialectical approach

As mentioned much has been made in the study of visual culture, aesthetics and new media studies, as well as in postmodern theory, of authorial autonomy, spectatorship and a move towards interpreting
spectatorship as a role imbued with some agency. Oudshoorn and Pinch (2003:1-28) discuss how one needs to see spectatorship (or users) as neither fully active nor passive, but along a continuum between these two positions. Such an argument does not understand spectatorship of screens as a contemporary ‘condition’, and fails to interrogate the simulated character of spectatorship. While there undoubtedly appears to be more agency in interacting with screens than Kracauer, Benjamin and Adorno foresaw, this spectatorship does not seem to be founded upon agency, but upon the simulation of agency. The closest model for understanding how this works, is to apply Jean Baudrillard’s (1984) theory of the simulacrum. His theory is often applied to the content of screen media, to the medium itself, and here, to the spectatorship it demands. This spectatorship is an act that is itself simulated, it is lodged in repetition and programmed responses, not in authenticity (Benjamin 2004).

Adorno and Horkheimer’s (2003:31-41) well-known argument around the dialectic of the Enlightenment is that the Enlightenment was thought to lead to the liberation of people from the so-called enslavement of mythological ignorance; the enchanted world of nature and religion. Instead, the thinking of the Enlightenment created a ‘second nature’, an administered world, which enslaved people anew to their own reason and knowledge of the world. I apply this manner of argument to spectatorship of screen media, in that spectatorship aims to be participatory but really succeeds in becoming more passive; it is a dialectical relationship, and not one which occurs along a continuum of development towards either more or less passivity or participation. While I am not arguing that spectators are ignorant dupes (Allen 1993:21), mindlessly absorbing ideological content they are given, or mistaking reality on screen for reality itself, this is mostly because spectatorship conceals its true dynamic and simulates agency.

The uncanny

Before discussing how participatory spectatorship may be simulated in screen media it is useful to briefly clarify my interpretation of the uncanny. Steven Johnson (1997:30) writes that screens are so much a part of contemporary life that to question their legitimacy would be to question the laws of physics. Screens are an inevitable part of contemporary existence. This familiarity is interesting in the context of the unheimliche as Freud (1955:1-4) discusses it. He theorises the uncanny as something familiar, which becomes unfamiliar. His discussion of the notion centres upon the word heimlich, which refers to all that is homely, familiar, and comforting. This environment also, strangely, has connotations of things that are private, secret or hidden, and should not come to light. These things could be shameful or even abject. As such the word heimlich has connotations which refer to things that are familiar and comfortable – but also things that are contrary or dialectical to that, strange and monstrous – and should be kept hidden. Heimlich and unheimlich are thus similar in meaning.
The uncanny is the unfamiliar and strange lurking within the familiar and banal. One could argue that the familiar becomes uncanny because in its familiarity it was transparent or invisible. Only when it appears as legible does it appear uncanny or strange. Examples of this include things that are inanimate that seem to be alive, or things that are alive but seem dead, such as zombies; dead human bodies that behave as if alive. Screen spectatorship is a familiar activity. It is so familiar that spectators easily react automatically towards screens (Introna & Ilharco 2006:57-76). One knows that they are for looking at and one is used to expecting specific information from specific screens. One is not overly aware of performing this recognition and the behaviour it calls for – but one may enter into spectatorship without second thought. Only when spectatorship becomes ‘strange’ does one see its uncanny aspect – that one is not the interactive, engaged and discerning spectators one thinks, but rather resembles a passive zombie.

Are zombies uncanny? Yes, in short, they were mentioned by Freud (1955:13) as the return of the dead, and also occur in the horror film and television genres as such (Allen 1993; Mitchell 2005:55). Because a zombie used to be a human being; it used to be one’s neighbour, mother or even eventually oneself, it is the familiar that has become monstrous and strange. As such one could argue that all things familiar (heimlich), contain the potential to become unheimlich, as Freud explains. To my thinking it is this familiarity spectators have with screen media that allows them to slip into spectatorship so easily, and without a thought. A rupture needs to take place in this familiarity, and the seamlessness between the illusion on screen and lived reality off screen. Only such a rupture may make the spectator aware of his behaviour as un-familiar, not normal but strange, and indeed even uncanny. How this rupture may take place is discussed in the next section.

‘Curiositas’ and the collapse of contemplative distance

Gunning (2004:862-870) writes about film in the late nineteenth century, such as the screening of Lumière’s Arrival of a train at the station. He investigates the popular notion that people reacted as if a real train was arriving in the cinema, coming to life from out of the screen. He argues that this is not in fact naivété that underpinned spectator response but rather there was a climate of awe and astonishment around new technologies. As such what probably caused spectators to react in this manner was their astonishment at the movement of the image. He argues that in the nineteenth century technologies of representation catered to an appetite for astonishment, which allowed spectators to be enthralled by films that had little narrative depth or meaning. He applies the theory of ‘curiositas’, written about by Augustine in the fifth century (Gunning 2004:871). This ‘lust of the eyes’ draws the spectator towards things that are not necessarily beautiful, but which might be fascinating, even morbidly, such as a depiction of a corpse. This is a lust for seeing for its own sake. Gunning calls this the ‘aesthetic of attractions’, and argues that early short films were technically dazzling spectacles of little meaning or depth of engagement. He posits them
as engendering a spectatorship completely opposed to the modern notions of artistic reception, which relied on detached contemplation (such as the Cartesian model formulates). This theory roughly correlates with Benjamin’s (2004:797-798) theory of aura and its destruction in reproducible media such as film, which according to Benjamin were produced for ‘exhibition value’, to be viewed en masse, rather than to be contemplated.

Many contemporary films could be argued to employ this appeal to the spectators’ lust for spectacle. Special effects and post-production, IMAX theatres and 3D cinema are but a few examples. Although I cannot argue that all screen media are merely reliant upon an aesthetic of attractions, this aesthetic seems to be enabled by ‘new media’. The instantaneous and overwhelming thrill often in turn allows the historical and contemporary spectator to feel a very heightened response, bringing him closer to the ‘action’. Gunning (2004:873) argues that the need for heightened reactions was a result of the overwhelming nature of modern urban life in nineteenth century society. Gunning cites Kracauer (2004:873) as writing about modern loss of fulfilling experience. Kracauer (1987:91-96) discusses 1920s picture palaces (film houses or cinemas) as displaying fragments of sense impressions, snip-
pets of spectacle to be consumed. Kracauer (1987) writes about this manner of film spectatorship as one of distraction, and this is later developed by Benjamin (2006:800-811) in his discussion of the loss of the aura of authenticity in film representation.

Film, television and other screens also anticipate the viewer’s reactions. This happens through genre, cinematography, direction, and programming, whether of software, interface or content. In the case of film, for example, the text is composed to elicit certain responses from the viewer. The viewer in turn feels his responses to be unique and genuine, although in truth, they only feel authentic. Film as medium is constructed to elicit or create affective responses in viewers (Tarkovsky cited by Grau 2003:153). In this manner film predicts and even constructs audience response. Specific and regulated response is required in order for this mass medium to be successful (Manovich 2006); spectators should laugh at comedic films, and feel fear in horror films.

Spectatorship of film furthermore engenders a relationship to its illusionism which Richard Allen (1993:40-42) terms ‘projective illusion’. This form of illusion entails that the spectator projects himself into the ‘world’ on the screen. The device allows the viewer to feel as if he or she is genuinely interacting with the screen. It corresponds to the suspension of disbelief – but also amounts to the suspension of reality outside the screen. This means that parts of physical reality are consciously ignored in order for the viewer to participate in the projective illusion on screen. It is this device which happens in a distracted manner, automatically. Film does not require the viewer to ponder it. As the image is continuously changing the viewer has no time to contemplate individual images or indeed the act of spectatorship itself. The viewer’s thoughts are continuously directed by the visual input. Manovich (2006) also discusses how film allows large groups of spectators to share the same ‘thoughts’, as depicted in the films they are collectively seeing as audiences. Kafka (cited by Virilio 1997: 91) says that watching a film is like pulling a uniform over one’s eyes. It is lack of awareness of this process which allows spectatorship of contemporary screens to seem ‘new’ and active, compared to spectatorship of older screen media such as early film.

Considering the metaphor of the zombie for contemporary screen spectatorship one may argue that the ‘curiositas’ of the aesthetic of attractions is comparable to the lust zombies have for living human flesh. Zombies automatically devour all living beings they stumble upon. The automatic consumption of screened images may be compared to this bloodlust which satisfies no real hunger in a zombie. One may find oneself watching a screen even though one has no specific need to, it happens without conscious consideration. Adorno and Horkheimer (2003:37-39) argue that in the cycle of consumption of the aestheticised world through mass media, audience response is automated and desire is simulated – it is a parody. They refer to canned laughter as an example of the false satisfaction promised by the medium in the genre of the television sitcom. One could understand this through the dynamic of the gaze – pivoting around the power and desire experienced by the spectator in looking through the manufactured gaze of the film (Mulvey 2004:833-844). The desire
is never met by the representation on screen, and as Adorno and Horkheimer (2003:37-39) say, the spectator must be satisfied with ‘the menu’.

Adorno and Horkheimer (2003) also argue that film encourages the viewer to see the world outside of the film representation as a continuation of what is depicted on screen. The more technically convincing the reality on screen is, the more this is achieved. Screen media are constantly improving the credibility of representational quality, approaching and even transcending the credibility of reality. An example of this is High Definition television and CGI effects, allowing the representation to be seen even more closely than the naked human eye could perceive in life. Paul Virilio (1997:50) writes about visual technologies altering and biologically invading the human eye, seeking to eradicate the distance between the eye and the screen. He writes about lasers being projected into the corneas of pilots’ eyes, and laser technology correcting errors in eyesight. Benjamin (2004:795) writes about the urge of contemporary (then 1930s) audiences to bring things closer. The aesthetic of attractions feeds this urge, which persists in spectatorship of contemporary screen media.

Virilio (1997:22-32) writes about the contemporary collapse of distance between spectator and representation beyond what it is to aesthetic distance, as a conditions affecting perception as a whole. He uses the metaphor of a sky diver, free falling towards earth. He refers to the account of one such a sky diver, who recounts his visual impressions of earth as it appears to rush up to meet him during the free fall. At one point, the diver says that the horizon appears to rush upwards so fast that it splits apart, and perspectival distance makes no more sense, but rather disintegrates into distinct impressions rushing past. For Virilio (1997:44-45) the advent of the transmission of representations via electro-magnetic media marks a new paradigm of perception, where Alberti’s window and Renaissance perspective no longer apply. He argues that the instant transmission of visual representation allows for distance to collapse in effect, as distance from an object no longer affects vision. Via television for example, one may see a live (‘real time’) representation of something on the other side of the globe. As such, distance has radically shrunk, and vision ‘travels’ at the speed of light. This extreme collapse of distance is implicit not only in screen media or digital screen media, but has affected perception to the point that distance is always potentially instantaneously traversable. It makes sense that contemplative distance, as it belongs to the Cartesian subject, thus also collapses in contemporary spectatorship. The concern that arises from this is whether a spectator confronted with such a complete inundation, or swallowing of distance from the represented world, may be thought of as active or meaningfully engaging with representation. Virilio (1997:22-34) thinks of this spectator as the ultimate sedentary type, who controls his world as if he is disabled, without physically moving. If Benjamin’s theory of the collapse of distance is applied here, it would seem that such a spectator could only be more distracted, as the screen moves from ‘in situ’ to ‘in vivo’, coming closer and closer until it enters the body (Virilio 1997:92). For Virilio (1997) vision has become so ubiquitous that he says it is industrialised, and he also uses the term Gunning uses, ‘eye lust’. For Virilio vision is not a choice, but it is also not something one is forced to experience, it happens automatically.
Rupturing spectatorship

Like nineteenth-century cinema audiences, contemporary spectators of screen media expect to be dazzled. Gunning (2004:36-48) also writes about old technologies seeking to make themselves new or uncanny in order to break the cycle of them becoming ‘second nature’ and ordinary. The modern association of technology with things that are novel or innovative, inevitably ends in these technologies becoming banal. The concept of ‘second nature’ is indicative of how technologies become ‘normal’, and also of how they form part of the ‘administered world’, or culture industry as theorised by the Frankfurt School (Adorno & Horkheimer 2003). According to Gunning (2004:42) all modern technologies become familiar at some point, and astonishment subsides into an automatic relationship with these technologies. Technologies may challenge this familiarisation, and become strange again. Mitchell (2005:26) refers to Bruno Latour who says that modern technologies (such as screen media in my interpretation) have not liberated us from mystery; rather, they are complex new life forms full of mystery, ‘they have made communication seem more transparent, interactive and rational’, but they have also ensured that we are ensnared in their matrices and networks of images, objects, identities and rituals. Spectatorship is more zombie-like now than it was thought to be even for early film’s audiences, because contemporary spectators feel themselves as having overcome that earlier passive spectatorship. This false sense of agency is thanks to postmodern ideas around spectatorship, but which are to my mind not fully realised in contemporary screen media spectatorship.

How does the uncanny aspect of spectatorship then come to light? If it does take place at all it may happen through a rupture in spectatorship as I have mentioned. There are times when screens manifest as objects rather than as screens. In touch screens such as tablets this may happen more easily in the course of interaction. When one notices the surface of the screen itself it becomes a strange object. In interacting with a tablet its own ‘objectness’ interferes with its illusionistic functions. As its surface manifests as tangible it becomes a film dividing two realities, as a window divides two spaces. The window is not supposed to be visible as a barrier, but rather a transparent opening ‘into’ representation. If the screen is covered in fingerprint smears for example, the spectator may experience a sense of being trapped by this film, as a bird that flies into a window.

In order to prevent a rupture in spectatorship screens are always attempting to hide themselves as objects. They become flatter, more transparent, and frameless. Their surfaces have even become integrated with key pads in touch screen phones and tablets. Screens also become ‘visible’ when they do not function correctly. Heidegger (cited by Gunning 2004:45-46) made the same argument with reference to tools as technologies that hide themselves. When a phone malfunctions it becomes a useless object, and this is what Gunning refers to as uncanny. I take his argument further, for in that moment not only the phone, but also the user, become strangely useless. The spectator is performing pointless motions of spectatorship, or is attempting to. Any screen is potentially doing this with any
spectator or user. It is possible to extend the argument to spectatorship as a whole. The moment of malfunction, or any moment which interrupts spectatorship, when the lights are switched on in the cinema, or when an advertisement interrupts a television broadcast, ruptures the distraction brought about by spectatorship of screen media, and its dialectical aspect may be revealed. Supposed activity may then reveal itself as passivity. Perhaps the physical body of the spectator itself encroaches upon so-called participative spectatorship, because the body is often (though not always) required to be ignored or to behave passively or repetitively. I am not implying here that interruption in spectatorship can make it more active, but that ‘rupture’ reveals spectatorship as uncanny, rather than ‘natural’.

Interactivity

Kristen Daly (2010:81-95) argues that contemporary cinema allows the spectator to play a more active role in the construction of meaning from film than when the medium was first theorised by Kracauer and Benjamin. She asserts that film narrative for example, is deconstructed in such a manner that in contemporary film much of the narrative meaning is (re) constructed by reference to external sources such as websites, DVDs, music, other films and so forth. Her argument is that this allows the spectator of film to be active - an author of sorts, rather than a passive viewer. I disagree with her fundamentally, since it is the simulated aspect of the interaction with the screen medium itself, as well as the construction of the film content in editing and directing, which results in the passive spectator, regardless of the number of platforms over which this is distributed. While making meaning by using external references seems interactive, it is a formulaic simulating of interactivity. The viewer cannot but obey the cues of the medium, regardless of the number of screens encompassed.

Daly (2010:82) expands on her argument by referring to the ideas of David Rodowick saying that contemporary spectators of digital electronic media are no longer passive viewers, but alternate between reading, looking and immersive viewing. These are, according to him, overlapping ways of interacting with media, and he asserts that digital users have been trained by their dealings with digital media to interact with, and participate in all that they consume. As I have mentioned previously, I agree that screen media spectatorship has altered the manner in which spectators consume other representational media which are not screen-based. Daly (2010:81-98) goes on to interpret Rodowick and Thomas Elsaesser’s ideas around the notion of game play as spectatorship of digital media. Elsaesser writes about a ‘new’ form of cinema which allows the spectator more interactivity, based on play and the construction of non-obvious relationships between things. Daly argues that narrative is now waning in favour of a form of cinema where navigation, inter-textual links and ‘figuring out the rules of the game’ are more important than a narrative structure. She calls this form of the medium ‘Cinema 3.0’ (Daly 2010:81).
Part of this new cinematic condition (to apply Colman’s terminology), are seemingly postmodern devices (Kando 1996) such as the notion of re-mix, intertextuality, and things being left ‘unfinished’. Daly writes about the spectator as participant in a community of ‘fans’, often forming their own groups and online discussion groups or blogs around the films and television series they are engaged in. *The walking dead* (Darabont 2010), a series based on a post-apocalyptic America brought about by the outbreak of a zombie virus, is a good example of how this works. While I reiterate that this paper is not a case study about the series and its depiction of the zombie motif, it serves as a relevant example of the form of spectatorship Daly refers to.

The series has been airing on the American channel AMC. Several factors distinguish the spectatorship it engenders from television series prior to the advent of digital media. The series is supplemented by a large and very engaging website. The site provides many things for ‘fans’ to engage with; press releases, interviews with the actors from the series, and importantly, many high definition photographs from the shooting of the series. Special effects make-up is revealed and aspects of the plot are
discussed. There are also ‘trailers’ for upcoming seasons and ‘teasers’ about episodes. Spectators may download high definition wallpapers for computer or mobile phone as well. With such a myriad activities and modes of engagement, as well as the revelation of some of the construction of the series (such as behind-the-scenes photographs and interviews), it seems that Daly’s argument is perfectly applicable, although I question it.

There is certainly more expected of this spectator, having to make intertextual links, finish parts of the narrative for himself (or herself), and create his own version of the future plot to an extent. Spectators also get ‘closer’ to the series than ever before, being able to download photographs, and have them as wallpapers on their computers and phones. An aspect that I did not mention above, which complicates spectatorship even more is the phenomenon of downloading films and television series from torrent websites. This allows fans to download and watch series in succession, for example, without the weekly delay of television broadcasting. This manner of engaging with media is illegal, but it is a reality, and adds another level of ‘agency’ to screen spectatorship.

While I do not disagree that the strategies employed by television producers and by spectators themselves has broadened the range of spectatorial modes for digital screen media, and by default even analogue or projected screen media, there are aspects to this argument that are of concern. Darley (2000:156-173) writes about the spectatorship engendered by computer games, as a form of screen-based spectatorship. He discusses the notion of interactivity as the spectator having agency in affecting or being affected by what occurs in the representation on screen. He argues that screen media spectatorship is always dependent upon the parameters of the content. This is pre-programmed as a limited set of options available to the user, which translate differently across media platforms. Films are limited in that the spectator has no control over playback, for example. The film cannot be paused at any point. Television allows the spectator some control over the lighting in the space, the volume of the set and so forth. One may also change the channel, but one cannot watch episodes on demand. Computer games offer many more inputs, but always subject the user to ‘rules’ or limitations of the game. No matter how interactive the medium appears, it remains subject to a set of programmed limitations. According to Darley (and I have been making a similar argument above), these limitations are disguised by what he terms vicarious ‘kinaesthesia’ (Darley 2000:155-157). The viewer feels sensually overwhelmed and involved, and as such is unaware of the limitations he accepts as part of spectatorship. I have discussed ‘curiositas’ or eye lust earlier, which may be compared with Darley’s argument using ‘kinesthesia’ here.

While many contemporary screen media representations strive to heighten the sensuality of the encounter with the spectator, through higher definition of the image on screen, super slow motion photography, simultaneous camera angles and so forth, this does not entail semantic intensification. In game play on digital interfaces, interactivity does not entail in-depth involvement in the game play either, but rather an expansion of superficial involvement, which echoes the aesthetic of attractions. For Darley (2000:167-168), who also attempts to write about more than one screen
medium, all these media have in common that they seek to provide direct visual and corporeal stimulation. Visual treatments of digital images have become rife. It is possible to apply filters and effects even to photographs taken on smart phones through applications like *Instagram* and *Hipstamatic*. These gradings or filters are also applied to television series and films, and any digital images. This reinforces Darley’s notion that content is often less important and, little interpretation or semantic resonance takes place. Spectatorship is less an activity of hermeneutic meaning making, than one of a sensual stimulation and distraction.

One may return to Benjamin’s (2004:795) notion of film allowing audiences to bring the world closer through representation, collapsing the distance engendered by the spectatorship of the Cartesian position, which required the viewer to contemplate what he saw. The interactive spectator thus does everything but contemplate, he or she is far too busy being distracted by all the options offered. Although the spectator may now be expected to perform roles of authorship, all of these are programmed, in turn ‘programming’ spectatorship.

The programmed aspect of media also constitutes the simulated aspect, since media conceal that aspect of themselves from spectators. Parts of the programming may be revealed, such as mentioned above in the example of behind-the-scenes makeup shots of actors in the series *The walking dead*. This is a foil, however, for far more remains concealed, especially regarding the process of spectatorship. The existence of the website that accompanies this television series predicts that viewers will visit the website, and so ‘expand’ their engagement with the series in a manner directed by the medium. Elseasser (cited by Daly 2010:98) warns that expansion across platforms often serves as a far broader base from which to market commercial offerings such as television series, rather than developing a more ‘active’ spectator.

**Conclusion**

I have argued above that digital media, and by extension screen media of different kinds are often thought of as engendering a particular form of spectatorship which is active and lends some agency to the spectator. Many theorists draw links between digital media and older screen media such as projected film, such as Virilio, Daly and Darley. For these authors it seems that spectatorship has changed from the time of nineteenth century cinema. My argument above has been that spectatorship and perception, have indeed been altered by a cinematic condition in society (Colman 2009:1-2). This condition is not as liberating as it seems to be however, for spectatorship remains rather programmed and passive in its relation to meaning making, and in this way is not so different to historical cinema spectatorship. The contemporary spectator is overwhelmed and stimulated by screen media, and expects to be so, leading to a distracted form of spectatorship, rather than a sense of agency. This distraction is exacerbated by the extreme collapse of distance between the spectator and the screen in the broadcasting and instantaneous nature of digital screen media (Virilio 1997).
While a spectator of contemporary screen media may feel sensually stimulated, and challenged to make some links of his or her own between various screen platforms, he or she has no space or time to contemplate the performance of spectatorship. As such, the Cartesian position of spectatorship is subverted, but it does not result in spectatorship which is more emancipated than that. Instead the spectator becomes zombie-like, performing automatic reactions and interactions with screen media. Although he is free (in a postmodern sense) from the constraints and flaws of the Cartesian position, he is only free to act within specific and predictable parameters.

The spectator is not only limited, but is also not aware of that fact. Only when the performance of spectatorship is interrupted may the spectator recognise himself as a stranger, in an uncanny moment. This moment is avoided at all cost by screen media, resulting in a dialectical play of spectatorship, where more ‘activity’ and interactivity leads to less active spectatorship, through more kinaesthetic stimulation, or ‘curiositas’ (Gunning 2004:871-872). As stated above, my argument does not write spectators off as victims of the media, but rather sees them as simulating an active spectatorship that is often assumed to be already established and flawless. In this manner spectators are zombie-like, in that their supposed interactive activities are to some extent as programmed and as reliant on sensual over stimulation as the antiquated ‘cinema of attractions’ was.

NOTES

1 The Cartesian position was formulated by thinkers such as Kant, as embodying Enlightenment thinking around the unified subject. The latter understands the world around him through employing logic and empirical knowledge. The Cartesian position also allows for art or in fact an object of any kind, to deliver a ‘truth’ or decisive message to the spectator, who is merely the recipient of the message, as created or formulated by an author in the vein of the Romantic genius. As such this view is often criticised in postmodern theory, for neglecting the viewpoints of those ‘Othered’ in modernity, such as women, or racial minorities. Tom Kando (1996:3-33) succinctly summarises the major movements addressing the problematic aspects of this position. Kevin Hart (2004) also summarises postmodern theory, explaining that the very nature of reality is questionable in postmodern contexts, since the rational Cartesian world is called into question. The Cartesian position sees the world in a totalitarian manner, as logical, knowable, and subject to human faculties. It relies on critical or contemplative distance, allowing the viewer or subject to objectively observe what he is looking at, through conscious contemplation.

2 Williams discusses the fear of technology as a fear of the dehumanisation of people in a technological world, with reference to the film Blade Runner, directed by Ridley Scott (1982). The film problematises the humanity or lack thereof of human characters in a fictional future, where humans are being manufactured through genetic manipulation. In the film the human characters lack vigour and indeed compassion, and appear quite zombie-like, going through life rather automatically.
Baudrillard (1984:2) writes extensively about the orders of simulacra. He argues that simulacra do not attempt to posit themselves as real, but call reality into question. Baudrillard’s orders of simulacra are summarised by Michael Camille (1996:39) as follows. Simulacra first reflect the ‘real’, then mask it, and finally substitute themselves for the real. When something is simulated it means that it bears no reference to an original it is a copy of, thus one may simulate being ill, without having an illness.

REFERENCES


Christian-Afrikaans women under construction: an analysis of gender ideology in *Finesse* and *Lééf*

Hettie Mans
Department for Education Innovation, University of Pretoria
hattie.mans@up.ac.za

Jenni Lauwrens
Lecturer in the Department of Visual Arts, University of Pretoria
jenni.lauwrens@up.ac.za

ABSTRACT

In this article we explore the nature of a particular kind of femininity, which we term ‘Christian-Afrikaans femininity’. It is our contention that the rise of glossy magazines over the last two decades, and specifically since the fall of apartheid in 1994, aimed particularly at Christian-Afrikaans women in South Africa, is linked to a so-called crisis of cultural identity facing (white) Afrikaans speaking people at this time. The aim of the semiotic and iconographical analysis undertaken here is to explore the nature of contemporary Christian-Afrikaans femininity as it is constructed in two South African, glossy, women’s magazines, namely, *Finesse* and *Lééf*. The construction of an ideal Christian-Afrikaans woman is considered here in terms of two closely related issues. On the one hand, we argue that the contemporary version of Christian-Afrikaans femininity is rooted in the social-political context of Afrikaner nationalism. On the other, we show that such myths are also rooted in the ideological construction of the ‘ideal’ woman in a Christian context, where patriarchal notions of gender continue to be perpetuated and maintained. It is, therefore, our aim to explore and expose the ways in which these two magazines naturalise a specifically white and normative construction of Christian-Afrikaans femininity thereby regulating and restricting the gender identities of modern Christian-Afrikaans women.

This research is derived from H Mans’ MA in Visual Studies, completed in 2013 under the supervision of J Lauwrens.

**Keywords:** Gender ideologies, Christian-Afrikaans femininity, popular myths of femininity, Afrikaner/Afrikaanses, biblical femininity, construction of identity.
Introduction

Ideal femininity is a concept that is never static but remains highly variable in terms of time, place and cultural context. Western art, for instance, has provided many versions of idealised femininity. In his book, *Feminine beauty*, Kenneth Clark (1980) examines this concept in art works dating from the second century before Christ to photographs of Marilyn Monroe. Based on his overview, there is no doubt that what is considered to be ideal femininity is culturally determined and not a given.

In a post-industrial, media saturated context, contemporary representations of ideal femininity no longer only circulate within the confines of the art gallery, but are now also to be found in the cinema, on television screens and in magazines, to name only a few examples. These are the sites in which ideas regarding how women should behave, look and what they may do are created, shaped, circulated and naturalised. More specifically, women’s magazines are a potent tool for the dissemination of gender ideologies by providing women (and men) with guidelines on the manner in which to perform (and understand) specifically sanctioned codes of gender (Bignell 1997; Ferguson 1983; McRobbie 1996, 2000; Shevelow 1989; Van Zoonen 1994; Viljoen & Viljoen 2005; Viljoen 2006; Viljoen 2008). For this reason, the study of women’s magazines provides much insight into both historical and contemporary constructions or versions of femininity. The purpose of this article is to explore two South African, Christian, Afrikaans, women’s magazines, namely *Finesse* and *Lééf*, in order to gain insight into the nature of a contemporary and specific version of femininity, as it is constructed in South African popular visual culture in the early twenty-first century.

Our argument therefore begins with a brief exploration of the ways in which women’s glossy magazines function as cultural texts that establish and maintain models of behaviour and appearance for their readers. We then investigate the reasons for the rise of glossy magazines aimed particularly at Christian-Afrikaans women in South Africa, by suggesting that a broader crisis of cultural identity facing (white) Afrikaans speaking people after the fall of Apartheid in 1994, as identified by Carel Boshoff (1992), Mads Vestergaard (2001) and Hermann Giliomee (2003; 2004a; 2004b), may have played a significant role in this phenomenon. The two Christian-Afrikaans, glossy, women’s magazines, *Finesse* and *Lééf*, are taken here as indicators of a particular kind of femininity which we term Christian-Afrikaans femininity.

In our analysis of the two magazines, we show poignant similarities between the traditional, biblical, Afrikaner feminine ideal as a historical construction and the version of Christian-Afrikaner femininity displayed on the pages of *Finesse* and *Lééf*. Characteristics such as piety, submissiveness, self-sacrifice and struggle – some of the mainstays of traditional representations of Afrikaner women in the discourse of Afrikaner nationalism (Gaitskell & Unterhalter 1989:60; Van der Watt 2009) – appear, for the most part, to be upheld in these magazines. In light of these historical roots, we investigate how contemporary Christian-Afrikaans women negotiate their identities within the complex visual
domain which restricts them, on the one hand, by offering them new versions of traditional femininity, and on the other, allows them to continuously reshape those ideals. It is our contention that, as with all mythical representations, Christian-Afrikaans femininity is constantly in a complex process of reconstruction and that critical scrutiny of this situation should never cease.

The approach used in this research is qualitative, speculative and exploratory. In other words, we neither attempt to reach objective, scientifically proven truths, nor do we suggest that constructions of femininity represented in Finesse and Lééf are the only or primary myths of Christian-Afrikaans femininity currently in circulation in the popular media. In addition, we acknowledge that there may be several overlaps between an Afrikaans feminine ideal and a Christian-Afrikaans feminine ideal as it is under investigation here. As such, we reject a positivist view on the interpretation of images and align our research with hermeneutic and phenomenological streams of thought.

The visual analyses are based on a mixed method approach, including iconography and semiotics. According to Theo Van Leeuwen (2001:92), these two visual methodologies ‘... ask the same two fundamental questions: the question of representation (what do images represent and how?) and the question of the “hidden meanings” of images (what ideas and values do the people, places and things represented in the images stand for?)’. There are, however, at the same time subtle differences between iconography and semiology, which Van Leeuwen (2001:92) clarifies as follows:

\[\ldots\] where Barthian visual semiotics studies only the image itself, and treats cultural meanings as a given currency which is shared by everyone who is at all acculturated to contemporary popular culture, and which can then be activated by the style and content of the image, iconography also pays attention to the context in which the image is produced and circulated, and to how and why cultural meanings and their visual expressions come about historically.

Following Van Leeuwen’s (2001:92) emphasis on the ways in which cultural contexts shape the making of meaning, it is imperative that the representations of a contemporary Christian-Afrikaans feminine ideal be analysed within broader political, historical and cultural terms, as well as in relation to other (visual) texts. As a starting point, therefore, the ways in which magazine discourse has contributed to the construction of idealised femininity in general is briefly outlined.

**Magazine discourse**

The contribution of women’s magazines to constructions of femininity is well documented. Three decades ago, Marjorie Ferguson (1983:1) noted the role played by magazines in reflecting and determining views on femininity by stating that:

\[\ldots\] alongside other social institutions such as the family, the school, the church and other media, [women’s magazines] contribute to the wider cultural processes which define the position of women in a given society at a given point in time. ... [T]hese journals help to shape both a woman’s view of herself, and society’s view of her.

---

*Image & Text* Issue 22, 2013 ISSN 1020 1497
Magazines are undoubtedly powerful ideological tools that form and define the world of a woman by depicting (and restricting) her role within it (McRobbie 2000:69). Furthermore, women’s magazines reflect feminine ideals according to local cultures and prevalent ideologies. Ferguson (1983:2) argues that:

[w]omen’s magazines ... tell women what to think and what to do about themselves, their lovers, husbands, parents, children, colleagues, neighbours and bosses. ... [H]ere is a potent formula indeed for steering female attitudes, behaviour and buying along a particular path of femininity ....

In South Africa, the study of magazine discourse is an emerging field, with one of the most valuable contributions in this regard being Louise Viljoen and Stella Viljoen’s (2005) analysis of ‘the cultural conceptualisation of femininity’ in two issues of the popular Afrikaans magazine, Huisgenoot (1953 and 2003). Stella Viljoen (2006:22) later noted a particular form of Afrikaner (nationalist) femininity as it was represented on the covers of Huisgenoot (from 1950-1959), identifying the Afrikaner woman as a homemaker and decorator and as a nurturing wife and mother. To our knowledge, as yet there is no analysis that specifically investigates representations of Christian-Afrikaans femininity in women’s magazines.

As Viljoen and Koenig-Visage (2011:2) argue, very specific ideas regarding gender ‘are communicated through the visual material promoting itself as “Christian” in the hegemonic sense’. For this reason, our analysis of the representation of women in two Christian-Afrikaans magazines from a feminist perspective seeks to uncover the nature and foundation of myths of femininity produced in these magazines and circulated to their readership.

As already stated, it would be impossible to argue convincingly that representations of Christian-Afrikaans femininity are altogether different from other constructions already established in the popular media. Rather, we acknowledge that the construction under investigation here taps into representations of women already circulating within global popular culture. For instance, familiar signs used to connote femininity – such as codes of physical beauty and body shape – permeate the pages of both magazines. We also recognise that our interpretation of a limited selection of images and text on the covers of the magazines and only some articles on the inside pages, is but one of the various possible interpretations of gender constructions currently circulating in Christian visual culture. At the risk of some broad generalisations, we do, however, want to suggest that a subtle but specific variation on contemporary myths of femininity appears in the magazines. Our argument is, therefore, that in Finesse and Lééf contemporary myths of femininity are combined with traditional stereotypes of women as set out in biblical narratives on the one hand, and with the ideological construction of women specifically as volksmoeders in the discourse of Afrikaner nationalism on the other.

Finesse, was first published in May 1998, four years after the fall of apartheid. Published by Carpe Diem Media, Finesse’s target audience is Afrikaans-speaking South African women. The May 2008
issue that has been selected for our study not only marked *Finesse*’s tenth birthday, but also celebrates Christian-Afrikaans femininity throughout its pages by centering on a theme of ‘ten most inspiring women’ as voted for by readers. In other words, this issue quite clearly indicates what contemporary Christian-Afrikaans readers find inspiring in women.

Aimed at a similar target audience, *Lééf* was launched in October 2005 by Media24. Apart from *Finesse* and *Lééf*, there are also currently a number of other Christian-Afrikaans magazines in South Africa, namely *Juig!*, *Lig* and *Intiem*. The reason for the sudden emergence of so many Christian-Afrikaans glossy magazines is perhaps rooted in the cultural identity crisis Afrikaanses are apparently experiencing (Boshoff 1992:5; Giliomee 2003; Vestergaard 2001). The democratic elections in 1994 brought many socio-political changes for all races in South Africa. Since the ruling National Party defined Afrikaner identity in the last fifty years before the fall of Apartheid (Vestergaard 2001:21), it seems that Afrikaanses were faced with a cultural identity crisis after 1994 (Boshoff 1992:5). According to Vestergaard (2001), Afrikaners were radically influenced by factors that stripped them of power after the fall of Apartheid. Factors that contributed to the cultural identity crisis that Afrikaanses apparently began experiencing include the fact that the Afrikaans language is no longer the dominant language of the State (Giliomee 2004:54), and that Afrikaans – as a language – has to find a place between ten other official languages (Vestergaard 2001:26).

In addition, according to Vestergaard (2001:22), freedom of religion poses a threat to the traditional Christian lifestyle of Afrikaners, and according to Viljoen (2008:319), affirmative action, which requires a re-evaluation of hegemonic relationships with regard not only to race, but also gender, has unsettled traditional Afrikaner patriarchal values.

Whilst other Afrikaans magazines, such as *Sarie* and *Huisgenoot* remain popular (Farquhar 2010) the existence of specifically Christian-Afrikaans magazines might also be a result of a backlash against the so-called ‘immoral’ lifestyle that many secular magazines portray. Angela McRobbie (1996:177) concurs that sex ‘more than ever before ... fills the space of the magazines’ pages ... in the 1990s’. A cursory glance through the magazine on the shelves of popular magazines outlets in South Africa reveals that, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the description is still apt. The emergence of *Finesse* and *Lééf* as well as other Christian magazines may indicate that, in the search for a new cultural identity, Afrikaanses are yearning for the familiarity of Christian principles and values, as portrayed in these magazines. The following statement published in *Juig!* (2009) is evidence of this attitude:

> Contemporary society has been destroyed by perverted morals and weak family values. This is mainly due to the influence of the media, such as the Internet, TV, radio, books and magazines, on our daily lives. Of course, we also have a powerless Church (which chooses to adapt to culture rather than changing for the good); that is why we see a need for a high-principled Biblical magazine in the Afrikaans market.
Keeping up appearances

The magazine covers: *Finesse* and *Lééf*

The *Finesse* and *Lééf* covers already advertise the particular Christian-Afrikaans feminine ideal that is constructed in its pages with pink and white dominating the *Finesse*-cover (Figure 1). Lacey (1998:38) argues that ‘[a]s a code, colour takes its cue from social codes’, suggesting that the reader interprets colour according to associations as set out by western conventions. According to Koller (2008:379), the traditional association of pink is ‘connected with femininity and its stereotypical features, such as softness and delicacy, with childhood and innocence’. The shocking pink on the *Finesse*-cover seems to blatantly celebrate femininity, especially in light of the magazine’s tenth birthday celebration, but may simultaneously be a celebration of ideal Christian-Afrikaans femininity. In explaining the association of white, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002:343) note that ‘[i]n China and other parts of East Asia white is the colour of mourning [while] in most of Europe it is the colour of purity, worn by the bride at her wedding’. According to western tradition, then, the reader may (subconsciously) associate the white on the *Finesse*-cover with innocence, and perhaps even a virginal, Christian-Afrikaans feminine ideal. As will be argued below, this contemporary feminine ideal seems to overlap with the ideal biblical woman who is pure (Geldenhuys 1954:169) and has integrity (Joubert & Smith 2010:18).

Similarly, the passive cover girls neatly correspond with what is perceived as attractive within the social codes already in operation in the twenty-first century. Admittedly, the presence of several cover girls instead of only one on the *Finesse* cover is unusual. Together they constitute the number ten, which on the one hand, obviously references *Finesse*‘s tenth birthday, but on the other also implies ‘top marks’ or perfection. The women, as representatives of a Christian-Afrikaans feminine ideal, must surely then embody perfection. Furthermore, the pursuit of perfection also characterises ideal biblical femininity where a woman is described as ‘a superwoman’ (Landman 2003:772), the ‘perfect woman’ (Geldenhuys 1954:163; Joubert & Smith 2010:17), or the ‘Proverbs 31-woman’ (Joubert & Smith 2010:17) which we consider in more detail in the following section.

![Figure 1: Front cover of *Finesse* (May 2008).](image-url)
Socio-political, cultural and religious contexts that shaped the values and attitudes of Afrikaner identity must be taken into account in understanding the construction of contemporary myths of Christian-Afrikaans femininity (Heaven, Le Roux, Simbayi & Stones 2000:67). Historically speaking, the Afrikaner’s cultural identity was embedded in nationalism (Boshoff 1992:10) which, in turn, stitched together the very fabric of Afrikaner language and religion (Heaven et al 2000:67). According to Vestergaard (2001:20-21), ‘Afrikaner identity was based on values of God-fearing Calvinism, structures of patriarchal authority ... , adherence to the traditions invented by the Nationalist movement, [and] conservative values such as the fundamental importance of the nuclear family and heterosexuality ... ’. In other words, Afrikaner identity, at least until the last decades of the twentieth century was predominantly based in a closely entangled connection between Afrikaner nationalism and Calvinist values.

Before 1994, (Christian) Afrikaner women were generally not influenced by international feminisms. This admittedly overly-simplistic generalisation is, however, supported by Christina Landman (1994:119) who argues that during apartheid ‘... an Afrikaans woman [had to] accept the religion of her father without question ...’ And this religion not only dictated very specific roles for the Christian-Afrikaner woman, but continues to do so for the modern Christian-Afrikaans woman. In the last few decades numerous (Afrikaans) authors have referred to Proverbs 31:10-31 as a useful foundation according to which Christian-Afrikaans women should model themselves. The main categories that Geldenhuys (1954:163-170), for instance, pinpoints in his interpretation of Proverbs 31 include character, role, appearance and religion:

- The character of the biblical feminine ideal is beautiful and pure. She has high moral values; she is sound, virtuous and chaste. She has integrity and is loyal, honest, dependable, trustworthy, noble, sincere, modest, honourable and dignified. She is helpful and sympathetic. She encourages others, she brings them peace and joy, and she is friendly. She is active, diligent and hardworking. She is intelligent, tranquil, calm and loving. She is a tower of strength and inspiration (in particular, for her husband). She brings comfort and is a quiet, dependable force.

- Her gender role prescribes that she needs to ‘help’ in providing for the needs of her family. She acts with deliberation and sensibility. Her life is one of never-ending diligence (without complaint). Her love is spontaneous.

- Her physical appearance is neat and attractive (irrespective of how busy she is).

- She is deeply religious. She seeks God in prayer and Bible study. She prays to Him and trusts Him.

When describing the expectations regarding the contemporary Christian-Afrikaans woman, former South African president, FW De Klerk (2007), also referred to Proverbs 31 in his speech on National Women’s Day. He stated that ‘[e]xcept for being virtuous and hardworking, the expectations for a
woman are compassion, nobleness, leadership, wisdom, love and guidance, to be without fear and to have courage for the future. … From biblical perspective, I find no difference between the “traditional” and the “modern” woman’ (De Klerk 2007). De Klerk continued by encouraging Christian-Afrikaans women to stay true to the biblical feminine ideal, as it has been constructed throughout Afrikaner cultural history.

Landman (2003:772) maintains that this ideology remains prevalent in Christian-Afrikaans discourse, with Proverbs 31 ‘... frequently referred to as the picture of the ideal woman. The more you read about Ideal Woman, the more you get the idea that she is, in today’s language, a super woman’. More than fifty years after Geldenhuys (1954) described the biblical feminine ideal as the best example of Christian-Afrikaner femininity, Joubert and Smith (2010) praise the same basic principles of the biblical feminine ideal. They too investigate Proverbs 31 in search of a definition of femininity, and identify her as the ‘Proverbs 31 woman’ (Joubert & Smith 2010:17). Joubert and Smith (2010:17-23) define the following categories in their in-depth interpretation of Proverbs 31: character, home-maker, mother and religion. They describe the Proverbs 31 woman as pure (of heart), honest, sincere, unselfish, supportive, subservient and selfless. In addition, she is apparently patient, meek, submissive and passive (Joubert & Smith 2010:17-18).

Cilliers’ (2003:96, 101) interpretation of the Proverbs 31 woman suggests that she is an ‘... ideal or noble woman, the almost perfect woman, … who is worthy of emulation’ adding that ‘Proverbs 31 takes her back to the days of Superwoman when the fashion prescribed that a woman should be a home-maker, a mother for her children, bring money in and still be seductive to her husband’.

It would appear that the biblical feminine ideal as set out in Proverbs 31 has long been used as the yardstick for Christian-Afrikaans ideal femininity. On our reading of Finesse and Lééf, despite the fact that feminist discourses have exposed normative patriarchal myths of femininity, the ideal held up to modern Christian-Afrikaans women in these magazines perpetuates the patriarchal, traditional and restrictive myths of femininity as defined in Proverbs 31. This fact is not only evident in the photographs and colours used on the cover of Finesse, as already pointed out, but also in the choice of text which literally defines a Christian-Afrikaans women as ‘married’, ‘stylish’ and an ‘angel’ (Finesse 2008). In other words, the ideal Christian-Afrikaans mother is neither single nor sexually liberated.8

Similar gender ideologies are to be found on the cover of Lééf. Through her body language and pose, the cover ‘girl’ exudes maternal tenderness appearing to give visual expression to Geldenhuys’ (1954:169) description of the biblical feminine ideal that ‘... despite her honesty and dignity, there is nothing hard and unsympathetic about her. … She has a wonderful talent to make people feel comfortable … with her wisdom, friendliness, and spontaneous love …’. In other words, the woman on the cover may be ‘read’ as being dignified, solemn, noble, neat and warm, all of which follow the rigid prescription of biblical femininity as outlined above.9
Similarly, the text on the Lééf cover (Figure 2) constructs a particular version of Christian-Afrikaans femininity by including the words ‘boys’, ‘mother’, ‘stylish’, ‘pray’ and ‘heart-food’ (Lééf 2008). These words immediately imply that, in a nutshell, an ideal Christian-Afrikaans woman is a deeply religious, stylish mother who shares her love by cooking. Once again, these characteristics overlap with the biblical feminine ideal as set out by Geldenhuys (1954) and Joubert and Smith (2010) and fix the gender identity of the ideal reader in the realm of the domestic sphere.

When investigating the covers of other women’s magazines (Figure 3) published in May 2008, it is clear that ideal Christian-Afrikaans femininity as it is modelled in Finesse and Lééf is distinctively different from other myths of femininity. Whereas the pose of the woman on the cover of Cosmopolitan, for example, reflects the visual representation of the quintessential destructive, self-assured and seductive woman that arose in visual culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Kitch 1999), the myth of the prim and proper Christian-Afrikaans woman suggests prudishness, innocence, purity and dignity. In other words, the Christian-Afrikaans woman contrasts starkly with the sensual, sexually liberal, feminine ideal provided on the Cosmopolitan cover, and the playfulness of Fair Lady’s feminine ideal. In addition, the proliferation of hearts, flowers, and butterflies on the pages of both Finesse and Lééf connote a specific kind of femininity, which may include ideas of innocence, purity, tenderness and ‘softness’, thereby not only referencing romantic ideas in fairy tale myths, but also framing women within the rigid parameters of the so-called ‘Proverbs 31 woman’.

Figure 2: Front cover of Lééf (May 2008).
Figure 3: Front covers of Lééf (2008); Cosmopolitan (Oosthuizen 2011); Finesse (2008); and Fair Lady (Larney 2011).
One of the main articles in *Finesse* is entitled ‘10 Most inspiring women’ (Figure 4) and provides the reader with specific directives on how to ensure that she becomes a fitting Christian-Afrikaans woman. Once again, the compositions, colours and attire, carefully chosen for the photographs of each ‘inspirational woman’ connote friendliness and style. The choice of their make-up (which is toned-down so as to appear ‘natural’), jewellery (not overbearing) and hairstyle (neat and fashionable) all contribute to such connotations.

The ‘inspirational’ theme of this issue of *Finesse* can be linked to the discourse of veneration and exaltation of the *volksmoeder* (mother of the nation) in many visual representations of the stereotypical Christian-Afrikaner woman that appeared in South African visual culture in the early twentieth century. Notable examples include the sculpture, *Woman and Children* at the Voortrekker Monument (1938) (Figure 5) and the National Women’s Monument (1913) (Figure 6) both of which portray the Afrikaner woman as a wife and mother with characteristics such as piety, submissiveness and self-sacrifice (Landman 1994; McClintock 1991:109).
More specifically, Liese van der Watt (2009:93) identifies a ‘volksmoeder discourse’ evident in the Voortrekker Tapestry (created between 1952 and 1960) which depicts scenes from the Great Trek of 1838. On display at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, the depictions of the women in the fifteen tapestry panels form, according to Van der Watt (2009:93), part of a larger nationalist project aimed at ‘venerating’ and ‘exalting’ the mothers of the Afrikaner nation. Always portrayed within the domestic realm, women are depicted in well-defined and structured familial relationships which create and reinforce the ‘overt harmony’ (Van der Watt 2009:96) of the Voortrekker family. At the same time, the gendering of space in the tapestries ‘offered an important way in which traditional patriarchal hierarchies within the Voortrekker, and by extension the Afrikaner family, could be reinforced’ (Van der Watt 2009:97).
Although such a line of arguing undoubtedly has its limits, it may not be too presumptuous to suggest that the ten ‘inspirational women’ which gloss the pages of *Finesse* subtly represent contemporary versions, if not of mothers of a nation, then surely of women after which Christian-Afrikaans women may (or should) model themselves. As Ferguson (1983:9) notes, ‘[r]eaders of women’s magazines are presented with examples of superwomen, an endless procession of successful, beautiful and inspirational role models to envy or emulate’. Although in this case the reader of *Finesse* is not given an ‘endless procession’ of role models, s/he is given ten that reflect most definitively the rigid patriarchal Christian-Afrikaans ideal. Van der Watt (2009:103) notes that the Voortrekker women, whose hardships were immense, were depicted throughout the panels as ‘... fresh, clean and completely tidy’. In this way, these idealised portrayals of the Voortrekker women as *volksmoeders* ‘idealised them as role models for Afrikaner women’ (Van der Watt 2009:103). In similar fashion, *Finesse*’s ‘10 most inspiring women’ prescribe a set of ideals toward which a modern Christian-Afrikaans woman ought to strive.

The way in which the models are posed in the photographs accompanying the article displays them with their heads slightly slanted. According to Goffman (1987:63) such a posture suggests submissiveness:

> [I]n head canting, height is reduced, contributing to a mere symbolization of submissiveness. The level of the head is lowered relative to that of others, including, indirectly, the viewer of the picture. The resulting configurations can be read as an acceptance of subordination, an expression of ingratiation, submissiveness, and appeasement.

Although submissiveness itself is not mentioned directly in Proverbs 31, this quality is no doubt a crucial ingredient of biblical femininity as viewed through the lens of patriarchy. For instance, although Joubert and Smith (2010:18 [emphasis added]) argue that ‘[n]o woman is any man’s floorcloth …’, they also state that ‘a woman that is honoured, respected and served by her husband, is eager to be reliable/dependable and is pleased to support him in his role as king, priest and prophet. She is unselfish and her subservient support for her husband makes him look good. … She is willing to sacrifice to accommodate her husband’s success’. Evidently, the myth of the subservient, submissive biblical feminine ideal is also a significant and unique characteristic of a modern Christian-Afrikaans feminine ideal.

**Tough enough**

The women featured in the article all describe a hardship which, with the help of their faith, had to be overcome, in order to become the ‘inspirational’ women they are today. In other words, what is emphasised in these articles is that these women are inspirational precisely because they have overcome some hardship in their lives. Thus, ‘triumph over hardship’, implicit in each story becomes a significant component of an imagined Christian-Afrikaans ideal woman. However, as McClintock (1991:109) points out, hardship and self-sacrifice have long been key ingredients of the Afrikaner woman. For example, ‘suffering, stoical and self-sacrificial’ (McClintock 1991:109) femininity are
enshrined in the National Women’s Monument (1913) (Figure 6) in Bloemfontein which commemorates the achievements and remembers the suffering of the Afrikaner women and children in the South African War (1899-1902). In the same way, Gaitskell and Unterhalter (1989:60) note that ‘after 1902, Afrikaner motherhood is exalted as saintly in suffering, admired for stoicism in victimisation, its strength an inspiration to the rest of the defeated nation. The emphasis is on nobility, passivity, virtuous nurturing and protection of children’. When viewed in this light, Finesse’s ‘ten most inspiring women’ are a potent reinvention of an earlier version of a specifically Afrikaner (and Christian) construction of women.

Nostalgia

Lééf adds another ingredient, namely nostalgia, to the myth of Christian-Afrikaans femininity. Throughout the publication, the codes that suggest a (better) bygone past include images suggesting the rural countryside, decor (such as a trousseau), handmade items and recipes that include traditional boere-food. Van Zyl (2008:132) argues that ‘[n]ostalgic recollection ... provides people with a sense of socio-historic continuity, allowing them time to come to terms with change and assimilate to their new conditions. Simultaneously, meaningful links to the past are made, allowing people to form their own sense of identity in a new era’. Considering the apparent cultural identity crisis that Afrikaanses are facing (Giliomee 2004b; Vestergaard 2001; Viljoen 2008), it is not surprising that nostalgia is a recurring trope in the construction of a Christian-Afrikaans feminine ideal in these magazines.

There are countless examples on the pages of both magazines that support the argument that the myth of contemporary Christian-Afrikaans femininity is a complex mix of patriarchal views of femininity and contemporary codes of normative femininity. On the one hand, a Christian-Afrikaans feminine ideal in the abovementioned analysis appears stylishly groomed according to contemporary secular standards. On the other, there are strong visual correlations between her current appearance and traditional definitions of Christian-Afrikaner femininity. Comparing the body posture of the constructed Christian-Afrikaans feminine ideal, typically with her head submissively canted in most instances in Finesse and Lééf, reveals that little has changed since the earlier versions of Christian-Afrikaans femininity were portrayed in the examples given above, except perhaps that she has (modestly) kept abreast with fashion.

Conclusion

In constructing a version of Christian-Afrikaans femininity on a mythical level, it cannot be denied that the representations offered in Finesse and Lééf are subtly shaped by codes of normative femininity already circulating in popular media. The construction of Christian-Afrikaans femininity in these magazines is, however, of a particular kind that cements it in two closely related issues.
On the one hand, we argued that the contemporary version of Christian-Afrikaans femininity is rooted in the social-political context of the rise of Afrikaner nationalism and the particular way in which it envisioned, imagined and imaged Afrikaner women. On the other, we showed that contemporary myths of Christian-Afrikaans femininity are rooted in the ideological construction of the ‘ideal’ woman in a Christian context, where patriarchal notions of gender are perpetuated and maintained with women continuing to be portrayed as subordinate to men. We conclude that *Finesse* and *Lééf* idealise the women displayed both on their covers and in their articles as role models for Christian-Afrikaans women, thereby regulating and restricting the gender identities of Christian-Afrikaans women.

Owing to limited space we have admittedly analysed only a very small selection of the photographs and articles that appear in the magazines. For the same reason, we have also not paid attention to the lack of photographs and articles showing black or lesbian women. Therefore, our analysis may seem reductive and limiting, but this was necessary in sustaining the argument we set out above. We do not assume that all readers accept and live out the visual representations given to them in the magazines. For, as Van Zoonen (1994:40) argues, ‘media audiences do not simply take in or reject media messages, but use them according to the logic of their own social, cultural and individual circumstances’. We do, however, suggest that the stereotypes presented in the magazines complicate the manner in which Christian-Afrikaans women negotiate their identities in the twenty-first century by restricting them to very specific normative gender roles.

As with its secular counterparts, the identities created in the pages of *Finesse* and *Lééf* magazines restricts Christian-Afrikaans women to a certain kind of normative ideal femininity. Although this kind of femininity can be pleasurable, it continues to encourage its readers to be submissive superwomen who differ only slightly from that propagated in Proverbs 31 as taken up by conservative (male) authorities in the Afrikaans community such as Geldenhuys (1954) and Joubert and Smith (2010). Evidently, the pious, submissive woman conjured up by this patriarchal framework has now simply been made more attractive to twenty-first century Christian-Afrikaans women by means of the artful techniques used by magazines such as layout, design, colour, fashion and make-up. The only difference in the construction of the supposedly ‘new’, liberated contemporary Christian-Afrikaans feminine ideal seems to be that it is merely a subtle, even disguised, portrayal of previous gender hierarchies. Thus, patriarchal assumptions about a women’s role in the public and private spheres as well as her various roles as wife, mother, and object of beauty are neatly repackaged in the guise of the pseudo-empowered twenty-first century woman.
NOTES

1. In the publications examined in this article there is only one representation of a black woman in each magazine. The actress, Shaleen Surtie-Richards, appears in Lééf and famous TV personality and former Miss South Africa, Jo-Ann Strauss, appears in Finesse. Two possible conclusions might be drawn from this. On the one hand, the Christian-Afrikaans feminine ideal constructed here is predominantly a white ideal. On the other, the magazines assume their readership to be predominantly white.

2. The May 2008 issues of both these magazines were chosen specifically because they mark a celebration of a particular kind of ideal femininity in the context of Mother’s Day. For instance, in Finesse, the main theme of ‘ten most inspiring women’ is an important component in the investigation of the current representation of an ideal Christian-Afrikaans woman, owing to the fact that the women on the cover were voted for by the readers of the magazine and then repackaged by the editorial board for consumption by the readers once again.

3. Owing to limited space, we are not able to explicitly draw such comparisons in this analysis and suggest that such an investigation would, no doubt, fall within the scope of another article. Suffice it to say that, throughout our argument, we endeavour to show our awareness of such overlaps.


5. Equally, we acknowledge that since images are polysemic, and contain multiple potential messages (Hall 1980:134; Lacey 1998:90-95; Van Zoonen 1994:40-42), myths of ideal Christian-Afrikaans femininity will be interpreted in different ways, depending on a reader’s own frame of reference.

6. Lééf, which is spelt with emphasis on the ‘ee’s, implies that the ideal reader of the magazine lives life to the fullest. Already in this title, the magazine seems to encourage its reader to strive toward living a deeper and more spiritual life with ‘heart and soul’ (Lééf 2008).

7. In the post-apartheid era the debate concerning precisely who is included in and who is excluded from the term “Afrikaner” is ongoing. In attempting to define “Afrikaner”, Giliomee (2003) merges culture and language, implying that an Afrikaner includes anyone who speaks Afrikaans. The issue is, however, more complex than this. Giliomee (2003:xix) explains that when it was first used in the eighteenth century, the term “Afrikaner” referred to whites and eventually ‘... had to vie with designations like burgher, Christian, Dutchmen and Boer’. Following Giliomee (2003), a distinction has been made in this article between the terms ‘Afrikaners’ and ‘Afrikaanses’ with the former referring to white Afrikaans speaking people in the pre-apartheid context – thus before 1994 – while the latter refers to all Afrikaans speaking people in the post-apartheid era irrespective of racial connotations.
8. Since heterosexual marriage with children is emphasised throughout these publications, a Christian-Afrikaans woman is apparently not homosexual. Clearly, although Christian-Afrikaans femininity is presented here as fashionable and trendy, it certainly holds on to notions of heterosexuality and patriarchy embedded in normative gender ideologies.

9. The cover girl on this issue is Penny Coelen-Rey who was crowned both Miss South Africa and Miss World in 1958.

10. Fairytale myths are often drawn upon in representations of Christian femininity. For example, in their visual analysis of the bookcover of Captivating: unveiling the mystery of a woman’s soul, Viljoen and Koenig-Visage (2011:5) argue that ‘most of the formal elements, as well as the constructed codes, on this cover … function to connect fairytale myths with feminine identity construction’. Some of the characteristics that are linked to Christian (fairytale) femininity include the idea that she is ‘identified with nature, beauty and the ephemeral’ (Viljoen & Koenig-Visage 2011:5-7) as well as feminine physical beauty, passiveness, decorativeness and the so-called ‘damsel-in-distress’. In addition, the fairytale myth connects a woman with the supernatural, the mysterious and the unknown.

11. The link between the construction of a specific gender identity for the Afrikaner woman and the repeated stress in these tapestries on Calvinist-Reformed doctrine as the crux of the family unit (made visible in the repeated images of the Bible) is an important one.

REFERENCES


Farquhar, J. 2010. The ABC consumer mag overview. The media online. [O]. Available:
tail&pid=257


http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a713711727#


http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713636289


Sublimation and reversibility: technologies of vision, the X-ray, and looking at paintings

James Sey

Research Associate, Research Centre, Visual Identities in Art and Design, Faculty of Fine Art, Design and Architecture, University of Johannesburg.

jsey@mweb.co.za

ABSTRACT

The first medical X-ray photograph was taken in 1895 by Wilhelm Röntgen. This was a time when such technological devices to measure and record previously unrecordable and little understood physical processes were proliferating. These technologies focused, with the notable exception of the work of EJ Marey, on visualisation, culminating in the dominance of cinema technologies in twentieth century culture. The use of X-rays in art has been largely limited to revealing layers of paint and other materials underneath the ostensible work, in order to aid the process of the restoration of paintings in gallery collections.

In some cases the X-ray process reveals a different image to the one apparent in an exhibited work, for example the painting Lake Garda (1921) by Maggie Laubser, obscures a self-portrait by the artist. The ability of the technology to reveal thus also raises the spectre of obfuscation – that is, of the aesthetic meaning of the work. The X-ray also thus reveals a temporal dimension to the works which perforce becomes part of their meaning. However, this temporality is not sequential and does not move inevitably forward. Is what we see when we look at the works the primary image, or can the obscured image recaptured by the machine come to replace the ‘finished’ work in terms of time, space and meaning? This technology of vision, in its palimpsestuous character and propensity to manipulate the sequential nature of time, problematises the link between vision and aesthetic meaning itself.

Keywords: X-Ray; sublimation; photography; memory; temporality; archive; human motion; reversibility.
PREAMBLE

This paper attempts, through a combination of an historical analysis, some critical theory and a psychoanalytic reading of culture and technology, to posit an argument about X-ray technology and art. In particular it argues that the various technologies of vision which arose in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially photography and film, fundamentally change how art is viewed and understood. At the same time, one of these technologies of vision, the X-ray, is anomalous in the way in which it enables a different understanding about viewing art; one which, I argue, relates to the psychological process of sublimation.

Introduction: the body and industrial technology

The first medical X-ray photograph was taken in 1895 by Wilhelm Röntgen, a picture of his wife’s hand. This was a time when such technological devices to measure and record previously unrecordable and little understood physical processes were proliferating. These technologies focused, with the notable exception of the work of EJ Marey, on visualisation, culminating in the dominance of cinema technologies in twentieth century culture.

At the time, a major reason for the technological explosion was the attempt to understand how the body worked in the conditions of massified industrial labour. Both science and national governments were exercised by efforts to get more productivity out of the body. An important inflection is given to this relationship between the human body and industrial technology in the apotheosis of productivism in Taylorist ergonomics and Fordism. FW Taylor, especially in the influential Principles of scientific management (1911), revolutionised industrial production in the early twentieth century, with the introduction of scientific task management and collective labour practices based on a rigid division between labour and management. As Canguilhem (1999) points out, it established, via Fordism and other proponents of industrial ergonomics, a mode of working life premised on the subjection of the body to the order of industrial machinery. As Canguilhem (1991:63) puts it, ‘with … Taylor … the human body was measured as if it functioned like a machine … [T]he realization that technologically superfluous movements were biologically necessary movements was the first stumbling block to be encountered by those who insisted on viewing the problem of the human-body-as-machine in exclusively technological terms.’

Canguilhem elegantly describes here the essence of the modernist order of industrial technology – that is, that human bodies must behave like machines, must identify with a machinic system. He also subtly poses the converse problem of the intransigence of the biological for the purposes of production and industrial work, and thus points to a key ambivalence in the relationship between human and machine.
The regime of identification with technology in the industrial order is perhaps necessary in terms of labour productivity, but it also imposes a fear of the prosthetic, dehumanising effects of technology which produces certain typical ‘pathological’ reactions, most typically a fear of work. In attempts to counter this ambivalent response, industrial systems and planning made attempts to continue social reformist practices made popular in the latter part of the Industrial Revolution. In one interesting such case, recounted by Mark Seltzer in his book *Serial killers* (1998), Henry Ford reveals a technofantasy which he saw as a major breakthrough in terms of rehabilitating the workforce of the USA after the devastation of the First World War. Ford (cited by Seltzer 1998:69) averred that ‘the production of the Model T required 7,882 distinct work operations, but … only twelve percent of these tasks … required “able-bodied men”. Of the remainder … “we found that 670 could be filled by legless men, 2,637 by one-legged men, two by armless men, 715 by one-armed men and ten by blind men”’.

Seltzer here succinctly specifies the characteristic ambivalence which lies deeply buried in the bedrock of contemporary technoculture - that regarding the nature of technological prosthesis. What he calls the ‘double-logic of prosthesis’ (Seltzer 1998:37) marks both the inseparability of human culture – and thus subjective identity – from the technologies which shape it, but also the attendant fear of human obsolescence and even destruction – often in the violent form of dismemberment here imagined by Ford – brought about by those same technologies.

Even underpinned by this ambivalence, what primarily drove the technicist efforts to subject the body to technology was the problem of fatigue for labour productivity. The problem of body fatigue for the industrial ideology of productivism rapidly became posed in materialist and thus technological terms. An array of machines and techniques were developed in order to elaborate a physiological technics – in Foucauldian terms a sophisticated disciplinary apparatus for productive technological bodies – which were all designed to inscribe the body in a new nexus of technographic knowledge. The most important of these new graphic technologies were developed to record previously unrecordable physical processes like heart rate, muscular contraction, and, most importantly, movement.

**Technologies of vision: Mareyism**

The motion of the body was an area of concern ostensibly to further refine techniques to combat the urgent problem of the fatigue and inefficiency of working bodies. However, we can also understand the concern of *fin-de-siècle* science to more closely understand human motion in terms of the ‘double-logic’ of technological prosthesis. That is, the invention of technologies to facilitate a closer examination and graphic recording of motion meant both a ‘decomposition’ of movement into its constituent elements in order to fit into an industrial technological paradigm, but also meant an understanding of the ways in which human motion and thus the human body, was uniquely non-technological, an understanding approaching metaphysics. An important part of the scientific endeavour to understand human motion is the development of technologies of vision.
In this regard there is a crucial link between the various physiographic technologies of the French scientist Etienne-Jules Marey, whose work in inventing machines to record human and animal physiological activity – primarily motion – is credited with influencing such disparate figures as Marcel Duchamp, the Lumière brothers, Edison, the Futurists and Eadward Muybridge, as well as the later invention of the X-Ray by Röntgen. Marey is best known for his work in ‘chronophotography’, a technique said to have anticipated cinematography (see Doane 2002). The technique involved the attempt to accurately record, through multiple exposure, single plate photography, a full range of human and animal motion through time. Through the use of such techniques Marey was able to discover what he called an ‘unknown language’ of the body; that is, the decomposition of motion revealed the ‘successive instants’ which made up the duration of human movements, and also the various forms of physical extension through space. It was a graphic visual technology which aspired to the ever-increasing refinement of the record of successive instants, frozen in time, rather than the recording of continuity of movement which would form the basis of cinema technology, the chief leisure technology of the twentieth century.

While such discoveries were scientifically innovative, they also had important philosophical and aesthetic consequences that stemmed from their reconfiguration of the body and subjectivity. The work of Marey and others at this time was not a disinterested scientific enquiry, but was designed in the first instance to produce a more efficient relation between industrial machines and working bodies. This became the major application of industrial ergonomics, and Marey’s insights were indeed applied to these and other such areas as military training. At the heart of this modernist technological endeavour was the attempt to improve productivity in labour contexts, but the attempt to isolate and decompose the body’s extension and duration meant the technology began to manifest itself as an attempt to reduce distance and time to the condition of instantaneity and presence. Such aspirations inscribe such technophysiographic machines as Marey’s in a general logic of modernity – the beginning of the era of information overload, of ‘speed and dynamism’ as the Futurists had it, of our own cyborg culture. This linked Marey’s apparently disinterested, and obsessive, scientific pursuit of pure representations of human extension and duration with a far more metaphysical and aesthetic modernist zeitgeist:

Marey ... diligently searched for the most ... self-effacing link between the body and the recording instrument, tending ultimately to privilege air pressure. Photography was, in this respect, ideal since its means of connecting object and representation - light waves - were literally intangible and greatly reduced the potentially corruptive effects of mediation. ... Marey consistently contrasted the graphic method [i.e. his own] favorably to phonetic language and statistics, heavily mediated forms of representation that were potentially obscure ... (as well as slow - instantaneity was an aspiration) (Doane 2002:48).

What Doane points to here is Marey’s attempts to develop technologies that would ultimately not interfere at all with the movement of a body in the act of recording it – a technology which would in effect act as an ‘absent prosthesis’.
As Francois Dagognet (1992) points out, what Marey’s chronophotography discovered is that human movement is, in some senses, discontinuous. The secret of understanding movement was therefore also the realisation that the recording devices used to track it – before the film camera and the photograph could do so – were, in a sense, introducing a narrative continuity into the perception of movement: ‘Too much continuity dissolved and absorbed into a single sequence what came in jerks. … [I]t was necessary to capture protrusions, linkages and multiple phases (or the discontinuity of continuity itself)’ (Dagognet 1992:100).

In effect, as Dagognet (1992:152) has it, Marey opened up new visual possibilities for the new physiographic technologies – especially those with visual outputs, such as the chronophotograph:

Mareyism limited the artist’s imaginary world and reminded him of the obligation to respect the real … . In another sense, it reaped the whirlwind and helped the plastic artist to express blinding speed and the uninterrupted.

The double agenda here is that ‘Mareyism’, or, specifically, chronophotography, both constrains representation to an atomised perception of reality, and enables its freedom from those same constraints. This is another version of the debate from antiquity about truth in representation. The debate, particularly in art, is reinvigorated at this time by the technical innovations in photography especially, including Marey’s chronophotographs.

Art, photography and the unconscious

Paul Virilio opens his 1994 book, The vision machine, with an example of this debate between the writer Paul Gsell and the sculptor Auguste Rodin. Gsell puts the technicist point of view forward that photography is ‘an unimpeachable mechanical witness’ (Gsell cited by Virilio 1994:1), and it is therefore art that distorts the truth. Rodin counters, argues Virilio (1994:2), by introducing the element of time to representation:

It is photography that lies … for in reality time does not stand still … [T]he artist condenses several successive movements into a single image. [The work of art] is true when the parts are observed in sequence … . The work of art requires witnesses because it sallies forth with its image into the depths of a material time which is also our own.

The Weimar critic and associate of Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer (1995:50), further elaborates on the distinctive temporal qualities of photography in relation to time in his essay ‘Photography’:

An individual retains memories because they are personally significant. Thus, they are organised according to a principle which is essentially different from the organising principle of photography. Photography grasps what is given as a spatial (or temporal) continuum; memory images retain what is given only insofar as it has significance. Since what is
significant is not reducible to either merely spatial or merely temporal terms, memory images are at odds with photographic representation.

What Kracauer importantly points to here is the psychological difference between memory images and photographic images. Counter-intuitively, he suggests that the photograph does not structure or contain the memory, that it merely provides a spatial or temporal context for the image. The affect is retained by the ‘memory image’. This is a distinction that Marey’s work does much to disguise, as it deepens the technical dimensions of what the photographic image could contain.

Marey’s project to isolate and objectify the extension and duration of human motion thus stands at an epistemological crossroads: on one hand he typifies the commitment of technological disciplinar-ity in nineteenth century science to give an objective and materialist account of the instrumentality of the human body and how it could be adapted to technicist and productivist ends; on the other, he provides us with what might be called a secret ontology of technology. That is, his techniques for the recording of human movement aspire to the extension and duration of human movement itself; to the erasure, as Doane’s earlier point implies, of the distance between the body and the technology which extends its agency, to the erasure of the trace of the technology itself. Not only do the new technologies erase the trace of their workings, but they also provide a technological means to reveal the narrative function inherent in consciousness, the stitching together of continuity from the discontinuity of the natural machine of the body. The paradox of the double register of the body-technology relation is here most evident: a technology which enables a greater knowledge of human being, which must be like air, or like light, rather than the reduction of the human to an identification with the technological state implicit in ergonomics and Taylorism. The ambivalent position of the technology in this thickening of human self-knowledge is famously remarked on by Benjamin (1973:238-239), specifically referring to the quintessential modernism of photography and cinema:

... a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye - if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored ... . Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person’s posture during the fractional second of a stride. ... The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses.

We might distil from the exemplar of Marey’s objective materialist attempts at the graphic inscription and chronophotographing of the ‘unknown language’ of the body the fundamental ambivalence around the possible conflicts between human and technological agencies in establishing and developing new scientific knowledge. We might also see an interesting connection between the attempt to erase the trace of technology, or, more accurately, the attempt to close the gap between instrument and object of knowledge – body and machine – and the rise of postmodernist ‘invisible technologies’, the digital technocultural infosphere of our contemporary era.
Benjamin's (1973:245) auratic theory of art in ‘The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction’, we should recall, devolves crucially on the question of distance:

The definition of the aura as “a unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be” represents nothing but the cult value of the work of art in categories of space and time perception. Distance is the opposite of closeness. The essentially distant object is the unapproachable one. Unapproachability is indeed a major quality of the cult image.

The concept of distance invoked here by Benjamin seems to maintain a distinction between the aesthetic and the technological inasmuch as the latter, as we have seen in the case of Marey’s chronophotography, seeks to erase the distance between itself and its subject, the human body. This tendency of certain forms of technology to the state of invisibility, or ‘absent prosthesis’, represents a certain reversal of the trajectory of the technological imperative of the industrial era, seen in Ford’s dismemberment fantasy, where the body and psyche are enjoined to become machinic, to identify with the machine in the workplace.

In other modes of technological representation, too, the relationship between the machine and culture is a productive one. Photography and the cinema, in Benjamin’s view, are of course the two most obvious technological modes of parlaying the trauma of the modern industrial condition into coherent narrative versions, but the antecedents of these lens-based visual technologies are also guns – early machine guns like Colonel Gatling’s crucial invention were the inspiration, as Doane recounts (2002), for Marey’s invention of the ‘chronophotographic rifle’, a gun which shoots multiple images and is in turn the inspiration for cinema technology.

Technology, narrative and time

For Benjamin, in ‘The work of art’ essay, the use of photography, especially portrait photography, as an aide de memoire, points to its role as a technological mediator of consciousness and memory itself. Significantly, the permanent record of the moment that is the photograph would soon be used to identify the dead in forensic detection. This would confirm the suggestion, as Benjamin discusses in the essay On some motifs in Baudelaire (1938) that these technologies compensate for the lack of psychical depth and full engagement with experience that is the consequence of modernity’s fascination with contingency. In this way, the products of mechanical reproduction, while they erode the aura of traditional artworks, also aid us to deal with the constant sensorial shock to which the contingency of modernity subjects us, in the forms of traffic, electricity, advertising, and so on. Benjamin provides an account of the psychical impact of shock underpinned by Freud’s view of the psychic apparatus in Beyond the pleasure principle (1920). In that essay, a distinction is drawn between consciousness and memory. Consciousness is forced to act as a ‘stimulus shield’, deflecting the worst of the shocks of the new, but paying the price of a loss of engagement with
affective experience. Technological analogues can provide us with a means of preserving experience and prosthetically extending consciousness.

One of the key means of achieving this preservation of conscious experience and the prosthetic extension of consciousness is in the creation of the temporal illusion of relentless forward motion and narrative – the apparent law of irreversibility. As Doane (2002:133) puts it, ‘film, in its mechanical and unrelenting forward movement, appears as the incarnation of the law of irreversibility’, it ‘makes visible not a knowledge of the original but a certain passing temporal configuration … this is the pathos of archival desire’. Desire, in this formulation, is archetypically for lost time, a nostalgia – indeed, a ‘pathos’ – which has a never-before and never-to-be realized fantasy at its root. Doane (2002:133) goes on to link the capabilities in cinema technology to the Mareyan project:

The cinema, much to Marey’s dismay, reconfirms the human senses, recapitulates the common sense and common vision of the everyday. Its alliance with irreversibility is wedded to this dependence upon visibility and referentiality. Nevertheless, as Benjamin attempted to stress with his concept of the optical unconscious, cinema is capable of much more.

The archival desire inscribed within cinema’s technology is rendered tantalizingly possible because film carries within its technical armature the ability to reverse the representation of time, an uncanny operation greeted by early viewers of ‘actuality’ films with hilarity, as if laughing at a joke or a pun. Reversibility in cinema technology at the theoretical level represents the possibility of recapturing lost time, of understanding what narrative progression had caused us to neglect or miss. But recapturing lost time, or living in the past, is also an uncanny or infantile process – a regression and perhaps even a perversion, despite its presence as a step to psychic cure. It was thus suppressed in the service of commercial narrative cohesion and sequential temporal flow, despite Benjamin pointing to the use of montage – the jump cut – as an appropriate means of dealing visually and narratively with trauma as a mode of living.

The X-ray and the artwork

In the context of the subsequent technical dominance of cinema technology the X-ray thus appears as an anomaly. Seemingly limited to its use as a means to represent inner phenomena and the interior of the body normally invisible to the eye, the X-ray quickly found its predominant niche as a medical technology. In this use it is part of the lineage of Marey and his colleagues, devising technical means to detect and analyse, and therefore improve, previously hidden physical processes. Lisa Cartwright (1995), however, also traces its early use as a prurient entertainment spectacle, playing in narrative form and in documentary films with the notion of the miraculously penetrating gaze. The harmful effects of roentgen radiation and the unstable dosage control, and wavelength spectrum of the rays made this impracticable however, and it became instead the most widespread and influential visual
medical technology of the twentieth century. Early X-ray scientists, as Cartwright points out, did not hesitate to experiment on their own bodies with fluoroscopic tubes, uncontrolled exposure which often brought cancer, amputation and death to the scientists. The X-ray’s suppressed character as a harbinger of ‘heat death’ is fascinating, and one to which I shall return.

Another aspect of the X-ray’s capability which renders it niched or anomalous is that it is trapped between the main seductions of both the photograph and the cinematic film. That is, the X-ray seems to neither capture a moment in time as the photograph does, nor present a narrative unfolding in time as the film does. Cartwright points out that, in the brief vogue for films which purport to use X-ray technology, there is only a prurient and unfulfilled promise of a forbidden gaze, through clothes or flesh, which actually forms part of a conventional film narrative. The photograph, on the other hand, presents the opposite temporal case for the X-ray. Though X-rays appear to be a specialised sub-category of photograph, in fact their ability to ‘look through’ clothes, flesh or the surfaces of objects serves to decontextualise the images X-rays create. Photographs provide a framing context – the background, the individual facial features that define the portrait, the family pic or the ‘selfie’. There is thus little of the main phenomenon of the photograph about them, that they are a moment frozen in time.

The specialised use of low-emission X-rays in the restoration of paintings gives rise to further reflection, however. The use of X-rays in art has been largely limited to revealing layers of paint and other materials underneath the ostensible work, in order to aid the process of the restoration of paintings in gallery collections. The key point of this use is in the establishment of the ‘authenticity’ of the work, to provide it with an attribution to a particular artist, and therefore a place in art history and a set of aesthetic values. In doing so the X-ray offers a means to establish the ‘aura’ of authentic artworks which Benjamin contrasts with the mechanical reproducibility of the filmic and photographic image.

Further complicating this consideration, however, is the fact that in some cases the X-ray process reveals a different image to the one apparent in an exhibited work. A good South African example of this is the painting *Lake Garda, Italy* (1921) by Maggie Laubser (Figure 1).
The painting, now part of the foundation collection of the Johannesburg Art Gallery, obscures a self-portrait by the artist, revealed only in an old conservancy X-ray, which I have reworked as part of an installation, *Sublimation and Reversibility – Laubser* (2010) (Figure 2). The ability of the technology to reveal thus also raises the spectre of obfuscation – of the aesthetic meaning of the work. The X-ray reveals a temporal dimension to the works which perforce becomes part of their meaning, but in a radically different way to the suppressed revelation of reversible time accomplished by cinema technology. In cinema’s propensity to reverse time, what we see is an uncanny technical manipulation predicated on narrative itself – a narrative that unfolds, but can also run backwards. The temporality revealed by X-ray, on the other hand, is not sequential – does not move inevitably forward or backward. It is, rather, a representation of a purer archival time. Is what we see when we look at the works the primary image, or can the obscured image recaptured by the machine come to replace the ‘finished’ work in terms of time, space and meaning? This technology of vision...
Figure 2: J Sey. *Sublimation and Reversibility – Laubser* (2010). Digitally retouched print of X-ray original on archival paper. 100cmx84cm. Photograph by the author.
has a palimpsestuous character, but also a propensity to problematise the sequential nature of time by revealing its narrativising and elisory function. More than this, it also problematises the link between vision and aesthetic meaning itself, precisely by revealing not only, in symbolic terms, the palimpsestuous nature of the image, but also the arbitrary nature of the link between aesthetic judgement and time. Some of these questions are raised in my recontextualising of the retouched under-image as a different work of art (Figure 2).

Conclusion: the X-ray, sublimation and the aesthetic

In the sadly underdeveloped psychoanalytic concept of ‘sublimation’, Freud, in *Civilization and its discontents* (1930) points to a general drive to repurpose libidinal energy towards the highest ideals of a society – emblematically in the production of art. According to Laplanche and Pontalis (1980:431), sublimation is:

A process postulated by Freud to account for human activities which have no apparent connection with sexuality but which are assumed to be motivated by the force of the sexual instinct. The main types of activity described by Freud to be sublimated are artistic creation and intellectual inquiry. The instinct is said to be sublimated in so far as it is directed towards a new, non-sexual aim and in so far as its objects are socially valued ones.

As they also point out, the term evokes the sense of the sublime, and of sublimation in chemistry, when something passes from a solid to a gaseous or evanescent state.

The sublime thus manages to be both hidden and proudly displayed – creative energy which is suppressed and repurposed from libidinal energy, yet also the highest form of cultural expression available. Cartwright’s (1995) discussion of those early X-ray scientists who experimented on themselves culminates with the account of physician and radiologist Emil Grubbe, who detailed in his autobiography the rapid deterioration of his own body on his way to death from radiation-induced cancer. His amputations did not impede his scientific spirit, and he removed tissue from his amputated limbs in order to closer study the effects of the radiation. The case reminds us that sublimity is not only the pursuit of beauty, but that which is most valued in a culture – specifically intellectual inquiry. But it is also a reminder that the sublime has long been associated with the death drive. In Freud’s great essay, *Beyond the pleasure principle* (1920), the famous formulation ‘the aim of all life is death’, summarises the theory that the pursuit of the ideal in culture means a renunciation of instinctual life and thus the sublimation of the erotic instincts of life. The pursuit of an ‘ego-ideal’ – a transcendental image of perfection – implies the recognition of that transcendence by those beings who have renounced baser instincts and represent the best in the culture – paradigmatically the artists.
The painted palimpsests revealed by the X-ray thus reveal, in an interestingly contemporary way, an established aesthetic and cultural dilemma – that of the ascription of relative value and aesthetic judgment. Which image, which brushstroke, can we regard as more sublime than another, even if we are privy to complete historical provenance? The early use of the X-ray technology was deployed by scientists to the point of their deaths in the pursuit of a sublime/sublimated ideal – that of the advancement of knowledge. The characteristic secular separation of science and art in the industrial era tends to obscure the parallels between this scientific endeavour and the artist’s pursuit of the sublime, the ineffable, the ‘unrepresentable’.

Foucault (1970, 1972) tells us that nothing falls out of the archive. And Doane (2002) relates this archive, the archive of the cultural unconscious, to the pathos of an unfulfillable desire. The desire, as with any unconscious process, is to turn back time. The law of irreversibility, and the propensity of the cinema machine to artificially, and literally, turn back time, are profoundly unsatisfying in terms of this desire. The ability of the painting X-ray to recover the images which have been buried in it raises another possibility of staging the desire: that of a rediscovery of the connection between the pursuit of the sublime (considered as the kernel of the ‘artistic life’), scientific experiment and time. This connection has been sublimated by the illusion of technically driven temporal progression or narrative form. The spectral image brought forth by the X-ray, then, is a liminal version of the aesthetic process of sublimation itself, a haunting version of the pathos of archival desire.

REFERENCES


Kuns en die verwerking van die verlede

Rita Swanepoel
Senior Lecturer in Art History, School of Communication Studies, North-West University,
rita.swanepoel@nwu.ac.za

OPSOMMING

Ten spyte van ’n demokrasie van bykans twintig jaar sit Suid-Afrikaners steeds opgesaal met die kompleksie nalatenskap van ’n verlede gekenmerk deur rassespanning. Direk na die eerste demokratiese verkiesing in die land in 1994 was Suid-Afrikaners vir ’n kort rukkie saamgesnoer in ’n euforie van ’n sogenaamde reënboognasie onder die vaandel van neo-patriotisme en die Afrika-renaissance. Sedert President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela in 1999 die leisels aan Thabo Mbeki oorgegee het, is daar ’n teleurstellende agteruitgang in rasseverhoudings. Om antwoorde te probeer kry op die vraag hoe en watter rol kuns kan speel om met die verlede vrede te maak, interpreteer ek twee werke van Willem Boshoff, naamlik Panifice (2001) en Writing in the Sand (2000). Die teoretiese raamwerk vir hierdie artikel vind aansluiting by Paul Ricoeur se voorstelle vir ’n nuwe kyk op geskiedenis deur ’n verbeeldingryke omgang daarmee. Daar word ook aangesluit by Giorgi Verbeeck se insigte ten opsigte van ’n terugkyk op die verlede vanuit ’n eietydse perspektief en omgewing.

Sleutelwoorde: Ricoeur, Verbeeck, Willem Boshoff, Panifice, Writing in the Sand.

ABSTRACT

Despite living in a democracy for nearly twenty years, South Africans are still burdened with the complex heritage of a past characterised by racial tension. Directly after the first democratic election in the country in 1994, South Africans were for a short period united by the euphoria of a so-called ‘rainbow nation’ under the banner of neo-patriotism and the African Renaissance. After Thabo Mbeki succeeded President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela in 1999 there has been a disappointing deterioration in race relations. In order to get answers to the question how and which role art could play in order to make peace with the past, I interpret two works of Willem Boshoff, namely Panifice (2001) and Writing in the Sand (2000). The theoretical framework for this article draws on Paul Ricoeur’s proposals for a new perspective through an imaginative engagement with history, as well as on Giorgi Verbeeck’s insights on looking at the past from a contemporary perspective and milieu.

Keywords: Ricoeur, Verbeeck, Willem Boshoff, Panifice, Writing in the Sand.
INLEIDING


Die artikel begin met ’n bondige kontekstualisering van die huidige sosio-politieke situasie in Suid-Afrika, gevolg deur die sketsing van ’n teoretiese raamwerk vir ’n verbeeldingryke omgang met geskiedenis vanuit ’n eietydse perspektief. Vervolgens word die twee installasies se visueel-waarnemende estetiese vormelemente beskryf, waarna dit geïnterpreteer word. Die artikel sluit af met enkele perspektiewe op die verhouding tussen kuns en samelewing.

Die ‘nuwe’ Suid-Afrika in konteks

Na ongeveer drie eeu van wit oorheersing gedurende kolonialisme en apartheid het Suid-Afrika se eerste demokratiese verkiesing op 27 April 1994 plaasgevind en is Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1918-2013) ingesweer as die eerste demokraties-verkose president. Onder Mandela, die versoener, het die land ’n nuwe vlag gekry asook ’n nasionale lied wat saamgestel is uit twee strofes van Nkosi sekelele ‘iAfrika, en twee strofes (een in Afrikaans en een in Engels) uit die voormalige volkslied, die Stem van Suid-Afrika. In die plek van slegs Afrikaans en Engels as amptelike tale, het die land gespog met elf amptelike landstale met Engels de facto as die hoofkommunikasiemedium in alle regeringsdokumente (vgl. Welsh & Spence 2007:294). In ’n euforie wat van korte duur was, was die

Mandela se termyn as staatspresident het in 1999 ten einde geloop en hy is opgevolg deur Thabo Mbeki (gebore 1942). Anders as Mandela wat wyd as ’n versoener beskou is, is Mbeki daarvan beskuldig dat hy toenemend rasgebaseerd gedink het en verhoudinge gepolariseer het (Arnold 2005:794-796; Thompson 2006:280-284; 286-288). Dit het onder andere geblyk uit sy toespraak van 29 Mei 1999 – algemeen bekend as sy \textit{Two Nations Speech} – waarin hy gestel het dat Suid-Afrika uit twee nasies bestaan, ‘[O]ne of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. … The second and larger nation … is black and poor …’ (Mbeki 1999). Hierdie neiging tot polarisasie is steeds te sien in die bedeling na die vervanging van President Mbeki. Sy opvolger, Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma (gebore 1942), ’n populis en toegankliker mens as Mbeki, dwing nie wyd respek af nie en word dikwels oor swak leierskap gekritiseer. In ’n uitspraak, wat tekens van ras-stereotipering toon, wys Scholtz (2010b:18) op indrukke in Nederlandse koerante wat Zuma met Mandela kontrasteer:

\begin{quote}
Zuma word, reg of verkeerd, deur baie beskou as ’n tipiese primitiewe Afrikaan\footnote{In Engels: “traditional African”} wat by wyse van spreke liever in dierrevelle in ’n nat sit en bier drink en met vroue in die bed duik, eerder as ’n staatsman wat ernstig opgeneem moet word. Die kontras met die geweldige verering vir Mandela kan nie groter wees nie.
\end{quote}

Die nuutste onthullings oor Zuma se moontlike betrokkenheid by die Gupta-gaste se landing op Waterkloof-lughawe in 2013, asook die opgradering en beveiliging van sy huis by Nkandla, sorg tans vir groot kontroversie. Joubert en Styan (2013:11) stel dat die kommer oor wanbestuur, korrupsie en ongelykheid in die ‘Waterkloof/Gupta-gebeure en by Nkandla’ ’n werkroep is aan opposisiekiezers. Hierby voeg Koelbe en Robins (2007:315-316) Zuma se ‘korrupte’ verhouding met Schabir Shaik\footnote{In Engels: “Schabir Shaik”} (soos uitgewys deur regter Hilary Squires), die sogenaamde wapenskandaal asook dat Zuma in ’n hofsaak van verkragting teen hom (waaraan hy uiteindelik onskuldig bevind is), erken het dat hy onbeskermer seks gehad met ’n vrou wat HIV-positief getoets is. Die toenemend hoë vlakke van armoede, swak dienslevering, misdaad en korrupsie wat tans in die land heers, is kommerwekkend (Parsons 2013:135; Plaut 2008:25; Southall & Daniel 2009:115). Armoede is een van die kernprobleme in Suid-Afrika. Dit mag een van die redes wees vir die hoë vlak van misdaad in die land. ’n Ander moontlike rede is dat ’n geweldskultuur in die land posgevat het as gevolg van onder meer raskwessies wat veral sedert die twintigste eeu kenmerkend van Suid-Afrika geword het. Zuma se geneigheid om sy gunstelingvryheidslied, \textit{Aluweth’ Umshini wami [Bring vir my my masjiengeweer]}, tydens openbare optredes te sing, word ook sterk gekritiseer (Jackson 2010:2; Steenkamp 2010:2, 5; Van Rooyen 2010:2). Dit is voorts interessant om die aandag te vestig op verkiesingspatrone in die

Since the end of apartheid, South Africans have voted in three national elections. During these elections, race has overwhelmingly predicted voting behavior for white and African voters ... so much that many have described South African elections as ‘racial census’.

Verder word bewerings gemaak van sogenaamde ‘omgekeerde’ rassisme, soos blyk uit FW de Klerk se onderhoud in 2010 met die Nederlandse dagblad De Pers (op 9 Desember 2010) onder die opskrif Apartheid is terug. De Klerk stel dat Suid-Afrika se witte onder rassisme ly en dat ofskoon die aanbieding van die wêreldbekerokker (2010) ’n gevoel van eenheid teweeg gebring het, ‘ons in sekere sin daarna weer in ou gewoontes teruggeval’ het (in Scholtz 2010a:2). Du Plessis (2013:14) maak die veelseggende opmerking oor die ANC wat volgens hom eens ’n trotse bevrydingsbeweging was, maar tans ’n party is:

... wat gestig is om onreg te bestry, maar wat 20 jaar nadat die onreg formeel beëindig is, ál meer begin word het soos die verdrukkers wat hulle beveg het. Innerlik verderf deur arro-
gansie, hebusg, korrupsie en ’n vreetende gedrewenheid om ’n rylik diverse samelewings in te dwing in die dwangbuis van dogmas wat grootliks geskoei is op gediskrediteerde idees oor ras en oop, moderne samelewings binne ’n kultuur van versluiiering en verberging ....


Die vraag wat teen hierdie agtergrond ontstaan, is of kuns ’n rol kan speel in Suid-Afrikaners se pogings om hul verlede te verwerk en ’n mensliker samelewings te weeg te bring. Om ’n beter begrip te kry van wat hierdie vraag behels, word ’n teoretiese raamwerk ten opsigte van geskiedenis-beskouinge geskets.

Teoretiese blik op die geskiedenis

Paul Ricoeur (2001; 2006), ’n protestantse filosoof vanuit ’n eksistensialistes-fenomenologiese perspektief, stel dat om vrede met die verlede te kan maak, die geskiedenis op ’n verbeeldingryke wyse vanuit verskillende perspektiewe belig moet word. Vir hom lê die oplossing vir ’n problematiese verlede daarin dat aggressor en slagoffer met ’n kritiese verbeelding saam moet werk aan die skep van ’n gedeelde narratief. As ’n voorstander van die beginsels van Waarheids- en Versoening-skommisies, stel hy (Ricoeur 2001:33) dat mense in so ’n samewerking getrou sal wees aan die
verlede omdat albei se ervarings en verhale aangehoor word. Sodoende kan heling en versoening plaasvind. Ricoeur (2006:312-326) beklemttoon dat vergifnis ’n geskenk is en nie ’n verpligting nie. Dit impliseer dat die een wat vergewe in staat moet wees om te kan vergewe. Die persoon wat vergewe, moet in so ’n mate geestelik en/of liggaamlik herstel of bemagtig wees dat so ’n persoon in staat is om vergifnis te kan skenk – nie net vir dit wat aan die persoon self gedoen is nie, maar ook in breër netwerke van verhoudings met ander mense en groepe.


Waar daar sprake van twee weergawes van dieelfde historiese gebeure is, naamlik dié van die maghebbers en dié van slagoffers, is ondeursigtigheid, verbittering, wraaksug, paranoia en die oplê van swye dikwels aan die orde van die dag. ’n Geskiedenis van hewige konflik en vergrypte teen menseregte impliseer ook (al beteken dit nog nie om die voorwaardes daarvoor te skep nie) ’n behoefte aan belydenis, opregte berou en vergifnis, sodat, in die woorde van Verbeeck (2007:241), ’n ’band van medemenslikheid’ herstel kan word.

Ricoeur (2006:21) gryp met sy pleidooi vir ‘getrouheid aan die verlede’ terug na die invloedryke geskiedkundige Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) se oproep aan historici om die geskiedenis te vertel ‘... wie es eigentlich gewesen war’ (Von Ranke 1973:57). Wat hiermee bedoel word, is dat ‘feite’ vir hulself moet spreek, al is dit hoe ongemaklik vir enige van die betrokkenes.

Ricoeur verstaan Von Ranke egter op ’n baie spesifieke manier: Die persoon of gemeenskap wat aan een van die twee siektes van herinnering ly (te veel of te min herinneringe), kan deur ’n kritiese verbeelding ander perspektiewe op die traumatische gebeurtenis in die verlede ontwikkel. Sodoende kan ’n rekonstruksie gemaak word van die verlede wat vanuit die hede mense se hoop en visie op die toekoms kan verbreed. Vir Ricoeur (2000:33-36) kan die Durcharbeitung (deurwerking/verwerking) van herinneringe deur ’n kritiese verbeelding daartoe lei dat mense anders na die geskiedenis kyk as iets wat bloot die ‘begraafplaas’ van (onafgehandelde) beloftes is. Hierdie begraafplaas is ’n metafoor vir onverwerklikte moontlikhede. Wanneer die pyn en lyding verwerk is, kyk ’n mens ook vanuit ’n breër perspektief na die verlede wat weer ’n mens se visie en uitkyk op die toekoms kan verruim.

So beskou is hierdie benadering ’n teenwerking van ’n verengde verstaan van die verlede wat aanleiding gee tot ’n ‘benouende uitsig’ op die toekoms. Om met ’n kritiese verbeelding na die verlede te kyk, kan lei tot ’n verruimde blik op die toekoms en hou volgens Ricoeur meer versoenende handelingsmoontlikhede vir die hede en die toekoms in.
Die epistemologiese en metodologiese probleme rondom die ideaal van volstrekte objektiwiteit (om geskiedenis te vertel wie es eigentlik gewesen war) het historici en geskiedenisfilosowe in die laat twintigste eeu laat neig na pleidooie om die geskiedenis nie in die vergetelheid te laat verdwyn nie. Dit volg nadat die tegnologiese vooruitgang van die samelewing met gepaardgaande gedragspatrone van verbruik in ’n groot mate gelei het tot die dood van enige historiese bewussyn.

Historisme het in ’n tradisionele westerse benadering die verlede beskou as ’n stap in ’n continue ketting wat die verlede, die hede en die toekoms aan mekaar verbind het. Die verlede is enersyds beskou as tradisie, waarin die voorgeslagte ’n afgehandelde rol gespeel het, en andersyds as normatief, in die sin dat dit die norme en waardes vir die hede bepaal het. Geskiedenis het met ander woorde ’n chronologiese tydslyn en ’n tradisionele en normatiewe funksie gehad (Verbeeck 2006:182-184). Sedert die onlangse oplewing van ’n hernude historiese bewussyn word die verlede tans nie meer beskou as ’n chronologiese eenheid wat die hede voorafgegaan het nie, maar as ’n naderende, immanente proses van ontwikkeling en verandering. Die verlede word daarom nie as afgehandel beskou nie (vgl. Verbeeck 2006:184; Blaas 1988:1-32).


The end of apartheid urged the need for a radical renewal of South African historiography. The central aim was the promotion of crossracial reconciliation by creating a new sense of national identity and consensus. ... History should serve as a mirror for cooperation, interaction and peaceful coexistence of different social and cultural groups ... (Verbeeck 2006:185-186).

Dit is in besonder Ricoeur se pleidooi vir ’n verbeeldingryke omgang met die verlede ter wille van berou, vergifnis en versoening, asook Verbeeck se insigte met betrekking tot die skep van ’n band van medemenslike samelewing wat hierdie artikel rig.

Vervolgens word Boshoff se taalgebaseerde installasies, Panifice (2001) en Writing in the Sand (2000) beskryf en daarna geïnterpreteer ter illustrasie van die rol wat kuns kan speel in ’n deurwerking van ’n traumatisie verlede en die vestiging van ’n medemenslike samelewing.
Beskrywing van Boshoff se *Panifice* en *Writing in the Sand*

> *Panifice* (2001)

Hierdie groot installasie wat direk op die vloer geplaas is, bestaan uit 56 liggepoleerde granietklippe, elkeen ongeveer die grootte van ’n brood in skakerings van bruin en aardse kleure. Onder elk van hierdie granietklippe is ’n plat, swart en gladgepoleerde granietblad geplaas. Op elk van hierdie swart graniet – ’broodborde’ is teks in wit en duidelijk leesbare letters gegraveer.

(Boshoff 2012).

Elk van die 56 swart graniet ‘broodborde’ bevat dieselfde teks uit die Evangelie volgens Mattheus, naamlik ‘watter pa onder julle sal aan sy kind wat vir brood vra, ’n klip gee?’ (Matt. 7:9). Die teks is op elke broodbord in twee verskillende tale – ’n Europese en ’n inheemse Afrikataal – gegraveer.
Writing in the Sand (2000)

Hierdie installasie bestaan uit 40 kg sakke sand wat plat op die vloer uitgegooi is waarop woorde in rye in verskillende Suid-Afrikaanse tale met duidelik leesbare, hoofsaaklik swart, sjabloonletters met behulp van silikoon geskryf is. Die woorde vorm lang horisontale lyne en die aanskouer moet van links na regs langs die installasie afstap om die woorde te kan lees.

Enkele woorde per sin, die name van die inheemse tale van die land, soos byvoorbeeld Setswana, is op swart gekleurde sand in wit sjabloonletters geskryf. Vanweë die swart agtergrond met wit letters, staan hierdie name van die tale uit.

(Boshoff 2012).

Lees en interpreetasie van *Panifice en Writing in the Sand*

Boshoff stel homself op sy tuiswebblad (2007) bekend as ’n kunstenaar wat met woorde en taal speel:

> Willem Boshoff is a conceptual artist focusing primarily on Installation art, languages and text, botany and sculpture. His works have several underlying tones; biblical, political and botanical.

Boshoff het *Panifice* gemaak vir die 49ste Biënnale in Venesië met die tema *Authentic/Ex-centric: Africa in and out of Africa. Writing in the Sand* het Boshoff weer vir die sewende biënnale in Havana, Kuba geskep. Hierdie twee installasies verskil in toonaard. Terwyl *Panifice* ’n ernstige beroep op die aanskouers doen ten opsigte van die ontsluiting van die kunswerk, het *Writing in the Sand* ’n meer humoristiese inslag. Albei installasies plaas ’n belangrike fokus op taal as ’n estetiese element in die werke en albei installasies roep Bybelse en Christelike intertekstuele verwysings op. Alhoewel die kunstenaar van Bybelse verwysings gebruik maak, moet dit nie as uitsluiting van ander gelowe of nie-gelowiges beskou word nie. Die gebruik van Bybelse verwysings maak ’n appèl op ’n verwysings-raamwerk wat aan baie mense bekend is. Dit dra ook ’n basiese beginsel van menswaardigheid (in Bybelse terme naasteliefde) en respek aan alle mense oor, naamlik om aan ander te doen soos wat *ja* aan jouself gedoen wil hê.

Sowel *Panifice* as *Writing in the Sand* bring mense van verskillende agtergronde en kulture bymekaar in ooreenstemming met Boshoff se artistieke intensie, naamlik om gesprekvoering tussen mense wat normaalweg min sosiaal met mekaar verkeer, aan te moedig:

> My work is generally focused on bringing about conversation, especially between social groups that do not communicate with each other easily or often (Boshoff 2009).

Terwyl die kunstenaar in *Panifice* een Europese en een Afrikaataal per granietbord afpaar, word die tale en woorde in *Writing in the Sand* in langwerpig sandstroke duidelik leesbaar van links na regs aan die aanskouer gebied. Boshoff (2009) stel dat die behoud van tale en daarby ingebed kulture, hom na aan die hart lê. In *Panifice* wys hy dat die uitsterf van inheemse tale en kulture nie net die lot van voormalige gemarginaliseerdes se moedertale, soos byvoorbeeld San, Khoisan, Nama en Griekwa is nie. Die kunstenaar illustreer hierdie punt deur Latyn, ’n eens magtige Europese taal af te paar saam met Zoeloe, ’n voorheen gemarginaliseerde Afrikaataal. Terwyl Latyn, eens ’n gevestigde en ‘superieure’ taal in alledaagse kommunikasie uitgesterf het, is Zoeloe die moedertaal van een van die grootste taalgroepe in Suid-Afrika en is dit steeds aan die groei en uitbrei. Boshoff vestig voorts die aandag daarop dat binne Suid-Afrikanse akademiese kringe ’n diskoe rs aan die gang is oor die nodigheid al dan nie van studente om Latyn as vak in sekere studierigtings te neem.

> The idea is to put dis-enfranchised languages on the same table as the established, privileged ones. Conceptually the work questions the licence and responsibility exercised by the so-called ‘privileged’ tongues over the so-called “neglected” or “unprivileged” ones.
The first pair of breads is in Latin and Zulu because there is a healthy/unhealthy debate raging at present in South African academic circles about the validity of Latin as an ingredient in studies in the human sciences, especially in legal subjects (Boshoff 2009).


Wat Writing in the Sand betref, stel Boshoff (2009) dat die installasie geskep is om respek te betoon aan Suid-Afrika se nuwe erkende amptelike tale naas Afrikaans en Engels, naamlik Sesotho sa Leboa, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa en isiZulu. Vir die installasie het die kunstenaar ook vreemde Engelse woorde gebruik soos pognology, concettism, bruxism, phalarism en vele ander woorde wat die kunstenaar uitgelê het. Die verduideliking van hierdie woorde is in een van die inheemse tale geskryf. Dit beteken dat indien ’n Engelssprekende persoon die betekenis van die woorde wil verstaan, so ‘n persoon ‘n inheemse taalspreker-aanskouer moet nader. Boshoff (2009) stel dit soos volg: ‘Their frustration is only relieved when the speaker of a “lesser” tongue comes to their rescue.’


Met sowel Panific as Writing in the Sand keer Boshoff mags- en identiteitsrolle om. Die inheemse moedertaalspreker is nou in staat om die Westerling as oningelig te stereotipeer en haar of hom vanuit ’n meerder kennisposisie behulpsaam te wees. Die implikasie is verder dat indien geen inheemse moedertaalspreker in die nabyheid is nie, die ‘beskaafde’, vanselfsprekend ‘kultureel ontwikkelde’ en ‘intellektuele’ Westerlinge hul toeval tot ’n ander persoon of ’n woordeboek of die internet moet neem indien hulle die installasies wil ontsluit. In die proses word nie net die identiteit en mag van die Self-meerderwaardige ontneem nie, maar ook die van die bevoorregte taal as voertuig vir sosiale en politieke mag. Fanon (1986:31) wys in hierdie verband op die belangrike punt, naamlik dat ‘[a] man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language’. Sodoende word die tradisies, norme en waardes van die Westerlinge as draers van ‘kultuur, kennis en beskawing’ ondermyn (Loomba 2005:54; McLeod 2000:20-21; Said 1995:89). Gevolglik sou gestel kon word dat Boshoff taal as die medium (voertuig) van
nasionalistiese en ideologiese eksklusiwiteit deur hierdie taalgebaseerde installasies dekonstrueer. Sodoende skep die kunstenaar ’n nuwe speelveld waar taal ’n belangrike rol speel in aanskouers se kennismaking met mekaar.

Die kunstenaar wys daarop dat die inheemse tale van die land wat al vir eeu gepraat word, in baie opsigte van hul oorspronklike eienaars vervreem is (Boshoff 2009). Afgesien daarvan dat inheemse tale gedurende kolonialisme en apartheid nie as amptelike ‘beskaafde’ tale erken is nie, het heelwat inheemse mense ook hul moedertaal verskuif vir verdere loopbane en opleiding wat hoofsaaklik net in Engels beskikbaar was. Boshoff (2009) maak die belangrike stelling dat indien ’n taal nie gepraat word nie dit nog steeds die gevaar loop om in die vergetelheid te verdwyn, al is die taal as ’amptelik’ verklaar. Tans in postapartheid Suid-Afrika verkeer mens se verkeerdelik onder die indruk dat – net omdat inheemse tale nou ook amptelike tale is – hierdie tale van uitwissing gered is. Terwyl dié vereenwoordiging nie dat net omdat alle tale en mense nou gelyk is, mense noodwendig mekaar as gelykes aanvaar en erken nie. Kortom, die nalatenskap van ’n verdeelde verlede word nie uitgewis deur ’n gelyk-makende demokrasie nie. Deur mekaar te leer ken en gesprekke met mekaar te voer oor die werke en die betekenis van taal en woorde, poog Boshoff om die ruimte waarin die installasies geplaas is te aktiveer tot ’n ruimte van kennismaking en besinning. Deur mekaar te leer ken en gesprekke met mekaar te voer oor die werke en die betekenis van taal en woorde, poog Boshoff om die ruimte waarin die installasies geplaas is te aktiveer tot ’n ruimte van kennismaking en besinning.

Commited art in the proper sense is not intended to generate ameliorative measures, legislative acts or practical institutions – like earlier propagandist plays against syphilis, duels, abortion laws or borstals – but to work at the level of fundamental attitudes (kyk ook Clarkson 2008).

Terwyl Writing in the Sand se titel ’n Bybelse verwysing bevat, maak Boshoff in Panifice van ’n Bybelteks gebruik as sy materiaal. Tog bied die titel Panifice belangrike sleutels vir die interpretasie van die installasie.

Panifice kom van die Latynse panem facere (Klein 1967:322). Die Spaanse woord vir brood – die woord waarna in die teks van die Skrifgedeelte verwys word – is pan wat afgelei is van die Latynse stamwoord panis (Boshoff 2009; Doepel 2001:102). Facere is ’n werkwoord en beteken ‘om te maak’, vry vertaal om brood te maak (te bak). Met Panifice bied Boshoff konsepteel 56 gebakte brode aan die aanskouers, elk geplaas op ’n swart broodbord. Deur die afparing van ‘n Europese en ’n Afrikataal per granietbrood en -bord nooi die kunstenaar die Westerling en die Afrikaan uit om in vriendskrap saam aan tafel te verkeer en saam van die ‘brood te eet’. Terwyl die term Westerling tydens kolonialisme en apartheid na wit, westerse en sogenaamde beskaafde mense verwys het, het Afrikaan na swart, sogenaamde onbeskaafde mense uit Afrika verwys. Die oordra van Westerse kulturele waardes wat
met imperiale kolonialisme gepaard gegaan het en wat voortgesit is tydens apartheid, het noodwendig gelei tot hegemonie en dominasie, wat die verhouding tussen die koloniale en apartheidsubjek en die sogenaamde onbeskaafde swart ander negatief beïnvloed het (Bhabha 1991:53; Loomba 2005:10).

Dit het tot gevolg gehad dat mense oor kleure grense mekaar nie in die normale gang van sake as gelykes en vriende beskou het nie. Boshoff probeer hierdie verskille uit die weg ruim.

Daar is egter meer te lees in die titel. Vanweë die gebruik van die woord brood in ‘n Bybelse konteks, word die konnotasie van die Christelike nagmaal opgeroep. Tydens die Nagmaal word die gemeenskap van die gelowiges genooi om die brood – metafories vir Christus se liggaam – te breek en te eet. Doepel (2001:104) wys in aansluiting hierby daarop dat die uitnodiging tot samesyn in vriendskap, in Engels uitgedruk word as ‘to begin a companionship, or to keep company’, waar com in Latyn op saam (together) dui en panis op brood. Die aanskouer het egter hier te make met granietbrode van ‘n bykans onbreekbare materiaal. Om saam te wees en om sosiale gesprekke te voer, word die brood konseptueel gebreek en gedeel.

Die konteks van die uitstalling met die tema Authentic/Ex-centric: Africa in and out of Africa is ook belangrik in die interpretasie van Panifice. Boshoff vra met sy installasie of die ‘brood’ van geloof en beskawing wat Europa na Afrika gebring het, werklik ‘brood’ was en nie inderdaad (koue, harde, graniet-)klippe nie, aangesien die voorrang van die Europese kultuur vir die inheemse tale en kulture dodelik was.

Writing in the Sand verwys weer volgens Boshoff (2009) na die gebaar van Christus wat woorde in die grond geskryf het. Volgens die Evangelie van Johannes 8:3-11 het skrifgeleerdes en Fariseërs aan Christus ’n strikvraag probeer stel na aanleiding daarvan dat ’n owerspelige vrou volgens die wette van Moses gestenig moes word. Christus het aan hulle gesê dat dié een onder hulle wat sonder sonde is, die eerste klip moet optel om haar te stenig. Nadat Hy dit gesê het, het Hy neergeknield en woorde op die grond geskryf. Toe Christus opkyk, was die skrifgeleerdes en Fariseërs weg. Sand is ’n onstabiele medium. Woorde wat daarop geskryf is verdwyn maklik. Indien tale nie gepraat word nie, sterf hulle uit. Die verdwyning of uitwissing van ’n taal het verreikende gevolge vir enige gemeenskappy. Dit lei in wisselende mate tot die vernietiging van identiteit, tradisies, kollektiewe herinneringe en die mites wat in daardie taal en plek van behorendheid ingebed is. Woorde wat in sand geskryf is en tale wat nie gepraat word nie, verdwyn in die vergetelheid. Hier het ons te make met verlies. ’n Mens sou jouself egter ook kon afbra of geskiedenis nie ook op sand geskryf is nie. Soos wat maghebbers kom en gaan, word geskiedenis vanuit die perspektief van die maghebber herskryf. Dit is dalk juist nou die tyd dat Suid-Afrikaners dit moet oorweeg om hul geskiedenis verbeeldingryk op sand te skryf en versoenend na mekaar uit te reik.

Om die woorde te kan lees en die installasies te kan interpreteer, moet aanskouers afkyk, buk of op die grond gaan sit. Hierdie ‘eise’ wat die kunstenaar aan die aanskouers stel is belangrik vir die interpretasie van hierdie werke. Volwassenes buk af om met kinders te kan praat. Afkyk impliseer op
’n metaforiese wyse ‘neersien op’. Binne ‘n koloniale en apartheidse diskos is swart mense as ‘onmondige kinders’ beskou en as sodanig behandel (Ghandi 1998:31; Loomba 2005:54). Daarenteen, wanneer mense langs die werke gaan sit, is alle aanskouers op ‘n gelyke vlak, wat beteken dat daar nie enige hiërargiese onderskeid is nie. Sodoende kry Boshoff konseptueel ‘n steek in teen imperiale meerderwaardigheid. Die beskouinge van die selfversekerde en meerderwaardige self word deur die ommekeer van mag gedekonstrueer tot onsekerheid en twyfel.

Doepel (2001:104) argumenteer dat Panifice doelbewus die grondvlak as omringende ruimte beset om die konseptuele skakeling met die oorspronklike Latynsprekers, die Romeine, se tradisie van akkubasie (‘aanlê’) in plaas van aansit vir ete, te representeer. Hy stel dat die gebruik van die grondvlakruimte ook konseptueel ‘the African way of dining close to the ground’ oproep.

Op dieselfde wyse as wat die kunstenaar in Writing in the Sand sy kommer oor die moontlikheid van die uitwissing van tale konseptueel verbeeld, doen hy dit in Panifice deur die gebruik van graniet, dié koue medium wat by uitstek gebruik word word vir grafstene, ‘n dubbelsinnige simboliserings van ewigdurende verlies. Terwyl woorde wat op sand geskryf word vervlietend is en gou verdwyn, word graniet as medium gedenkstene (memorials) van tale en kulture wat uitsterf. Graniet kan ook beskou word as metafore vir die verharde houdings jeens mekaar.

Dit wil voorkom asof Boshoff nie net daarop uit is om wraak te neem op die neerbuigende self-beskouinge van maghebbers nie, maar om speels mee te werk aan ‘n mensliker samelewing. Hierdie benadering blyk uit die keuse van woorde vir Writing in the Sand. Nie net is baie van die woorde in die installasie vreemd en onbekend nie, maar die betekenis daarvan is dikwels humoristies en heel eienaardig, soos blyk uit die volgende voorbeelde:

**Pognology**: Die bestudering van gesigshare of baarde

**Concettism**: Die kuns om intelligent voor te kom sonder om in werklikheid enig-iets intelligents of wys kwyt te raak

**Bruxism**: Die geneigdheid om op jou tande te kners, en

**Carphology**: ’n Oordrewe geneigdheid om ’n mens se pajamas te streel en te vertroetel (Boshoff 2007).

Die ‘obskure’ woorde is tong in die kies uitgesoek om ‘n glimlag te ontlok, enersyds van die ‘bevoorregte’ Engelssprekendes, maar ook van die inheemse moedertaalsprekers. Boshoff skep deur humor ‘n vriendelike ruimte waar mense wat mekaar voorheen nie geken het nie, ontspanne sosiaal kan verkeer, amper soos kinders wat in ’n sandput speel:

> [t]he extraordinary explanation (of the so-called marginalized English word) is calculated to bring a smile to the face and to engender further conversation, almost like children playing in a sandpit (Boshoff 2007).
Deur sy installasies poog die kunstenaar om deur die omringende ruimte waarbinne die installasies geplaas is, die klem te plaas op direkte kontak, mededeelsaamheid en kommunikasie. Daarom is dit belangrik dat kuns in ’n ruimte geplaas word wat vir die publiek toeganklik is en nie noodwendig net in galerye wat bekend is vir ’n uitgesokte visueelgeletterde gehoor nie.

Die gebruik van inheemse tale kom neer op ’n uitdaging wat die kunstenaar rig tot sowel voormalige bevoorregtes as inheemse groeperinge. Hierdie uitdaging is gerig op ’n herwaardering van die eie en van mekaar se tale, kulture, identiteit, norme en waardes. Terwyl die twee installasies versoening en ’n mensliker samelewing as belangrike konseptuele fokuspunte het, vestig Boshoff (2009) die aandag op die belang van taal as ’n voertuig vir menswaardige verhoudinge:

A comforting cloak of language covers us within our respective groups. It unites and divides us. It heartens and enrages us. When we share our mother tongue with others who also speak it, we can be as poetic, as comprehensive, as spell-binding and as persuasive as the best of speakers in any of the world’s major languages.

Slotbeskouinge

Suid-Afrika se koloniale en apartheidsgeskiedenis word gekenmerk deur herinneringe aan die weerstand teen maghebbendes wat alle ander bevolkingsgroepe in die land ontmoet het vanuit hul (die “superieures” se) meerderwaardige blik van onderwerping. Beide Writing in the Sand en Panifice sou as betrokke kuns geklassifiseer kon word, omdat – in die woorde van Van Gorp (1984:91) – die installasies “... ten dienste wil staan van een bepaalde mens- en maatschappijvisie”. Wanneer dit op Boshoff van toepassing gemaak word, beteken dit dat hy die tafel dek, oftewel die omgewing en ruimte skep om houdings en menings ten opsigte van ander daadwerkelik te verander. Hy doen dit deur die artistieke gesprekke wat sy installasies tussen voorheen onwaarskynlike gespreksgenote ontlok. Hierdie gesprekke kan tot nuwe insigte en kennis van mekaar en tot sosiale verkeer lei. Sonder gesprekvoering kan versoening immers nie plaasvind nie. Boshoff bied aan die voorheen gemarginaliseerde stemlose ’n stem. Sodoende hou die kunstenaar as’ t ware ’n spieël voor die (deelnemende) aanskouers van hoe werkelik menswaardige samelewings daar behoort uit te sien. Deur sy installasies pleit die kunstenaar vir ’n nuwe samelewingsbegrip wat aansluit by die beskouinge van Ricoeur, naamlik ’n bereidheid om met ’n kritiese verbeelding mee te werk aan ’n menslike samelewing.

Terwyl hierdie artikel nie daarop sinspeel dat politici noodwendig ’n belangstelling in kuns en kunstenaars toon of kunswaardeerders is nie, is dit belangrik om daarvan kennis te neem dat kuns die geleentheid en gespreksruimte kan skep vir die deurwerking van ’n verdeelde verlede, omdat aanskouers mekaar in hierdie ruimte deur kuns ontmoet. Kuns se krag binne ’n sosio-politieke omgewing moet nie onderskat word nie, omdat kuns dit wat dikwels moeilik is om te verwoord, visueel kan
verbeeld. Daarom kan kuns as ‘n platform vir oortuigings dien. Aangesien Boshoff se installasies dikwels buite die tradisionele ruimte van ‘n galery geplaas word, is die kans groter dat mense wat nie normaalweg in kuns belangstel nie, dit ook sal sien. Die ongewone estetiese materiale wat hy gebruik en die skaal van sy werke dra ook hiertoe by.

Aan die ander kant is dit wel so dat kuns steeds as ‘n eksklusieve luukse vir bevoorregtes beskou word. Boshoff oorkom hierdie probleem deur juis van ongewone estetiese elemente soos verskillende tale, Bybelse verwysings wat wyd bekend is (en humor gebruik te maak om ook die nie-belangs-tellende visueel by sogenaamde ‘hogere’ kuns te betrek. Sy gebruik van Bybelse verwysings roep aanskouers op tot ‘n menswaardig-georiënteerde respekbetoning aan alle mense. Die installasies bied die ruimte en geleentheid vir nadenke en besinning wat aangegryp behoort te word ter wille van ‘n deurwerking van die verlede en versoening in ‘n gepolariseerde gemeenskap.

In sowel Panifice as Writing in the Sand keer Boshoff bestaande ordes om – die geringstes word geag, hulle is noodsaaklik vir die ontsluiting van die kunswerke. Boshoff werk in sy installasies mee aan ‘n mensliker samelewing en om in ‘n werklik mensvriendelike tydvak in te beweeg. Heel ironies is geskiedenis en versoening nie in graniet geskryf nie. Dit is nie ‘n gegewene nie en Suid-Afrikaners sal op ‘n kreatiewe wyse saam vrede met die verlede moet maak en na oplossings vir die land se verhoudingsprobleme moet soek. Hierin kan kuns ‘n rol speel.

NOTES


4. Hy het egter vigsaktiviste woedend gehad met sy uitspraak dat hy gestort het, ‘as he calculated that the risk of infection was low and, after showering, he would be able to minimize his risks even further (Koelbe & Robers 2007:316).

5. Vgl. Evans (2001:17) se opmerking met betrekking tot Von Ranke se ‘wie es eigentlich gewesen war’ Die outeur stel dat hierdie frase (in Engels) vertaal moet word met ‘how it essentially was’, for Ranke meant not that he just wanted to collect facts, but that he sought to understand the inner being of the past’. Ricoeur (2006:273) stel in sy beoordeling van Von Ranke dat, ‘[T]o be sure, it is not in order to judge past actions, hence to esteem them as great or not, that Ranke states that he will limit himself
to events “as they actually occurred”. This principle, in which I readily read a claim to trustworthiness, was above all else the expression of a restraint, a withdrawal from the region of subjective preferences and a renouncing of selective praise.’ Volledigheidshalwe kan net genoem word dat Ricoeur verder aantoont dat Von Ranke self nie ontkom het aan die gevaar van aanprysing deur geskiedskrywing nie.

6. Hierby moet in aanmerking geneem word dat Ricoeur nie die verbeelding as sodanig ondersoek nie, maar eerder sy ondersoek rig op ’n ‘pattern of imaginativity amid the vast polysemy of imaginative discourse’ (Venema 2000:41).

7. Die verbruikersmark vra nooit na die geskiedenis van die produk, die vervaardiger of die koper se geld nie. Dit is eers in die onlangse verlede die geval – bv. met die Koop Groen-veldtogte, of Koop Eties, waar mense doelbewus kies om sekere produkte te koop om ontwikkeling in arm wêrelddele te help of om ekologies sensitiewe produksiemetodes te help ondersteun.

8. Hierdie webblad is nie meer op die internet beskikbaar nie want dit is vervang met die op-gegradeerde webblaai van 2009 en 2012.

BRONNELYS


Promoting and popularising the asylum: photography and asylum image-making at the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum, 1890-1907

Rory du Plessis
Lecturer in the Department of Visual Arts, University of Pretoria
rory.duplessis@up.ac.za

ABSTRACT

Studying the history of the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum under the medical superintendency of Dr Thomas Duncan Greenlees (1890-1907), the nature of imaging the institution emerged as a point of interest. This article specifically explores how Greenlees promoted and popularised the asylum in order to gain custom from private patients. I argue that one way in which Greenlees created patronage was through the cultivation of a public image of the asylum as ideally suited to the care of middle class patients, as well as promising restoration and recuperation from insanity. In this manner, the image-making of the asylum provided a vital tool to counter public fears and stigma. Furthermore, Greenlees’s image-making acted as a form of public relations with the broader community to initiate public confidence in the establishment.

Keywords: Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum, Thomas Duncan Greenlees, moral therapy, photography, lunatic asylums, Michel Foucault.

Introduction

This article investigates the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum under the medical superintendency of Dr Thomas Duncan Greenlees (1890-1907). Specifically, it explores how Greenlees promoted and popularised the asylum in order to gain custom from private patients. To elucidate further, Greenlees sought to promote the asylum as a treatment option for insanity, and to popularise it amongst the
middle class. In order to achieve this twofold objective, Greenlees was attentive to constructing a public image of the asylum as instrumental in the recovery of insanity while devoted to the care and comfortable provision for the middle class. This very belief in the curative potential of the asylum is an expression of moral therapy.2

An essential component in Greenlees’s image making was the use of photographs. The photographs are striking reflections of the extent to which Greenlees meticulously crafted a positive public image of the asylum. Instead of submitting the photographs to the standard Foucaultian reading that seeks to explore connotations of control, repression and discipline, I suggest that moral therapy’s production and dissemination of positive images cannot be solely read in such limited terms. Accordingly, I argue for a contextual reading of the positive images that accounts for the central tenets and therapeutic initiatives of moral therapy. In other words, I aim to explore the theory and principles of moral therapy in order to provide a historically informed understanding of the production and encoding of the positive images of the asylum.

Background

Eric Engstrom (2012:486) states that the history of psychiatric institutions is an important and prolific field of psychiatric historiography. In particular, this field has become pronounced in its movement away from carceral and repressive narratives of asylums. This movement has significantly led to nuanced descriptions of asylums as fulfilling multiple roles other than just that of discipline (Engstrom 2012:486, 488). Previously, asylum scholarship was entrenched within a dominant discursive theme of discipline. This entrenchment originated and was principally established in the work of Michel Foucault (1961), who argued that the practice of moral therapy at the asylum was an act of patient self-disciplining. However, recent scholarship has criticised some of the original arguments forwarded by Foucault as being far too simplistic and reductive and have sought to provide a much more complex interpretation of the asylum (Wannell 2005:3). To explore further, although there is no doubt that Foucault provides a valid argument regarding patient self-disciplining in moral therapy, he is erroneous in stating that the asylum is primarily authoritarian and repressive (Berks 2005:410).3 Rather the asylum is inherently hinged between two poles: care and curative aims versus repression and discipline (Digby 1983:218). Thus, rather than favouring a singular reading of moral therapy, it needs to be regarded as ‘fundamentally ambiguous’ (Scull 1993:8): the humane and benevolent care offered by moral therapy does offer a marked departure from directly brutal means; yet it also came to be a mechanism for inducing conformity (Scull 1993:8). In sum, studies of the moral therapy practised at asylums should be placed in a tension between the promotion of a humane treatment versus an advancement of self-discipline in the patients (Rutherford 2003:84). It is precisely by adopting such an approach that recent scholarship is able to offer a more nuanced understanding of asylums.
Although colonial asylum history in South Africa (Swartz 2008; Swartz 2009) provides a wide-range of studies that centre on writing accounts of specific institutions, they do not necessarily offer a more nuanced view of the asylum. Instead, these studies can be defined by all sharing one unifying theme, namely, ‘the relationship of colonial psychiatry (and psychiatric institutions) to racism and oppression’ (Swartz 2008:286).⁴ For Swartz (2008:289) this is symptomatic of the reigning discursive formation of asylums as repressive and custodial institutions that guides the researcher to a pre-given set of expectations and results. To elucidate further, the well-established arguments of asylums as inhumane and authoritarian create a hegemonic interpretive framework for colonial asylums that figures race and oppression as the principal coding of archive data (Swartz 2008:289).

One particular expression of this hegemonic framework is research that focuses on the differential treatment and care for black patients in the Cape Colony’s asylums. The basis for the differential treatment of black patients was that they were considered by colonial psychiatrists to be more responsive to physical treatment (for example, physical labour offered under the guise of occupational therapy) than to moral therapy. The reason put forward to explain such responsiveness was that blacks were deemed less refined and less civilised than whites (Deacon 1999:104). This belief put into place practices that had racist consequences (Swartz 2009:71). One such practice was the building of separate institutions for blacks and whites. These included Valkenberg (1891) established for whites only and Fort Beaufort Asylum (1894) which was reserved exclusively for black patients. Asylums that cared for white patients received a higher concentration of resources and access to the therapeutics of the well-designed landscape and architecture of the asylum. In contrast to this, Fort Beaufort Asylum was primarily viewed as cheap custodial care of black patients (Deacon 1999:116-118; Swanson 2001:16; Swartz 1996:30-31; Swartz 2009:71).

The abovementioned studies underscore that the colonial situation had a direct influence on the treatment offerings of the asylum to be affected by the race of the patient (Digby 2008:1197; Swanson 1994:25-6; Swanson 2001; Swartz 1995; Swartz 2009:71). Nevertheless, such findings may unwittingly present a degree of over-simplification of the asylum by disregarding archived information that confronts the researcher with narratives that depart from the dominant discursive formation of colonial oppression (Swartz 2008:289). In other words, while the differential treatment of the black insane and the racist practices of colonial asylums and psychiatry have been explored at length, interest in discussions outside of racial discrimination has been but negligible. In the process, asylums in South Africa are cast solely as emblematic of colonial power relations. However, this formation provides a misleading unitary reading of the asylum that does not account for other narratives that are also present in the asylum. This is not a call to discount the black patients’ subjugation under colonial authority, but it does appeal for a more nuanced description of the asylum, one that acknowledges it to be an extremely complex site and/or institution embedded in multiple meanings and diverse purposes (Engstrom 2012:488; Swartz 2008:298).
One aspect that has only received passing reference has been Greenlees’s care for private patients at the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum. When such care has been described it has primarily been superficially outlined in order to indicate the extent of the differential treatment received across the races. In contrast to this approach, I seek to place particular focus on the treatment of private patients in order to highlight a number of important trajectories that have been unaccounted for in South African asylum historiography. One such trajectory is a commercial rationale in which Greenlees required private patients to reduce the running costs of the asylum (Deacon, van Heyningen, Swartz & Swanson 2004:243). In order to acquire and obtain private patients, Greenlees had to ‘prime the pump’ (Porter 1987:165) to create custom or patronage amongst the white, middle class public. It is precisely this point that I am interested in exploring – how Greenlees promoted and publicised the asylum as suitable for private patients. I argue that one way in which Greenlees created patronage was through the cultivation of a public image of the asylum as ideally suited to the care of middle class patients, as well as promising restoration and recuperation from insanity. I endeavour to draw on recent scholarship that pertains to asylum image making (Cross 2010:75; Godbey 2000:36-37; MacKinnon 2003; Topp 2007:241) to act as a necessary scaffolding to explore and examine Greenlees’s very own attempts at such image making.

In the discussion that follows it will become apparent that Greenlees’s public image of the asylum served to counter the dominant belief that the asylum was a carceral repository while also addressing the stigma attached to insanity and the asylum. In this manner, the image making of the asylum provided a vital tool to counter public fears and stigma. Furthermore, Greenlees’s image making acted as a form of public relations with the broader community to initiate public confidence in the establishment. An essential component in Greenlees’s image making was the use of photographs. The photographs are striking reflections of the extent to which Greenlees meticulously crafted a positive public image.

The representations of the positive public image are at odds with studies in the visual culture of asylums that are overplayed by stereotypical images of asylums as carceral institutions that resemble prisons. In this regard it is clear that while asylum historiography has moved beyond carceral narratives, the same cannot be said for studies of visual culture. Even when positive images are addressed, they are either overshadowed by the presence of negative images (MacKinnon 2003:124) or submitted to a Foucaultian reading that seeks to reveal or expose markers of docility as connotative of patient self-disciplining. However, moral therapy’s production and dissemination of positive images cannot be solely read in such limited terms. Instead, I argue for a contextual reading of the positive images that accounts for the central tenets and therapeutic initiatives of moral therapy. In other words, I aim to explore the theory and principles of moral therapy in order to provide a historically informed understanding of the production and encoding of positive images of the asylum. Such a contextual reading or exploration will outline three interrelated themes. First, the positive images were deployed to represent the curative intent of the asylum. Accordingly, the images...
stressed the normalcy, well-ordered and civilised character of the insane patient as indicative of the restorative and recuperative potential of the asylum. Second, and related to the first point, the images revealed not just the curative intent but the humane treatment and care received at the asylum. Prior to moral therapy the traditional imagery of asylum treatment was based on taming madness via discipline, in moral therapy the imagery is transformed to concentrate on humane treatment within a domestic environment. Third, the positive images can be read as one record of the asylum’s material culture and commitment to therapeutic initiatives. Moral therapy postulated that the curative agency of the asylum resided in providing aesthetically pleasing and cheerful surroundings in which the patients would be occupied by various recreational and occupational pursuits. Along these lines, asylums were cheerful, pleasant, attractive and comfortable in appearance.

Moral therapy and the domestication of insanity

Moral therapy postulated that residing in an asylum offered a cure to insanity. The cure was neither derived from the surgery performed at the asylum nor from the administration of drugs, but by offering patients a wholesome diet, regular employments, diversified amusements and cheerful asylum interiors (Burdett 1891a:186; Sankey 1856:466-467). Accordingly, the asylum doctor was tasked to occupy the patient with new pursuits or distract and amuse them through external stimuli and aesthetically pleasing experiences (Browne 1864:312; Burdett 1891a:186-187) in order to ‘extirpate pernicious and perilous habits of thought or actions’ (Browne 1864:314). In this formation, the therapeutic value of cheerful interiors as well as occupation and recreation lay in diverting the mind of the patient from unwarranted melancholic thoughts while replacing and restoring healthy trains of thoughts (Browne 1864:318).

The doctor’s role was not only involved in ‘prescribing’ such activities ‘as carefully as any medicine ... to the needs of each individual case’ (Care and treatment 1891:569-570), but in stimulating and influencing the patients’ thoughts and behaviour through surroundings and daily routines (Conolly 1856:55). This is indicative of a central tenet of moral therapy that postulated that every aspect of asylum life – no matter how great or small – was capable of affecting the mind and thus had the potential to act as an agent or remedy to cure insanity (Browne 1864:314). Consequently, the doctor was admonished to remove all objects that could agitate the patient and it became incumbent of the doctor to surround the patient with objects that act favourably on the mind (Conolly 1856:55). Along these lines, the ward surroundings were believed to have a powerful effect on the patient and much attention was placed on providing cheerfully designed interiors of comparative comfort (Burdett 1891b:47). The full extent of such provision included:
Doors opening into gardens; flowers blooming round the windows; wide and light galleries; windows commanding agreeable views; sitting-rooms and bed-rooms, where neither bars, nor guards, nor heavy locks and keys are seen or required; convenient furniture; cleanliness everywhere; good bedding; baths and lavatories of the best construction; provision for warmth in winter, and for coolness and shade in summer and every addition that can aid or protect the feeble, and benefit the sick, by day or by night, affording alleviation, and comfort, and rest for all the forms of pain and sorrow ... (Conolly 1856:82).

Evident in this quote is a conscious drive to move away from the image of the asylum as a prison encompassed by mechanical restraint, punishment and wretched abandonment of patients. Instead, the focus was on assimilating the asylum to that of a home, of lessening the differences between them so that ‘whole surroundings and conditions of life in asylums should be as home-like ... as possible’ (Care and treatment 1891:570). In principal this meant using design features and elements to make the patient ‘almost unmindful of being the inmate of an asylum’ (Conolly 1856:145). This resulted in great importance being placed on designing and constructing the asylum to be homelike – the extent to which is evident in medical officers indicating the furnishings, articles and fittings required to make such a resemblance apparent in asylums (Burdett 1891a:121; Burdett 1891b:41; Eastwood 1863:324).

The homelike asylum did not just provide a comfortable surrounding for the patient but also enabled and promoted the patients ‘to conduct themselves as much as they can like other members of society’ (Eastwood 1863:324). Implicit in this regard is that a homelike space would instil in the patient habits and behaviours that befitted models of ‘normal’ conduct. Thus an important objective of asylum design was to immerse the patient in an environment that meticulously emulated the home life in order to enable patients to conduct themselves like other members of society (Parry-Jones 1972:184). In this formation, immersing the patients in a homelike asylum acted as a curative technique by facilitating a return to sanity and to ‘normal’ life (Terbenche 2005:33; Wynter 2011:46). In a Foucaultian reading, such a curative technique is rather regarded as an act of patient self-disciplining. The patients are required to cooperate in becoming docile, to regulate and manage their own disagreeable behaviour to fit into the models of ‘normal’ conduct which will consequently ensure their successful release from the asylum as ‘cured’ (Foucault 2009:237).

For Andrew Scull (1983), the homelike asylum is indicative of a new iconography of treating madness which he terms the domestication of insanity. Prior to the nineteenth century the traditional imagery of the treatment of madness was dominated by carceral custodianship in which the inmates lived in dreadful living conditions. Furthermore, the prevailing principle was that madness could be tamed by discipline. However, in sharp contrast to the aforementioned points, in the nineteenth century it was believed that the dangerous and disturbing aspects of madness could be rendered tranquil and tractable ‘amidst the comforts of domesticity’ (Scull 1983:245). Along these lines, the domestication of insanity meant that the insane received treatment in an environment that was explicitly domestic.
(Scull 1983:246). In spite of providing a new iconography of the treatment of madness, the domes-
tication of insanity still relied on the trope of madness as dangerous and stereotypically figured as
brutally bestial, dishevelled and dirty. The only divergence of the stereotype occurs following the
admittance of the patient to a homelike asylum in which a number of transformations take place that
include cleanliness and orderly conduct. This narrative or ‘quasi-mythical scene’ (Scull 1983:245) is
elocuently evident in Conolly (1856:154-155) expressing the following:

A man of rank comes in, ragged, and dirty, and unshaven, and with the pallor of a dungeon
upon him; wild in aspect, and as if crazed beyond recovery. He has passed months in a
lonely apartment, looking out on a dead wall; generally fastened in a chair. He has the
appearance of a mad beggar; and all decent habitudes seem to have been forgotten.
Liberty to walk at all hours of the cheerful day in gardens or fields, and care and attention,
metamorphose him into the well dressed and well bred gentleman he used to be: he
discontinues various habits and antics, the growth of solitude and vacuity of mind and
heart; and the colour of health is equally restored to his complexion and to his thoughts. In
time, the tranquil days and nights, the regularity of hours of exercise and meals, good diet,
cheerful social intercourse, and hopeful words often heard, together with the administration
of baths, and all the medical and therapeutic means practicable as well as obviously
necessary in some cases, produce a permanent impression on the whole frame of body
and mind.

Thus in the setting of the asylum, the ghastly grotesque image of madness gives way to icons of
health, restoration and codes of civility shared with the outside world.

**Moral therapy at the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum**

The Cape Colony’s dedication to asylum reform and the tenets of moral therapy was reflected in the
appointment of Dr William Dodds as the Inspector of Asylums. In this role Dodds made a number
of site inspections of the colony’s asylums and reported on their implementation of moral therapy.
In regard to the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum, Dodds’s inspection reports of 1889 made a number
of unfavourable comments on the appearance of the day and visitor rooms as well as the lack of
recreational activities. Overall, the asylum was not in a satisfactory condition and improvements
in the direction of moral therapy were still desirable (CCP 1/2/1/77). However, an astonishing
improvement at the asylum was recorded from 1890 with the appointment of Greenlees as the new
medical superintendent. Greenlees’s commitment to moral therapy is evidenced in his annual
reports that scrupulously provide an account of the activities, recreational offerings and decoration
of the asylum. The plethora of amusements listed in his annual reports included amongst others:
regular dances, picnics by ox wagons to sites of interest in Grahamstown, magic lantern entertain-
ments, concerts, excursions to the entertainment offerings of Grahamstown, and the establishment
of an instrumental band. Outdoor recreations included for men, cricket practice every week, and for
women, croquet or lawn tennis (CCP 1/2/1/79).
For Greenlees (CCP 1/2/1/104), the amusements in an asylum formed one of the most crucial factors in the treatment of the mentally ill. The importance that Greenlees placed on amusement and recreation was for him attributed to the numerous beneficial effects it had on the patients. First, they reduced the boredom and monotony of asylum life (Asylum life 1896:341). To mitigate monotony, Greenlees (CCP 1/2/1/92) stated that:

> efforts are made to provide amusement, instruction and recreation to the patients. Hardly a day passes but something or other is ‘on’ and our resources are often put to the test to introduce new and varied means of amusement, for repetition in these as in many other things has the effect of producing that monotony it is their object to dissipate.

Of significance in combating boredom was the use of excursions to Grahamstown as the new surroundings and people were believed to add variety to the patients’ lives (CCP 1/2/1/82). In a similar way, performances at the asylum by the local residents of Grahamstown enabled the patients ‘to spend many “happy evenings,” where otherwise the time would hang drearily and wearily on their hands’ (Asylum life 1896:341). Second, by patients and people from the town visiting one another, it helped to diminish in the patients ‘the feeling of separation from the outside world which is so keenly felt by many patients, and to brighten their lives’ (Dodds in CCP 1/2/1/84). Third, and as previously mentioned, amusements and recreations serve to divert the patient’s thoughts from ‘unhealthy brooding and introspection’ (Asylum life 1896:341) or from conducting ‘mischievous and degraded habits’ (CCP 1/2/1/82).

A central focus in Dodds’s reports was recommendations to provide clean and decorated rooms as ‘making the wards more cheerful and comfortable tells beneficially on the patients’ (CCP1/2/1/79). Accordingly, bare and dreary wards were urged to be made cheerful and brighter (CCP 1/2/1/79). Greenlees was significantly involved in the asylum decoration, interior design and decor. Under Greenlees’s superintendency, the wards and various rooms were transformed in appearance to be bright, clean, comfortable, well-kept and cheerful (CCP 1/2/1/79; CCP 1/2/1/82). Greenlees’s design and decoration endeavours even reached outdoors to the male airing courts which he aimed to make aesthetically pleasing by planting flowerbeds (CCP 1/2/1/79).

Besides all the wards and dormitories being bright, clean and well kept (CCP 1/2/1/82), Greenlees’s superintendency also included a number of additions and improvements to cater for private patients. From the commencement of Greenlees’s tenure he made considerable effort to encourage the admission of private patients at the early stages of insanity. In this conception, the asylum was envisaged as a hospital for the treatment of acute and recoverable cases of insanity (CCP 1/2/1/79). Accordingly, the wards that were reserved for private patients were furnished in an exceedingly comfortable manner that reflected the aesthetic and tastes of the Victorian middle class (CCP 1/2/1/82). In the rooms for ladies and gentlemen, marble mantel-pieces were erected. Although these mantle-pieces were ornamental they provided ‘quite a smart appearance to the wards’
The appropriate appearance of the private wards was outlined by Greenlees (CCP 1/2/1/84) as an important factor in gaining custom from private patients:

The Ladies Room has had an ornamental wooden dado, stained to imitate walnut, fitted in; and a border of hand-painted flowers also, which tend to give this room a bright and cheerful appearance, and it is now quite suited for patients of a better class.

The steadfast fervour for catering for the material and aesthetic tastes of the private patients was matched by providing for the amusements and recreational activities of private patients which included being taken to the seaside for a ‘change of air and scene’ (Asylum life 1896:341).

Following the improvements to the asylum, as well as the provision of suitable accommodation for private patients – wards that were bright, attractive and comfortable and recreational offerings befitting middle class status – the asylum received a considerable increase in private patients (CCP 1/2/1/82). Moreover, the asylum was favoured by private patients from both the local district and broader region that wished to benefit from its ‘curative agencies’ (Dodds in CCP 1/2/1/82). It is imperative to note that the curative agencies for private patients moved beyond recreation and occupation in pleasant surroundings to include exceptionally comfortable provision – even luxury – for such patients. Without the prerequisite affluent ambiance and adornment, it was believed that private patients would never recuperate and could even be dangerous for the well-being. Such a view is encapsulated by Browne (1837:169) stating that:

To strip a man suddenly, and for no reason that he can comprehend, of all the luxuries and elegancies to which he has been accustomed, and expose him to the bald simplicity or meagreness observed in establishments for the insane, would overthrow a tottering mind, and totally crush one that has been already weakened. Upon all men the transfer from a palace to a cell in Bedlam, would be a dangerous experiment, and upon such as are bowed down with misery, or rabid with passion, the effect cannot be salutary.

In this manner, the curative agencies of the asylum for private patients became contingent on the necessity for luxurious provision and pampering of the patients. By 1898, the large numbers of private patients were regarded by Greenlees as a sign of the asylum’s growing popularity (CCP 1/2/1/108). Greenlees was so confident of such signs that he continued to provide new buildings to provide ‘excellent accommodation’ for gentlemen ‘paying the highest rates of board’ (CCP 1/2/1/112).

The improvements made to the asylum catered for the needs, amenities and luxurious accommodation required by private patients. Although the discussions thus far have indicated how the improvements and additions at the asylum reflected its suitability for the care of middle class patients, what has not yet been identified and explored is how Greenlees promoted and popularised the asylum in order to gain custom from private patients. To elucidate further, Greenlees sought to both promote the asylum as a treatment option for insanity, and to popularise it amongst the middle class. In order to achieve this twofold objective, Greenlees was attentive to constructing a
public image of the asylum as instrumental in the recovery of insanity, while devoted to the care and comfortable provision for the middle class.

**Public image of the asylum**

Greenlees’s attention to a public image of the asylum was largely an act of public relations. Accordingly, Greenlees was to a lesser extent interested in marketing and advertising to gain custom but to a large extent focussed on establishing the public’s confidence in and acceptance of the asylum. The public image of the asylum was carefully crafted over multiple platforms and events each of which publicised the achievements and advantages of the establishments. These included: printed documents, like the asylum’s own periodical *The Fort England Mirror*, which functioned like a brochure designed to inform readers and attract clientele; talks and speeches presented by Greenlees that aimed to de-stigmatise mental illness; and opening the asylum to the public for inspection and entertainments. Such acts of ‘institutional display’ served to display its achievements to the broader community, but also to counter stereotypes of insanity as brutish and animalistic. In the discussion that follows, it becomes evident that the creation and maintenance of the asylum’s public image was a central professional concern for Greenlees (see also Tomes 1994:129).

> **Publicity photographs**

Greenlees produced a large series of photographs of the asylum that were distributed for public consumption (CCP 1/2/1/84). For Brookes (2011:30), such photographs, which were produced for public display, can be defined as publicity photographs. Greenlees’s set of photographs specifically promoted the asylum as a place of recovery suitable for accommodating private patients. Figures 1 and 2 displays the lavish interior of the ladies sitting-room. The overall impression created is far removed from any stereotypical images of asylums as carceral. There are no signs of mechanical restraint, the absence of any prison-like resemblances (for example, bars on the window) and no forms of discomfort or punishment. Instead, the rooms are pristinely clean, immersed in opulent ornament while the aesthetic furnishings and interiors reveal refined sentiment. The abundantly adorned mantles and tables filled with vases and pot-plants, and other paraphernalia of all kinds most certainly expressed a Victorian residence appropriately decorated for ladies. Such an ensemble of elements allowed the viewers of the photographs to recognise the asylum interior as typical of the domestic setting of middle to higher socio-economic class (Hickman 2005:55). In this way, the representation of domesticity at the asylum reflected a specific image of ‘home’ and a particular way of life, namely one that expressed the gentility and refinement of an affluent and wealthy socio-economic class. In view of this, the prominent kinship between home and asylum reflected in the photographs was not only based on underscoring the therapeutics on offer at the asylum.
(see the discussion on the domesticity of insanity), but also indicating its ideal suitability for caring for the provision and comforts of private patients. Thus, the humane treatment offered at the asylum moved beyond humanitarianism, health and healing to include resemblance to the homes from which the private patients had been withdrawn, and were accustomed to – luxurious comforts and elegant interiors.

**Figure 1:** Ladies' sitting-room, Fort England Asylum, Grahamstown showing period furniture, c. 1890s. (Reproduced by permission of the Western Cape Archives and Record Service, reference number: AG 403).
The photographs not only communicated the asylum’s benevolence in treating and caring for the material needs of the private patients, but also served as a form of public relations to attract such patients to the establishment (Hickman 2005:55-56; Maryrose 2001:41). To elucidate further, it was common practice within asylums to attract wealthy patients through depicting the lavish interior of the asylum (Guyatt 2004:60; MacKenzie 1992:23; Tomes 1994:145). Accordingly, one can argue that Greenlees was not only concerned with providing aesthetic interiors as an important component in the moral therapy offered to the patients – to place them in cheerful surroundings in order to mitigate melancholic thoughts – but was also concerned about how the character of the interior rooms, captured by photography, could favourably impress viewers. The photographs held the potential to indicate the devotion of the asylum to the care and provision of private patients and this may consequently have led to generating custom for the asylum (Kirkbride 1854:11-12). Thus the asylum’s decor takes on a new significance beyond aspects pertaining to patient therapeutics. Attention is now also placed on how the photographs of the aesthetically pleasing interiors of the asylum can secure and reinforce the public’s confidence in the asylum. In the light of this, it can be argued that

Figure 2: Ladies’ sitting-room, Fort England Asylum, Grahamstown showing period furniture, c. 1890s. (Reproduced by permission of the Western Cape Archives and Record Service, reference number: AG 405).
The interior photographs of the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum were an integral component of the construction and propagation of the public image of the asylum as being dedicated to providing an appropriate setting for private patients to regain their serenity. Moreover, they also contributed to the uptake of private patients.

The Fort England Mirror

At the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum, Greenlees launched the publication of an asylum magazine called The Fort England Mirror (CCP 1/2/1/82). A number of issues appeared each year for several years (CCP 1/2/1/108). The intention of the magazine was to provide a source of amusement and instruction to the asylum patients and the outside world at large (CCP 1/2/1/84; CCP 1/2/1/92; CCP 1/2/1/108). Dodds (CCP 1/2/1/82) regarded its publication as providing ‘proof of the effort that is being made to bring this asylum abreast of the best institutions of the kind’. Dodds’s esteemed praise can be attributed to the magazine providing the asylum with further therapeutic initiatives. To expound further, Browne (1864:334) contended that asylum periodicals contributed to the rest and amusement of the patients. Furthermore, the inclusion of articles by patients provided an illustration of ‘how closely the insane mind may, in its operations, approach the standard of health’ of sane individuals (Browne 1864:334). In this sense, asylum periodicals could offset stereotypical conceptions of insanity as a loss of rationality while providing indications that its contributors were en route to a full recovery.

The magazine also included descriptions of the activities and events at the asylum. In such articles, the outside world was kept abreast of life in the asylum. These articles provided a communication channel to the broader outside community (Maryrose 2001:2, 9) and kept them informed. Although the outside subscribers to the magazine included the neighbours surrounding the asylum and a number of interested members from society (Asylum life 1896:341), Greenlees also submitted the magazine to the South African Medical Record,11 the Journal of Mental Science12 and Grahamstown’s local newspaper, The Grahamstown Journal. The wide dissemination of the magazine to several audiences – professional and community readers – as well as its contents and use of images, allows for an argument to outline how it operated in a similar manner to asylum brochures. In other words, in the discussion that follows, I will show how the magazine acted like a brochure to attract and inform readers who might be considering asylum treatment for themselves or for their relatives and friends.

The asylum events recorded on the pages of The Fort England Mirror were neither mundane nor reflective of the general activities offered to all patients. Instead, the articles featured exciting and eccentric events – for example, spending a week at a hydropathic resort – and the performances of the asylum’s resident Fort England Cricket Team (Reviews and notices 1894). The content of such
articles was clearly not indicative of activities offered to all patients but only to private patients. It is precisely the articles’ shared focus on the amenities and activities for private patients that link it explicitly to the content of asylum brochures. A number of studies (Parry-Jones 1972:105; Wynter 2007:211) explicate that asylum advertising and brochures relied on providing an account of activities and marketing the amenities and recreational facilities to gain clientele. Accordingly, the magazine’s articles share the typical content of asylum advertising typical of the nineteenth century.

Of interest is that there is no record of any of the articles authored by patients levelling any criticism towards the asylum. Instead, the articles authored by the patients are identical to Greenlees’s construction of the public image of the asylum (see also Goffman 1971:96). The favourable view of the asylum as described by the patients does not necessarily show coercion or evidence of editing on the part of the asylum administrators, but rather suggests that, for the private patient, life in the asylum may indeed have been as idyllic as the public image suggests. For the private patients, the asylum was similar to ‘homes of luxury’ (Greenlees 1903a:18) which allowed the patients the expression of individual taste, a significant degree of liberty and recreational pursuits befitting their class standing. Even though the articles represent the life of only a small fraction of the patients, and may even contribute to fabricating the impression that the public image of the asylum is a reality for all patients (Goffman 1971:99), the written accounts did significantly affirm the public image of the asylum. Accordingly, Greenlees’s construction of the public image of the asylum was unequivocally supported by the patients’ articles and favourable testimonials.

The argument for The Fort England Mirror acting like a brochure is further forwarded by investigating the design of the magazine as well as the images presented in it. The Grahamstown Journal regularly reviewed the latest issues of The Fort England Mirror which included evaluating the readability, scope and style of its contents as well as its design. All of the evaluations were overwhelmingly favourable and included confirmatory statements such as:

> it is a very handsome little production, printed in inks of various colours, and in type clear and clean, making it worthy, in its neat cover, of a place on the drawing-room table.
> The contents are diverse in quality and interesting in character (The Fort England 1892).

Of particular interest to note is that the magazine was valued for its design features to the extent that it warranted display on drawing room tables. In this regard, the magazine was not simply deemed a standard Victorian periodical of low quality design and printing, but was esteemed for its format and presentation that allowed for central display in Victorian rooms that were intended for socialising and entertaining guests. By the magazine receiving prominent placement in such rooms, one can infer that a number of conversations with guests were inspired by discussing the activities of the asylum or reading about them. Furthermore, we may also assume that such conversations were centred on the showcased achievements of the asylum, thereby potentially assisting in securing the public’s confidence in the asylum.
By 1892, *The Fort England Mirror* was using photographs for illustrations which, according to Greenlees (CCP 1/2/1/84), added to the magazine’s ‘usefulness by giving the world an idea of the Asylum and its surroundings’. The importance placed on the asylum’s surroundings was based on gaining patronage. To explain further, asylums also relied on the depiction of a well-maintained and well-tended appearance of the grounds to attract private patients (Wynter 2007:211; Wynter 2011:43; Ziff 2004:37). Apart from the well-tended gardens and picturesque surroundings that were connotative of the therapeutic possibilities and curative agency of the asylum (du Plessis 2012), it was increasingly important to stress that the asylum premises possessed the character of a gentleman’s residence in order to attract and cater for the middle and upper classes (Parry-Jones 1972:105). One way in which the character of a gentleman’s residence could be represented at the asylum was by the inclusion of a photograph of the Fort England Cricket Team (Reviews and Notices 1894).

The representation of cricket may be argued to be a purposeful and decisive expression of public image making of the asylum for a number of reasons. First, cricket was regarded as a healthy, disciplined game which encouraged self-respect, self-control and appreciation for orderly behaviour. In other words, participation in the sport of cricket encouraged patients to conform to an act of regulated self-disciplining and the adoption of respectable and restrained behaviour (MacKinnon 2009:145). Second, apart from reducing boredom and inducing conformity, cricket presented a bridge to connect the asylum and society at large (Ellis 2013b:84; MacKinnon 2009:143). Cricket provided one of the foremost means of integrating the asylum into the community. To substantiate further, at the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum cricket matches were played with outside teams from as far afield as Port Elizabeth (CCP 1/2/1/89), and when the matches were played at the asylum, Greenlees noted that they were very popular events with the local community and resulted in the asylum’s grounds looking ‘bright and cheerful with visitors, patients and cricketers’ (in CCP 1/2/1/82). In this way, cricket matches were believed to mitigate any feelings in the patients of being a ‘little cut off from the world’ (Dodds in CCP 1/2/1/84). Lastly, cricket matches were seen as an important opportunity to counter and remedy any public prejudice against asylums or the mentally ill. This point is evocatively expressed by Dodds stating that cricket matches ‘tend to correct the extravagant ideas that many even educated people still have in relation to asylums and the insane, and to enlist their sympathy on behalf of the sufferers who need all that enlightened medical science can do for them, but on whose behalf too few voices are raised’ (Dodds in CCP 1/2/1/84). Thus, cricket matches provided an important means of fostering communication and public relations between the asylum and the outside world, as well as affording an avenue to de-stigmatise insanity (MacKinnon 2009:145; Miron 2004:68).

By outlining this discursive formation of cricket within moral therapy, I consequently want to explore how it can open up a multiplicity of interpretations within one image of a cricket match. Figure 3, titled ‘Fort England Asylum Cricket Club versus public school cricket club at City Lords, Grahamstown,
November 1892’, presents an idyllic picture of a cricket match captured on a sunny day with a panoramic view of the city of Grahamstown in the background. Evidenced from the title is the fact that we are looking at a match played outside the grounds of the asylum. Accordingly, we could read the image as indicative of the porous relations between the asylum and the community. Moreover, it is strikingly apparent that the players from the two cricket clubs look similar in terms of dress, pose and action. To explore further along these lines, the asylum players are not dressed in an asylum uniform, instead they are dressed like all the players on the field in match attire. This may suggest that patients were not solely marked by an identity of an asylum patient, but adopted the attire befitting sporting occasions. Regarding pose and action, all the players depicted are poised according to their relevant positions played in the match. For this reason we can appreciate that the therapeutic benefit of playing cricket resulted in asylum patients adopting the behaviour suitable for specific events. In sum, the viewer is actually confronted with the indistinctness between patients and non-patients. Consequently, the image may propose that patients cannot be marked as ‘mad’ in terms of dress (wearing an institutional uniform) or demeanour and behaviour.

Figure 3: Fort England Asylum Cricket Club versus public school cricket club at City Lords, Grahamstown, November 1892. (Reproduced by permission of the Western Cape Archives and Record Service, reference number: AG 419).
This proposition potentially acted to challenge the stigma of mental illness by countering the stereotypes of the animality of madness. The propriety of the patients and the absence of any disturbing appearances may have counteracted the popular perception of insanity, as well as stimulating and shaping the public engagement and debate with the asylum and insanity. This argument is continued further in a later section (see Photography and de-stigmatising mental illness).

More specific to the context of *The Fort England Mirror*, the image is a showcase and testament to the asylum catering for the amusements of private patients. These amusements and recreations were not just based on therapeutic intent, but also helped to maintain the gentlemanly class of the patients even within the walls of the asylum. Thus, the asylum did not strip patients from their relative class and social position on entering the asylum but actively preserved such positions. By preserving the class and social standing of patients, Greenlees demonstrates a scrupulous regard for attracting private patients. Yet Greenlees did not just construct a veneer of fulfilling the needs and wants of the private patients but was undoubtedly concerned with ensuring for their provision. As is evidenced from the asylum’s annual reports, Greenlees was committed to the comfort of private patients. This commitment meant that the private patients received luxurious homelike comforts, which were believed to ensure the therapeutic potential of the asylum, while the activities of the asylum allowed for the maintenance and performances of class status (see Sidlauskas 2013:3).

Asylum visiting

A central thrust in moral therapy was the curability of insanity derived from residing in the asylum. However, the promotion of this tenet was hindered by the stigma attached to the asylum. Greenlees (1903:122) admitted that even subsequent to a patient’s successful recovery and discharge from the asylum, the mere fact that the patient was once ‘in an Asylum will injure him socially, and perhaps financially, for the rest of his life’. To delineate further, not only were people still frightened of asylums and believed them to be closely aligned with ‘gaols’ (Greenlees 1903b:122), but former patients themselves found it difficult to re-enter society owing to the stigma attached to mental illness. Greenlees (1910:2) actively sought to ‘suggest a remedy’ to such acts of public prejudice. One such means was by opening the asylum up to visits from the public (CCP 1/2/1/104; CCP 1/2/1/108). Greenlees enthusiastically encouraged visits from the public and noted the large number of visitors on numerous occasions that were favourably impressed by the asylum (CCP 1/2/1/108). More specifically, Greenlees (CCP 1/2/1/104) confidently posited that such visits helped to mitigate stigma against asylums – a sentiment evident in him stating that ‘the more the public know of the internal working of an asylum the sooner will their prejudice against such institutions disappear’.

Greenlees’s active encouragement of asylum visiting as an act of public relations is directly at odds with the reigning discursive formation of visiting as a form of voyeurism. However, a number of
studies have challenged the conventional reading of asylum visiting as restricted to acts of voyeurism (Andrews 1991; Miron 2004). These studies have also compellingly outlined the positive aspects of opening the asylum to visitors (Andrews 1991). Fundamentally, asylum visiting prevented the complete isolation of patients from greater society. In addition, it provided the asylum administrators with a means to educate the public on the causes and treatment of insanity (Miron 2004:2-3). In this role, asylum administrators aimed to promote the practice of asylum visiting as an approach to instructing and enlightening the public on asylum treatment in order to counter any forms of stigma attached to the institutions. By providing opportunities for the public to visit asylums:

> they may see something of the inner life that is led; they would then find that though lunatics are “shut up within the walls of an asylum,” to use the current expression, yet that those walls contain persons who enjoy a fair amount of the pleasures and comforts of life, and are as happy as many of those who pity them; that they enjoy a considerable measure of liberty, which is being gradually extended, and which is capable of still further judicious extension (Eastwood 1863:326-327).

Recognising this assumption, Greenlees’s practice of opening the asylum to public visits was a common practice amongst asylum administrators who strove to de-stigmatise asylums (see Miron 2004). Such practices were hinged around making the asylum as accessible as possible to the public as a means to emphasise the transparency of the asylum regimen to non-restraint, humanitarianism and care (Miron 2004:56; Topp 2007:252). The direct benefits of this stance included securing public confidence in the asylum and gaining an increase in custom (Miron 2004:2).

Although there is no doubt that some of the visitors came to the asylum to gape and gawk at the patients, there were others who certainly came to admire the asylum, while others offered activities and engaged with the patients (Miron 2004:2-3; Showalter 1987:37). The motives of the visitors who sought a freak show or expected a voyeuristic spectacle did not deter asylums from being open to the public owing to the potential such visits had to enlighten at least some individuals:

> Although some may visit the asylum for idle curiosity, to a reasonable extent, visiting is advantageous as it gives the community an opportunity of being disabused of old prejudices and of knowing the kind of therapy offered at the asylum (Kirkbride 1854:68).

Overall, asylum superintendents believed that the public visitations were the best means by which public confidence could be gained (Miron 2004:57). Even when attention was paid to regulating the conduct of unscrupulous visitors to the asylum, which included impressing on them ‘that the patients they see are always to be treated as ladies and gentlemen and that levity and rudeness of behaviour is quite as objectionable’ (Kirkbride 1854:69), this was not at the expense of encouraging and valuing the role of the well-intended visitor (Andrews 1991:19).
The porosity of the asylum to the outside world and community (see Ellis 2013a:4) cannot just be accounted for in terms of public relations, but also needs to acknowledge its therapeutic intent. Asylum superintendents believed that the well-intentioned visitor may contribute to the well-being of the patient by ‘alleviating the affliction, perhaps even of promoting the convalescence’ (Hawkins 1877:10) in offering services of various kinds. As already noted, one such service offered by the public included providing amusements and entertainments to the patients (Hawkins 1877:14). The annual reports of the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum are brimming with the extensive entertainments offered by the community to the patients at the asylum. In addition to offering entertainments, members of the community also visited the asylum on a regular basis as an act of friendly concern for them. Emblematic of this concern was the custom known as ‘flower Sunday’ when several teachers and scholars from the different Sunday schools in Grahamstown visited the patients and gave each of them a bouquet (Sampson 1982:13). The full resonance of such events in helping the patients is spelt out in this extract penned in the nineteenth century:

To a patient who rarely or never had been visited, what a novel pleasure it would be to find someone from the outside world taking friendly interest in herself. How greatly would any unaccustomed little gift be appreciated. The prospect of another visit, even after a long interval, would help to relieve the monotony and dullness of asylum life. It is not too much to assert that such sympathy might impart fresh interest to existence, and, in some cases, accelerate recovery, or render less wearisome continuance within hospital walls during the period of necessary sojourn (Hawkins 1877:11).

From the treatise presented, it is clear that connections between the asylum and surrounding community were sustained through entertainment offerings and humanitarian interest on the part of the public. However, it is important to note that such connections were also forged on the part of the asylum. During Greenlees’s tenure he provided a number of events at the asylum that were for both the patients and public community. For example, when the asylum staff offered variety entertainment to the patients, the wider public was also invited. Furthermore, The Grahamstown Journal was invited to such events and reported on them in their newspaper columns (Entertainment at ... 1892; Fort England ... 1894). The news coverage of the asylum also included the reporting of additions and alterations to the buildings of the asylum (Red-Letter day 1894), as well as the cricket matches between the asylum’s team and outside teams (see Cricket 1892). In this way, the press’ reporting of the asylum established it as a community institution that offered events and festivities of local importance. In inviting the press to the asylum’s events, Greenlees was not only able to establish the asylum as a prominent institution in the community but also secure a positive public image of the asylum. To explain further, Greenlees provided suitable events to stage the successes and the middle class status of the asylum to the press. Accordingly, Greenlees provided the press with a positive framework on which to report on the asylum which corresponded to his image making of the asylum.13
Greenlees invited the scrutiny of the public gaze into the asylum; however, it was not the patients that were intrusively gazed upon as a form of vulgar spectatorship but rather the public image of the asylum. Greenlees provided a polished platform of the asylum, one that mirrored his promulgated public image of the asylum. However, what is significant is that the practices noted take place in the context of ‘institutional display’ (Goffman 1971) in which the public are provided with a carefully orchestrated image of the establishment. Visitors were most likely only shown the patients who were cooperative, well-behaved and in acute and recent states of insanity, in wards that are reserved for the private patients and hence luxuriously furnished, immaculately neat and pristinely clean (Goffman 1971:96). Thus the public may not necessarily receive an inclusive view of the asylum but only a ‘dressed-up view’ (Goffman 1971:95) which pertained to the care and treatment of private patients.

Photography and de-stigmatising mental illness

Whereas in the preceding sections I have argued that photography provided a useful tool in the de-stigmatisation of the asylum, in the section that follows, I claim that they are also a decisive tool in countering the stigma of mentally ill persons. The claim is supported by outlining how the stigma of mentally ill persons was in part based on the dominant stereotype of madness as bestial and violent; in opposition to this, Greenlees represented the mentally ill as ‘normal’, civilised and indistinct from sane individuals.

In representing the mentally ill as ‘normal’ and for the purposes of displaying the curative intent of the asylum, Greenlees deviated from the dominant use of photography for psychiatry during the nineteenth century. For psychiatry, photography was a diagnostic tool deployed by the clinical gaze to recognise the appearance of madness (Berkenkotter 2008:56). Hugh Welch Diamond (1809-1886) inaugurated such a view by postulating that photography accurately captured the external signs which, according to the theories of physiognomy and phrenology, connoted mental illness. In order to underscore the medical nature of photography, Diamond’s photographs share an iconography of a plain background taken in a studio with the sitter facing the camera (Tagg 1993:80). Diamond’s work had a great influence on Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), who photographed female patients with hysteria at the Salpêtrière (Buda 2010:280). Charcot’s photographs represent isolated figures against a stark background in various ‘poses and postures of delirium’ (Didi-Huberman 2003:xi). In this way the images consist of the hysteric, dramatically set against a dark backdrop which showcased the body in two distinct modes: in the throes of contorted extremities, extraordinary expressions, epileptic seizures and spasms; or frozen prostrate figures that appear seemingly lifeless (Baer 2002:43). Although the nineteenth century saw the recording of physiognomy (Diamond) and the symptomology of hysteria (Charcot) as the rationale of photography, Greenlees departed from
such ‘clinical’ uses of photography to instead capture the ethos of moral therapy (explicating on the curative agency of the asylum and its therapeutics) and to counter the general public perception of ‘madness as something beyond the common’ (Greenlees 1892:25). Accordingly, the iconography of Greenlees’s photographs diverge from the visual conventions demanded by the clinical gaze and instead is informed by Victorian photographic conventions for documenting the home and the pursuits of middle class individuals. By adopting such an iconography, Greenlees was not only able to counter the clinical visualisation of madness, but also popular conceptions of mental illness.

The reigning popular stereotype of mental illness in the nineteenth century was an individual with: wild, unkempt hair; tattered clothing; red-veined, staring eyes; an angry attitude; wearing poor clothing; nakedness; and an animalistic, wild or beastly posture and poise (Andrews 2007:6; Buda 2010:279; Gilman 1996; MacKinnon 2003:124). Mercier (1890:xv) vividly outlines such a dominant conception of the mentally ill held by the public:

He is usually raving, shouting at the top of his voice, and smashing the furniture. When not in this state, he is controlling himself, and in the plenitude of his cunning—for he is no lunatic if not cunning—he is lulling the surrounding people into a sense of false security, until he can get a convenient opportunity of cutting their throats. Instead of a hat he wears straws in his hair, speaks of himself in the third person, and talks in ingenious and complicated parables.

Such exaggerated and sensational conceptions were peddled by literary, visual and performing artists (Buda 2010:279; Cross 2010:131; Gilman 1996). In direct contrast to the image of madness as propagated in the arts and literature, the asylum doctors and superintendents aimed to correct such brutal and grotesque conceptions of insanity. The task of correcting and eliminating erroneous notions of the mentally ill held by the public consisted of continually underscoring and bringing to light how ‘wonderfully little difference that there is between [the insane] and other people’ (Mercier 1890:xvi). In other words, the insane are “‘fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same summer and winter,” as a sane person’ (Mercier 1890:xvi). Thus, the asylum superintendents and administrators suggested a new way of perceiving the mentally ill; no longer in a binary opposite to the sane, but now identical to sane individuals in emotions, diet, and frailty to disease and injury.

The move towards emphasising the semblance between sane and insane was also informed by a notable change in the types of insanity presented at the asylum (Scull 1983:247). Asylum professionals recorded that the cases of insanity under treatment at the asylums were significantly of a ‘milder type’ (Browne 1864:310). To explicate further, Greenlees (1907:2) stated that the insanity presented at the asylum was no longer marked by cases of furious raging madness but placid types who were merely regarded as an exaggeration of the conduct and thoughts found in sane individuals:16
Indeed, the more one studies insanity, the less does it seem to differ from sanity. In the latter condition, we have all the various emotions and passions as are to be found among the insane, only in different degrees, and this is due simply to the want of, or variation in, the controlling power (Greenlees 1899:16).

In this formation, the asylum is no longer conceived as a place for the dangerously disturbed to be ‘rendered tranquil and tractable’ (Scull 1983:237), but as a place for those suffering from mild forms of insanity that is ‘in no way dangerous and criminal’ to find ‘shelter and retreat’ (Greenlees 1897:13). Thus, the narrative of the mentally ill individual entering the asylum is no longer figured in terms of the domestication of insanity – wild, bestial madmen who are transformed into well-ordered individuals following interment in the asylum – but as ‘normalised’ individuals in terms of dress, conduct and appearance who turn to the asylum for recovery from stress, anxiety and other forms of mental illness in their early stages. The asylum is now primarily regarded as a safe retreat for patients to find rest and relief in order to regain their mental health (Bogdan & Marshall 1997:24; Terbenche 2005:47).

The reconfiguration of the asylum as place for the treatment for stress and anxiety was communicated not just in Greenlees’s academic texts (1897; 1899; 1910), but is explicitly apparent in the photographs of the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum. In figures 4 and 5, the photographs depict rooms that are comfortable, clean and attractive in appearance. Apart from the appearance of the rooms, the patients are occupied with board game activities and billiards that contribute to the viewer being almost unmindful that the individuals pictured are inmates of an asylum (Conolly 1856:144-145). Moreover, the dress and respectable appearance of the patients is a key detail that strikes the viewer to question conventional beliefs of insanity. Instead of markers of insanity evident in the patients (indicated by nakedness and/or dishevelment), the patients appear respectable and gentlemanly (Andrews 2007). Thus, the photographs offer an alternative to the stereotypical images of madness by communicating the kinship between sane and insane.

As previously argued, the appearance of normalcy in these photographs may indicate the successful re-socialisation of patients to societal norms of the outside world (MacKinnon 2006:12; Wynter 2011:41-46) and thus refer to the curative role of the asylum. Additionally, the dress of the patients could also propagate the asylum’s provision and suitability for the care of private patients – its maintenance of the social class standing of patients in terms of dress, recreation and interiors (Parry-Jones 1972:102–12; Wynter 2011:43). In addition to such multiple readings, I wish to further the argument forwarded in figure 3, namely, that in the photographs mental illness is purged of classical markers of difference and dishevelment, violence and brutality. The representations of the mentally ill in the photographs do not visibly demonstrate ‘madness’, but rather the preservation of propriety and orderly behaviour. In this way, mental illness is no longer associated with a loss of civility and resulting public disgrace. Rather, the personal reputation and dignity of the patients remained intact via an asylum regimen that authorised numerous enactments of status, self-respect and self-esteem – from dress, decorum, activities and milieu.
Figure 4: Passage in the Fort England Asylum, Grahamstown showing period furniture, c. 1890s (Reproduced by permission of the Western Cape Archives and Record Service, reference number: AG 421).

Figure 5: The billiard room, Fort England Asylum, Grahamstown, c. 1890s (Reproduced by permission of the Western Cape Archives and Record Service, reference number: AG 397).
What makes figure 4 extraordinary is the way in which the photograph is carefully constructed and arranged in terms of formalist elements to draw attention to a number of core features that illustrate what life is ‘supposed’ to be like for patients in the ward. The foreground of the image is flooded by bright sunlight and even appears to warmly embrace and comfort the patient on the right hand side. In this way, the expansive light that bathes the room helps to counter any feelings of despair that is commonly associated with the institution (Gilman 1996:131). Furthermore, any associations of the asylum as gloomy, dark, damp and prison-like are offset by the ‘free transmission of air and light’ (Familiar views of lunacy 1850:105). What appears to be a floorboard of lighter colouring leads the viewer to a solitary man seated at a table. The man has his hands in his pockets and stretches his legs out under the table. The pose is significant as it indicates rest and relaxation. Such an indication would have been clearly apparent to a Victorian audience as this sort of posing was a standard trope in photographs of gentlemen in leisurely environs. Thus, the pose of the seated male provides intertextual references to leisure in order to underscore the asylum’s ethos of rest and recuperation within a tranquil setting.

The somewhat extended discussion of the positive images is an attempt to recuperate the images from the standard Foucaultian reading that indicates patient self-disciplining. However, such a discussion is limited to the images of private patients produced for public consumption. To delineate further, it was only private patients in a privileged class position that were able to project a ‘normative’ self (Sidlauskas 2013). The majority of the asylum’s patients did not receive the freedom to preserve their self-identity as they were issued with uniforms and were precluded from activities and rooms reserved for private patients. Without the necessary mise-en-scène that characterises the imaging of the private patients, the images from the rest of the asylum population will be open to multiple interpretations outside of Greenlees’s construction of the asylum’s image. Furthermore, the discussion pertains only to the images produced for public consumption. Greenlees distinctly selected only the photographs of patients that looked respectable in terms of dress and demeanour for public consumption. In the photographs not intended for public display, like the casebook photographs, there are a significant number of images of distressed, dishevelled and belligerent patients. Such images hold the potential to problematise the public image of the asylum (see du Plessis 2014).

Conclusion

A reverberating emphasis has been placed on how the photographs made for public consumption can be regarded as indicative of the normality of asylum life, its connections with the community and its restorative potential. Overall, such photographs provided ‘a positive promotional image of the [asylum] in the popular press’ (MacKinnon 2003:124). Nonetheless, an equivalent level of importance has also been placed on how such photographs provide only an ‘incomplete picture’ (Guyatt 2004:52) of asylum life in that they represent only the activities, provisions and accommodations for the ideal private patients and have little to do with the majority of patients (Goffman 1971:98).
Moreover, even for the private patients, the images represent only ‘a single event on a single day in one of many years’ (MacKinnon 2003:142) within the asylum. Therefore, the photographs display only a snapshot of asylum life and one that represents only ‘the good times and the successes of asylum life’ (MacKinnon 2003:142). These findings are important in order to acknowledge that the publicity photographs, as well as Greenlees’s construction of a public image of the asylum, are only reflective of the private patient profile of the asylum, and even so, only present an idealised image of them. However, this does not serve to dismiss the potential of the photographs to counteract the popular perception of insanity and to de-stigmatise mental illness in general. Indeed, Greenlees’s image-making of the asylum directly led to an increase in the number of private patients. Additional developments that may be linked to Greenlees’s public image of the asylum include the establishment of his own private practice (Deacon et al. 2004:243) and the opening of Douglas House in 1904 to cater for the needs of private white female patients (Swanson 2001:17).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Prof Amanda du Preez, Prof Joan Fairhurst and Dr Natasha Ruiz-Gómez for their insightful comments and generous guidance. The photographs are reproduced with permission from the Western Cape Archives and Records Service.

NOTES

1. This institution was established in 1875 in Grahamstown, a small frontier town populated by British colonial settlers in what is now the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. For an in-depth discussion of the history of the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum, see Swanson (1994; 2001). Thomas Duncan Greenlees (1858-1929), was born in 1858 in Kilmarnock, Scotland. He studied medicine at Edinburgh, graduating with a MB, CM in 1882 and a MD in 1901. Prior to his appointment as the Medical Superintendent at the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum from 1890-1907, he had significant experience working in asylums in Britain which included being the assistant medical officer at the City of London Asylum at Stone, the Medical Officer at both the Carlisle Asylum and Dartford Asylum. In addition to his post at the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum, he was appointed as the Surgeon Superintendent of the Grahamstown Chronic Sick Hospital and the Visiting Medical Officer to the Institute for the Care & Education of Weak-minded Children. After his tenure in Grahamstown, Greenlees returned to the United Kingdom to become resident physician and superintendent of the Fenstanton Asylum at Streatham Hill. Greenlees was noted for his services to the British Medical Association (BMA) from 1893 to 1927. In South Africa, Greenlees was a member of the Grahamstown and Eastern Province Branch of the BMA for several years. His membership at the Branch included a number of notable appointments including serving twice as its president. In 1908, Greenlees was elected as representative of the Cape of Good Hope, Eastern, Western, and border branches for the Central Council of the
BMA. At the Annual Meeting of the BMA in 1910 he was vice-president of the Section of Psychological Medicine and Neurology. Greenlees was the author of numerous publications that were critically acclaimed by his peers and the BMA. He was a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (Burrows 1958:343).

2. Moral therapy was first pioneered at the end of the eighteenth century at the Retreat in Yorkshire, England. The therapy offered can be briefly described as a mild regimen focused on the placement of patients in a carefully designed environment with the minimal use of physical restraint (Hickman 2005:48). Although moral therapy was pioneered at the Retreat, the term itself, and the first disciplined study of moral therapy, is attributed to the Frenchman Philippe Pinel (Sachs 1999:239; Sutton 1986:36-37). In particular, Pinel built upon the contribution of the Retreat to coherently communicate the central tenets of moral therapy as a concern with the abolition of all forms of physical punishment and restraint and to offer patients a regular routine of activities conducted in a restful setting (Sachs 1999:239). Although there exists a number of similarities and influences between the moral therapy conceptualised and conducted at the Retreat and by Pinel, there are also substantial distinctions which have not been adequately acknowledged by researchers. To remedy this situation, Charland (2007; 2010) has eruditely examined the respective nature of moral therapy practiced by Pinel and the Retreat.

Pinel’s views of mental illness and moral therapy have been explored in terms of their Lockean influence (Charland 2010: Gerard 1997:40), as well as in their contributions to psychiatric care and treatment (Charland 2010; Gerard 1997:381). For Greenlees (1903:15), Pinel is viewed as positively saintly by halting the cruelty and restraint of patients. Greenlees (1903:15) extols Pinel for striking the ‘death-knell of cruelty to the insane for all time, and, in giving them more liberty, better diet, recreations, and useful employments, he established the treatment that has existed ever since his time, and will form the foundation of all future methods of treatment’. Although Greenlees holds Pinel’s contributions in deep admiration, Greenlees theorisation of insanity and its treatment and cure are more closely informed by late nineteenth century theorists including William W Ireland (1832-1909), Henry Maudsley (1835-1918) and Charles Arthur Mercier (1851-1919).

3. In later works (see Foucault 2006), Foucault critiques a number of the central tenets raised in the History of madness (1961). Particularly, Foucault exhibits dissatisfaction with the nature of power in his analysis of the asylum. Rather than conceiving power as an exercise of unilateral violence and force, Foucault seeks to analyse the relational character of power – as multiple networks and relays of struggles, tactics and strategies that arise in any relations (Davidson 2006:xv). In this formation, ‘power is never something that someone possesses, any more than it is something that emanates from someone. Power does not belong to anyone or even to a group; there is only power because there is dispersion, relays, networks, reciprocal supports, differences of potential, discrepancies, etc. It is in this system of differences, which have to be analysed, that power can start to function’ (Foucault 2006:4). Accordingly, Foucault (2006:12) argues that the understanding and analysis of asylum power should not focus on the doctor or medical superintendent but rather explore the relays and support networks around them – the nurses, attendants and supervisors – and the patients’ reaction, resistance or interventions to such a system of power. In sum, Foucault (2006:12, 15-16) acknowledges that the History of madness (1961) is ‘entirely open to criticism, especially in the chapter on asylum power’ as it fails to account for the relational character of power that he now identifies within psychiatric practice.
4. Notable exceptions in this regard are studies by Jones (2004; 2012) and Parle (2007). Julie Parle’s *States of mind* (2007) provides a study of mental illness and its treatment in Natal and Zululand, from 1868-1918. Parle maintains a plurality of focus and challenges hegemonic narratives based on the issues of gender, race, class and colonialism (Swartz 2009:73). A significantly nuanced study of mental health services in South Africa, which falls outside the scope of colonial asylum history, has been undertaken by Jones (2004; 2012). Jones argues that in the period of 1939-1989 the role of mental health services was not simply a repressive state apparatus linked to the apartheid government’s oppression of the black population. Her argument does not refute that human rights abuses did occur at mental health institutions but does counter the belief that psychiatrists are a homogenous group that directly serve the interests of the state. Through her examination she reveals the complexities that define the relationship between practitioners, patients, and government officials which in turn creates a heterogeneous view of mental health services that cannot be restricted to any overarching or unitary reading (Jones 2004:1-3).

5. Although a number of studies have hinted at the construction of an elitist image at Valkenberg and the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum (Deacon 2003:25; Swartz 1995), there has been no full length study of image making at either of the aforementioned asylums. Accordingly, this essay is informed by international studies of image making while exploring the specific context of the Cape Colony and the particular peculiarities of the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum.

6. This is not to discount such readings but a criticism of overplaying Foucaultian readings at the expense of exploring other interpretations (see Godbey 2000). Accordingly, the essay still includes Foucaultian insights but also aims to investigate other more nuanced interpretations.

7. William John Dodds (1854-1939), MB, CM (1876), MD (1879) a Scottish trained doctor arrived in Cape Town in November 1889 and was appointed Inspector of Asylums in 1889 and Medical Superintendent of Valkenberg in 1891 (Burrows 1958:345; Swartz 1995). Dodds held the Inspector of Asylums post from 1889 to 1913. In this role, he advocated for the humane care of patients in an asylum regimen that included work and recreation in pleasant surroundings. Dodds promoted his beliefs through his regular site inspection of the asylums under his jurisdiction (Swartz 1995).

8. The annual reports for the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum are referenced according to their catalogue entries from the Western Cape Archives and Record Service.

9. Greenlees succeeded Dr Hullah who died suddenly on 18 February 1890 (CCP 1/2/1/79).

10. It is important to note that the features and elements employed by Greenlees for the provision and care of private patients is not unique but is shared with a number of private asylums in the United Kingdom, for example the Holloway Sanatorium and Ticehurst Asylum. Holloway was opened on 15 June 1885 in Egham to care for middle class patients. The interior of the sanatorium was opulently decorated and furnished and included a recreation hall, theatre and billiard room. Outdoor facilities for entertainment included tennis courts, a cricket pitch and Turkish baths. The entertainment offerings and luxurious interior comforts were believed to ease the middle class patients’ transition to the institution and to aid in their recovery. For further discussion of the Holloway Sanatorium, see Shepherd (2004; 2007) and Sidlauskas (2013).
11. The journal is now known as the South African Medical Journal.

12. The journal is now known as The British Journal of Psychiatry.

13. The scandals and suicides perpetrated by patients at the asylum were predominantly framed by The Grahamstown Journal as resulting from a patient lapsing into a deranged or depressed state. The image of the asylum and Greenlees’s professional status is never brought into disrepute or questioned.

14. Although the photographs are framed as objective evidence of the appearance of madness, the sitters were deliberately posed and were allocated with props. Furthermore, literary and aesthetic models of femininity influenced the way Diamond posed his female subjects (Cross 2010:69; Gilman 1976:8; Gilman 1996:233; Showalter 1987:87). For Tagg (1993:80) such findings underscore that Diamond’s photographs constitute ‘the point where discourses of psychiatry, physiognomy, photographic science and aesthetics coincided and overlapped’.

15. Several studies have underscored how the iconography of hysteria is derived from the visual and performing arts (Baer 2002:35; Cross 2010:62; du Preez 2004:55). Moreover, it is also acknowledged that the hysterics performed, enacted and/or staged their symptoms (Didi-Huberman 2003; du Preez 2004:49).

16. Although Greenlees states that patients had relatively mild forms of insanity, it proves difficult to validate and/or further explore such claims. One primary reason for this difficulty is that Greenlees’s (1905) statistics for the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum are not disaggregated to account for the form or intensity of the mental illness (acute, sub-acute or chronic). To elucidate further, in his statistical analysis of the cases presented at the asylum from 1890-1904, Greenlees (1905:219) accounts for 969 white patients of whom 48.7% suffered from mania and 21.6% from melancholia. What is missing is any tabulation or comment that stipulates the exact nature of the mental illness as either mild or critically severe.

REFERENCES


Browne, WAF. 1837. *What asylums were, are, and ought to be*. Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black.


Care and treatment of the insane. 1891. *Journal of Mental Science* 37:566-572.

CCP 1/2/1/77: Reports on the Medical Committee, the vaccination Surgeon and the Government and Public Hospitals and Asylums for 1889. Cape of Good Hope Official Publications.

CCP 1/2/1/79: Reports on the Medical Committee, the vaccination Surgeon and the Government and Public Hospitals and Asylums for 1890. Cape of Good Hope Official Publications.

CCP 1/2/1/82: Reports on the Medical Committee, the vaccination Surgeon and the Government and Public Hospitals and Asylums for 1891. Cape of Good Hope Official Publications.


CCP 1/2/1/104: Reports on the Medical Committee, the vaccination Surgeon and the Government and Public Hospitals and Asylums for 1897. Cape of Good Hope Official Publications.


Ellis, R. 2013a. ‘A constant irritation to the townspeople’? Local, regional and national politics and London’s County Asylums at Epsom. Social History of Medicine: doi:10.1093/shm/hkt002


Entertainment at the asylum. 1892. The Grahamstown Journal, 12 July.


Greenlees, TD. 1892. The brain: its development, architecture, functions and education. A lecture delivered in the Assembly Rooms, Grahamstown, on 18th May 1892. Grahamstown: Slater.


Sankey, WHO. 1856. Do the Public Asylums of England, as at present constructed, afford the greatest facilities for the care and treatment of the Insane? Journal of Mental Science 2:466-479.


Brenda Schmahmann’s own involvement in changing the visual image of Rhodes University coincided with the writing of this book, in which she takes a look at the way South African universities reconfigured their visual representation in the era of transition from the 1990s to the present. In the first chapter, she focuses on the monuments and sculptures that no longer represented the new visions and constituencies of universities; how they were moved, removed and recontextualised. Her discussions raise the issue of how universities intermittently acknowledge, underplay, challenge and accept their inadvertent complicity in imperialist, colonialist, nationalist and capitalist projects.

In the second chapter, Schmahmann focuses on institutional insignia and shrewdly comments on the revision of institutions’ coats of arms. Not only was this considered a necessity for universities to discard outdated, unrepresentative and discriminatory symbols, it also offered an opportunity for rebranding in a time when university education has become increasingly commodified. Hence the replacement of many a coat of arms with a logo that might place the institution in a better position to attract the better students and the better academics, which in turn might make it eligible for more resources in the national competition for a larger chunk of government subsidy.

The third chapter looks into the acquisitioning of new art, not always to replace the old, but often to juxtapose, counter, ironise and question. Chapter Four is entitled “Portraits of university officers”
and traces the ways the proud rows of portraits of the people who had led the universities came to be seen as an embarrassment owing to the absence of racial and gender diversity up to the 1990s. This chapter raises issues about feminist critique from within universities, but also the extent to which artists’ agency enabled negotiation with a legacy which could not be downright discarded.

Lastly, Schmahmann discusses a number of prominent controversies that illustrate the interplay between student and lecturer artists, university leadership, politicians and the media when it comes to making meaning of visual art. Kaolin Thomson’s *Useful Objects*, Kevin Leathem *This is not Paul Kruger*, the child rape etches from Diane Victor’s *Disasters of Peace* and Richard Sagan’s *Top Ten Atheist Retorts* are drawn upon to illustrate the ironies in universities’ self-censorship post-1990: it sometimes even trumped the apartheid government’s measures of the previous era.

Allusions in this section to politicians’ and administrators’ inability to understand art, opens room for contemplation. That universities of all places ought not display art as adornment, but rather as encounters for critical reflection, is an important point. But the knowledge basis and the cultural frame of reference – the kind of education which is exacted from the viewer to make ‘proper’ sense of art, speaks to the heart of the university’s predicament: engagement with the new still presupposes an intimate knowledge of the Eurocentric legacy, still presumes a memory of the previous canon (not only its content but also its practice) which has supposedly been discarded.

Schmahmann concedes in her conclusion that issues are opened up rather than resolved in this book, which has to a large extent been the result of her personal journey through the censorious waters of South African academia: from art history to critical visual culture studies; from her 1986 article in *De Arte* being shelved because of an image of an erect penis, to her key role in the making of the Rhodes University Tapestry as replacement for the row of portraits of white male power figures in the university’s Council Chamber.

Schmahmann’s autobiographical positioning of herself in the book is apt. Her personal position and self-critical role offers the history she relates an honesty in the sense that it does not claim to be comprehensive or conclusive. In the process, however, the narrative remains strongly focused on South Africa, although one should argue that what had been undertaken in this book was a first step: it placed the author’s first-hand experience of displaying, managing and acquisitioning art for Rhodes University in a national context. It might be insightful now to compare the South African transformation experience with other visual histories of transformation in neighbouring, and further-off, parts of the world. The book under review has laid a welcome foundation for such an investigation.
Editorial policy and guidelines

*Image & Text* has been published annually since 1992 (primarily as a journal for design) and was accredited by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training in 1997. Since 2011, it has been repositioned as a multi- and interdisciplinary journal that orbits around the nexus of visual culture. The aim of the journal is to draw perspectives from a broad field of interests and subjects: visual anthropology, material culture, visual arts, design culture, visualising sciences and technologies, art history, philosophy, fashion, media and film studies, architecture, literary studies, tourism studies, new media and cyber theory, and so forth. The grounding provided by visual culture studies as a comparative and enabling premise for all these approaches, subjects, interests, fields and theories is located in the global South, not only geographically but also critically.

The editors invite papers that address or intersect with the visual from any of the fields mentioned above. One of the aims is to showcase new and young academic voices, as well as more established voices.

- Authors may wish to discuss the scope or applicability of their articles prior to submission and are encouraged to contact the Editor in this regard.

- All manuscripts received are first read by members of the editorial committee, who may recommend changes before submitting the manuscript for peer review, or reject manuscripts outright that are deemed inappropriate or not up to standard.

- Manuscripts are sent for refereeing to at least two subject specialists in a double blind refereeing process. The referees are chosen from other tertiary institutions or fields of expertise as appropriate. The comments and recommendations of the referees are conveyed to authors as necessary, and they may re-submit manuscripts once changes, if necessary, have been effected. If articles are rejected by both referees, authors are not encouraged to re-submit. Authors may provide the names of one or more potential referees for consideration by the editorial board but this does not guarantee that they will be used. All authors are subject to the same rigorous review process.

- Only material deemed to be of a suitably high standard is published.

- Articles may be submitted in English or in Afrikaans.

Contributors should please ensure that their submissions satisfy the following editorial requirements:

- A declaration must be submitted wherein the author states that the article submitted is based on original research. The author must furthermore stipulate that the article has not been submitted elsewhere for consideration or has not already been published elsewhere under another title (an example is available on the journal website [www.imageandtext.up.ac.za](http://www.imageandtext.up.ac.za)).
• All articles must have a cover sheet that provides the following details:
  • Title of the article
  • name of author/s
  • affiliations and contact details of all author/s
  • designation of author/s and date of submission

• Articles must be presented in the following sequence:
  • title of article
  • name of author/s
  • 200 word abstract and six keywords
  • main text
  • endnotes
  • references
  • images and captions

• Manuscripts must be typed in A4 format in Times New Roman or Arial 11-point font size, 1.5 line spacing with generous left and right margins, left aligned only.

• All pages must be numbered and the Harvard Reference System must be used throughout (an example is available on the journal website www.imageandtext.up.ac.za).

• Length of articles must be approximately 5000 – 7000 words (including references).

• Please use endnotes rather than footnotes.

• The house style of Image & Text uses single quotation marks for direct quotes and double quotation marks to draw attention to a concept or word.

• Digital images must be of a quality suitable for reproduction and printing and should be 300dpi and in jpg or tiff format. Do not embed images in the text but indicate their placement in the text.

• Text and images must be submitted in separate files.

• Authors are responsible for obtaining copyright and reproduction clearance for all visual or other material submitted. A copyright agreement form must be signed and submitted to the journal Editor (an example is available on the journal website www.imageandtext.up.ac.za).
E-mail submissions and correspondence

Please send electronic manuscript submissions to:

image.text@up.ac.za

Correspondence may also be addressed to:

The Editor
Image & Text
Department of Visual Arts
University of Pretoria
Private Bag X20
Hatfield
South Africa 0028

Neither the editors nor the University of Pretoria accepts responsibility for the loss of manuscripts or visual material.

This journal is an e-publication and is available through Sabinet online and on the journal website www.imageandtext.up.ac.za. For any enquiries in this regard, please contact the Department of Visual Arts at +27 12 4202353 or email image.text@up.ac.za
Editorial board

Jeanne van Eeden
Editor

Jeanne van Eeden has been teaching art history and visual culture in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Pretoria since 1990 and became Professor and Head of the Department in 2008. She obtained a DPhil in Communication from the University of South Africa on the South African theme park, The Lost City, in 1999. She is the co-editor of the book *South African visual culture* (2005) and has contributed chapters to British, German, American and South African books and is a National Research Foundation rated researcher. She was assistant editor of *Image & Text* from 1992 to 2006, co-editor from 2007 to 2010 and also serves on the editorial board of the South African academic journal *de Arte*. She has published on topics related to gender, post-colonialism and cultural representation; entertainment landscapes; South African tourism images; and social spatialisation in South African visual culture.

Amanda du Preez
Assistant editor

Amanda du Preez is Associate Professor in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Pretoria, where she teaches Visual Culture Studies. She obtained a DPhil in English from the University of South Africa on the topic of cyberfeminism and embodiment in 2003. She has co-edited *South African visual culture* (2005), is the editor of *Taking a hard look: gender and visual culture* (2009) and has authored *Gendered bodies and new technologies* in 2009. She is the assistant editor of the South African academic journal *de Arte*. She serves on the Advisory Board of the Institute for Gender and Women’s Studies (UP) and serves on the Governing Board of the International Association for Visual Culture. She has published widely on topics mainly pertaining to gender, embodiment and the sublime.
Fatima Cassim

Fatima Cassim holds a Masters degree in Information Design and she currently heads the Information Design division at the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Pretoria. She teaches both practical and theoretical Information Design related subjects at undergraduate level and also provides research supervision to postgraduate students. In addition, she serves as an adjudicator on a number of national and international design competitions and awards schemes. Fatima’s research focuses on the culture of design in the current creative economy and the strategic role of design within this changing environment. In particular, she is interested in the nature and application of design thinking and the possible impact it may have on design education. When she is not being an academic, she tries to exercise creative muscle by running around the globe.

Benita de Robillard

Benita de Robillard is a lecturer in the Wits School of Arts, Johannesburg. She teaches courses informed by interdisciplinary critical and cultural theories, which think about the complex and ramified relationships between bodies, technologies and diverse aesthetic modalities. She supervises postgraduate work focused on bodies, cultures and sexualities, which is rooted in interdisciplinary and queer ways of thinking. Her current research project explores some of the nomadic meshings of sexualities, socialities and politics in the post-apartheid milieu. These explorations are located within an emerging critical system constituted through the intersections of feminist, queer and cripqueer theories with critical animal studies and somatechnics.

Ashraf Jamal

Ashraf Jamal teaches film studies at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and has taught at the universities of the Eastern Mediterranean, Malaya, Stellenbosch, Natal, Rhodes and Cape Town. He studied in the UK, Canada, USA, and South Africa. Jamal combines world literature and cinema, media studies and visual culture, ethnography, and the performing arts under the rubric of cultural and postcolonial studies. Jamal is the co-author of Art in South Africa: the future present (David Philip 1997) and the author of Predicaments of culture in South Africa (Unisa-Brill 2005). His literary-critical study Littorally speaking is forthcoming with Rodopi (2012). He is also author of a novel, Love themes for the wilderness (Random House-Kwela 1997), a novella, A million years ago in the nineties (Brevitas 2003), and a collection of short fiction, The shades (Brevitas 2002), winner of the Sanlam Prize for the title story.
Mugendi K M’Rithaa

Mugendi M’Rithaa is an industrial designer, educator and researcher who lectures at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, where he is an Associate Professor. He holds postgraduate qualifications in Industrial Design, Higher Education, and Universal Design. He is passionate about various expressions of socially (responsive and) responsible design, including Participatory Design; Universal Design; and Design for Sustainability. He has a special interest in design for development on the African continent and is associated with a number of international networks focusing on design within industrially developing/majority world contexts. He is currently serving a second term on the executive board of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design.

Rory du Plessis

Rory du Plessis is a full-time lecturer in Visual Culture Studies at the Department of Visual Arts, University of Pretoria. He completed his BA (Visual Studies) (cum laude), BA (Hons) Visual Studies (cum laude) and MPhil (Philosophy and Ethics of Mental Health) (cum laude) at the University of Pretoria. Previously, he has worked as the National co-ordinator for the Southern African Sexual Health Association (SASHA) as well as a researcher at the Institute for Womens and Gender Studies, University of Pretoria. His research interests pertain to the representation of sexuality in South African popular media as well as the history and philosophy of mental illness.
Advisory board

➢ Rory Bester

Rory Bester teaches art history at the University of the Witwatersrand and is also a critic (Mail & Guardian, Camera Austria, Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art), curator and documentary filmmaker. Bester’s catalogue essays on contemporary artists have been commissioned by BildMuseet (Umeå), Christie’s (London), DaimlerChrysler (Berlin), Documenta XI (Kassel), Johannesburg Art Gallery (Johannesburg), Museum Villa Stuck (Munich), National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne), Recontres d’Arles (Arles), South African National Gallery (Cape Town), SMAC Gallery (Stellenbosch), Stevenson Gallery (Cape Town), Studio Museum Harlem (New York) and White Box (New York). He edited Figure/Ground: reflections on the South African Reserve Bank Art Collection (2007) and Ephraim Ngatane: a setting apart (2009). He has curated and co-curated exhibitions such as: Democracy’s Images: Photography and Visual Art after Apartheid (Bildmuseet and international tour), Kwere Kwere / Journeys into Strangeness (Castle of Good Hope and international tour), The Field’s Edge: Agency, Body and the African Lens (University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum), and prospect / Johannesburg (Gammel Holtegard).

➢ Deirdre Byrne

Deirdre Byrne is a Professor of English Studies in the Department of English at the University of South Africa, Pretoria. Her research interests are gender, feminist literary theory and criticism, and speculative fiction (science fiction, fantasy and any creative use of the usual conventions of realistic narrative). Recently she has worked on the liminal status of national and cultural identities.

➢ Elfriede Dreyer

Born in Pretoria, Elfriede Dreyer was educated in South Africa and the Netherlands. She is Associate Professor of Visual Arts at the University of Pretoria and is the owner and curator of Fried Contemporary Art Gallery & Studio in Pretoria. In diversified way as a visual arts theorist, curator, writer and artist, she is engaged with utopia/dystopia discourses, technologisation and African modernities. In 2001 she received the D Litt et Phil in Art History from the University of South Africa.

Steven Dubin

Steven Dubin is Professor of Arts Administration and Research Affiliate of the Institute of African Studies at Columbia University in New York. He is the author of *Bureaucratizing the Muse* (1987); *Arresting Images* (1992, cited as a Notable Book of the Year by The New York Times); *Displays of power: memory and amnesia in the American museum* (1999); and *Mounting Queen Victoria: curating social change* (2009). Professor Dubin’s awards include the Fulbright-Hays Research Fellowship to South Africa, Fulbright Senior Specialist award to Iceland, Chancellor’s Award/Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities, The Lady Davis Visiting Professorship at Hebrew University (Jerusalem), and writing residencies at Bellagio (Italy), The Ragdale Foundation (Illinois), and The Ucross Foundation (Wyoming). He has written and lectured widely on censorship, controversial art, museums, and popular culture, and is a frequent contributor to publications such as *Art in America* and *Art South Africa*. He has been working and travelling throughout Southern Africa for the past eleven years.

Paul Duncum

Paul Duncum is Professor of Art Education, School of Art and Design, University of Illinois, Champaign Urbana, USA. A former graphic designer and art and design high school teacher, he obtained his doctorate from The Flinders University of South Australia and taught at several Australian universities prior to his present position. He is widely published in art education journals in the areas of his research and teaching, which include children’s drawings, images of children, popular culture, visual culture and art education. His work is principally informed by Cultural Studies. He is a life member of Art Education, Australia and a member of the Council for Policy Studies in Art Education. He is the editor of the 2006 NAEA publication *Visual culture in the art class: case studies*, and a leading advocate of the visual culture movement within art education.
Pieter J Fourie is a professor in Communication Science at the University of South Africa. He is the author of a number of books on media studies, the editor of the accredited journal *Communicatio: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*, a former president of the South African Communication Association, and a National Research Foundation rated researcher. He serves on a number of national and international editorial boards and scientific committees. He has published various accredited research articles, contributions to books, and conference papers on topics ranging from media semiotics and pictorial communication to normative media theory and philosophy, media and society, and the political economy of the media. He was awarded the South African Academy of Science and Arts’ Stals Prize for his contribution to the development of Communication Science in South Africa.

Ian Glenn is Professor of Media Studies and Director of the Centre for Film and Media Studies at the University of Cape Town. After studies in English at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal and York in England, he did an MA and PhD at the University of Pennsylvania, with a dissertation on mystical experience in the poetry of TS Eliot and Wallace Stevens. He joined UCT as a lecturer in English and was head of English before moving to the new Centre for Film and Media Studies. He has published widely on African and South African literature and on South African media. He has a particular interest in the French traveller and ornithologist Francois Le Vaillant and his multi-media portrayals of his travels. He is currently working on a French edition of Le Vaillant and on curating an international exhibition on Le Vaillant.

Amy Kirschke is a Professor of Art History at University of North Carolina Wilmington, where she specialises in modern art, the art of the African Diaspora and African contemporary art. Her current research includes West African contemporary art, in particular the African biennial and the art of Ghana. Kirschke is the author of *Aaron Douglas: art, race and the Harlem Renaissance* (1995, University Press of Mississippi) and *Art in crisis: WEB Du Bois and the art of African American identity and memory* (2007, Indiana University Press) which was awarded the 2007 SECAC Award for Excellence in Scholarly Research and Publication. She has contributed chapters to books in the field of African American art/Harlem Renaissance, including *Temples for tomorrow, African diasporas in the old and new worlds*, Cary Wintz’s *Harlem speaks, The souls of black folk one hundred..."
years later and Women of color: taking their rightful place in leadership (2009.) She is editing a volume on Women Artists of the Harlem Renaissance, (University Press of Mississippi, 2012) and a volume on the 100th Anniversary of The Crisis Magazine (University of Missouri Press, 2012).

› Annette Kuhn

Annette Kuhn is Senior Professorial Fellow in Film Studies at Queen Mary University of London and a longstanding co-editor of the journal Screen. She has published widely in the areas of cultural theory, visual culture, film history and cultural memory, with authored books including Family secrets: acts of memory and imagination (1995 and 2002); An everyday magic: cinema and cultural memory (2002); Ratcatcher (2008); and (with Guy Westwell) The Oxford Dictionary of Film Studies (2012).

› Jacques Lange

Jacques Lange is partner and creative director at Bluprint Design, publisher and editor of DESIGN> and www.designmagazine.co, and part-time lecturer in Information Design and Visual Communication at the University of Pretoria. Throughout his career Jacques has actively engaged in design practice, profession management, education, research, design promotion, policy advocacy and design journalism. His professional output has earned him many industry awards and his work has been featured in numerous international publications and exhibitions. He is an experienced industry juror, widely published author and speaker on design issues internationally. He is a past president of the International Council of Communication Design (Icograda, 2007-2009), founding co-chair of the International Design Alliance (IDA, 2005-2007), and advisor to various governmental institutions and NGOs. His research interests include the creative economy, talent mobility and creative diaspora, design policy, profession management, and contemporary design from lesser-known regions. Jacques is also one of the founders of Image & Text.
Jenni Lauwrens teaches in the Visual Studies division in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Pretoria. She teaches from first year to Masters level students in the subjects, art history, visual communication, research methodologies and key texts in visual culture. Jenni has published in local and international publications on the relationship between visual culture studies and art history. Her research interests include the aims and protocols of visual culture studies and art history, art education, art historiography, spectatorship, embodiment, phenomenology, neuro-art history, neuro-aesthetics and practices of seeing. She is currently working on a PhD on the historical and theoretical implications of the viewer’s particular forms of embodiment.

Victor Margolin is Professor Emeritus of Design History at the University of Illinois, Chicago. He is a founding editor and now co-editor of the academic design journal Design Issues. Professor Margolin has published widely on diverse design topics and lectured at conferences, universities, and art schools in many parts of the world. Books that he has written, edited, or co-edited include Propaganda: the art of persuasion, WWII, The struggle for utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, 1917-1936, Design discourse, Discovering design, The idea of design, The politics of the artificial: essays on design and design studies, and Culture is everywhere: the Museum of Corn-temporary Art. He is currently working on a world history of design.

Nicholas Mirzoeff is a Professor of Media, Culture and Communication at New York University, New York. After more than a decade of writing about and teaching visual culture, most recently at SUNY Stonybrook, Mirzoeff decided to join the Department of Art and Art Professions in order to create a cross-departmental and cross-disciplinary visual culture program. The new program in visual culture also signals the primacy of the visual image, he believes, which affects our lives to a greater and greater extent each day. Mirzoeff’s recent book, Watching Babylon: The war in Iraq and global visual culture, enlarges upon this intriguing notion. His first book, Silent poetry: deafness, sign and visual culture in modern France, was about sign language and its relationship to painting. Mirzoeff is also the author of An introduction to visual culture.
George Pfruender

Georges Pfruender is a Swiss national who has spent a significant amount of time living abroad in Africa, Asia, America and the Middle East. He received his Master of Fine Arts from San Francisco Art Institute in 1991. While continuing to produce his own body of work, for the past decade he had also been Director of the Fine Arts University Ecole Cantonale d’Art du Valais, Switzerland, President of the Swiss National Board of Art and Design, Vice President of the Swiss UNESCO Commission, and since 2009, Head of the School of Arts at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As artist and researcher he has participated in conferences, panels and residency programs in Europe, USA, South Africa, Venezuela, and Taiwan, and is presently involved in projects engaging artists in migrant communities of the inner city of Johannesburg. At the Wits School of Arts he has been responsible for the coordination of arts programs at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (MFA, PhD) concerning the disciplines of music, drama, fine arts, film and TV, digital arts and cultural theories.

Annette Prichard

Annette Pritchard is Professor of Critical Tourism Studies and Director of the Welsh Centre for Tourism Research at Cardiff Metropolitan University. Annette has a long-standing interest in the relationships between places, representations and identities and she has published 15 books and over 40 papers on these connectivities. Much of her work is driven by a commitment to transformative research and she is one of the originators of the hopeful tourism agenda and co-chair of the biannual Critical Tourism Studies Conference Series. Annette was formerly Convenor of the Leisure Studies editorial board and her current editorial responsibilities include serving as joint Research Notes Editor of the Annals of Tourism Research. She is also an advisory board member of the Copenhagen Business School’s Creative Industries Research Centre and a regular invited speaker at events and conferences.

Marian Sauthoff

Prof Marian Sauthoff is currently Executive Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture at the University of Johannesburg. Prior to this, she was the head of the Department of Visual Arts and also chaired the School of Arts at the University of Pretoria. She completed her master’s (cum laude) and doctoral degrees through the University of Pretoria. Prof Sauthoff is the founding editor of the accredited journal Image & Text: A Journal for Design, which she edited from 1992 to 2010. She has also served on the editorial board and as guest editor of a number of interna-
Annie van den Oever is Extraordinary Professor for Film and Visual Media at the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Free State, South Africa. She is also director of the Film Archive and director of the Master in Film Studies at the Department of Arts, Culture and Media, Faculty of Arts, University of Groningen, The Netherlands. She is an editor of several academic journals and book series in her field, among them: board member of *Film and Media, Amsterdam University Press* (since 2003); series editor of *The key debates: mutations and appropriations in European film studies*, with Ian Christie (Birkbeck College, London), and Dominique Chateau (Paris I, Sorbonne Panthéon); chief editor of the new educational books series for Film and Media studies (since 2011), and Editor-in-Chief of the European Journal for Media Studies NECSus (since 2011). Her last two books are *Ostrannenie* and *Sensitizing the viewers*, both published at Amsterdam University Press.