National melancholia and Afrikaner self-parody in post-apartheid South Africa

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Abstract The publication of Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich's study of post-Hitler Germany, *The Inability to Mourn*, did much to advance the utility of Freud's essay, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in our understanding of the problem of nations' failure to relinquish fully identifications with fallen regimes. Following the path paved by the Mitscherlichs, I examine, in the context of contemporary South Africa, the prohibition of continued identifications with apartheid; I frame this prohibition as a loss that cannot be grieved. Looking at the case of Oppikoppi, a predominantly Afrikaans South African music festival, I examine the recent phenomenon of Afrikaner self-parody as a form of melancholic response to this loss, as a form national melancholia. I employ the Freudian concept of melancholia in understanding self-parody as a spectacular technique that at once denigrates, preserves and transforms the past in its ironic repetition as parody.

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Introduction

Freud (1917) proposed that both mourning and melancholia are a 'reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on' (p. 243). What I am examining here is the loss of apartheid. Although there is a large body of literature examining the losses brought about by the apartheid regime, much of which is centered on the public mourning that unfolded around the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission

(TRC), few studies have examined a continued identification with or nostalgia for apartheid. Being nostalgic for apartheid in post-apartheid South Africa is frequently equated with being politically insane and morally questionable. Yet recent studies (eg, Jansen, 2007; Dlamini, 2009) suggest that the end of apartheid occasioned a complex loss for South Africans, which I propose was a melancholic loss.

In contradistinction to mourning, Freud (1917) proposed melancholia as a kind of rebellion against the social world that has occasioned a loss, a refusal to accept 'the verdict of reality' (p. 255). In melancholia, to prolong psychically an attachment to a lost object, an object-cathexis is withdrawn into the ego, establishing 'an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object' (p. 249). Particularly when a loss is brought about through prohibition, identification with the lost object is formative of the psychic conflict of conscience as the object bears the trace of its problematic social status and is incorporated as such, becoming a problematic feature of the ego. Put succinctly, 'Melancholia is a rebellion that has been put down, crushed' (Butler, 1997, p. 190). That is, identification with the lost object is the rebellion that is put down by conscience, which allows the lost object to live on as a castigated feature of the ego. While the pain of mourning takes the form of grief for the lost object, the pain of melancholia is discernable in a conflicted relation with oneself. The psychic conflict that ensues is, in other words, the conscious form of melancholic loss, a loss that is constellated in the symptom of persistent self-beratement.

Freud (1921) provided a few speculative thoughts on how melancholia may be cultivated in the formation of groups. His argument was premised on the notion that group membership is subject to certain limitations. When these limitations entail the renunciation of a loved object and where 'the object is given up because it has shown itself unworthy of love' (p. 133), melancholia may ensue if in attempts to preserve the lost object it is 'set up again inside the ego, by means of identification, and severely condemned by the ego-ideal' (p. 133). Freud (1923) then developed the argument that melancholia may be the precondition for mourning, rather than its opposite or its failure. As he stated, 'It may be that this identification is the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects' (p. 29). Thus, in this reformulation of melancholia, there is no pre-existent ego prior to melancholic loss. As Freud put it, '[T]he character of the ego is a precipitate of the abandoned object-cathexes and it contains the history of those object choices' (p. 29). Freud's (1921, 1923) later reconceptions enable a more properly psychosocial formulation of melancholia, foregrounding the relation between the social and the psychic, as the particular prohibitions of a given society occasion the losses whereby the character of the ego is formed and shaped.

Freud's (1917) thesis and his developments of it (1921, 1923) have recently received a significant amount of attention in critical scholarship and have been applied to various social and cultural contexts. Although the groundwork for

this wider applicability of mourning and melancholia, outside the clinic had been laid by Freud, it was Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich's (1975) study of post-Hitler Germany, *The Inability to Mourn*, that did much to develop the social dimensions of the Freudian ideas of mourning and melancholia. What is more, the Mitscherlichs offered a useful lens through which to examine the problem of nations' failing to relinquish fully identifications with fallen regimes.

It is worth tracing the broad strokes of the Mitscherlichs' argument on the vicissitudes of Germany's identification with Hitler after World War II, as this has implications for an analysis of continued identifications with apartheid in a post-apartheid context.

Not having observed either the processes of mourning or signs of melancholia in the German Federal Republic, the Mitscherlichs (1975) proposed the 'de-realization of the past', the wholesale 'denial of the past' (p. 14), as the means by which many Germans defended against an acknowledgement of 'collective responsibility and guilt' (p. 14). They go as far as to argue that, had the Germans fully confronted their Nazi past in the years immediately subsequent to the war, mass melancholia and a devastating total loss of self-esteem would have crippled the population. *The Inability to Mourn*, faithful to Freud's (1917) formulation, is thus primarily concerned with the rigid defences necessary for deferring the process of mourning and the repetition of the past that ensues with the failure to mourn. As the Mitscherlichs (1975) state, 'History does not repeat itself, yet it often incorporates a repetition compulsion whose grip can only be broken when historical events bring about a change in the level of consciousness' (p. 50).

The situations in postwar Germany and post-apartheid South Africa show some similarities, but also some marked differences. Because the German situation entailed 'processes that shook the entire society' (Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich, 1975, p. 32), an individual burdened with guilt became merely 'a sinner among sinners' (p. 33) and was saved from isolation and moral abnormality. In South Africa, that kind of group absolution from guilt is not possible, for victims and perpetrators alike – those oppressed and those complicit in their oppression – are now subjects of the same nation. As a result, South Africans are continually confronted with the trauma of apartheid. Another difference is that in Germany, as the Mitscherlichs point out, '[T]here were no political ideas (which might have been produced by an anti-Nazi resistance movement had there been one) to fall back on' (p. 13), whereas in South Africa the foundations of the anti-apartheid movement, fractured and heterogeneous as these were, have become the foundations of the post-apartheid nation. The preamble to the South African constitution begins, 'We, the people of South Africa, recognise the injustices of our past'. It is a collective recognition of the apartheid past *as an injustice* that has constituted the post-apartheid nation. The commandment of the post-apartheid nation, in other words, is to live against, be affectively opposed to, apartheid. Thus, an anti-apartheid disposition, functioning as a principle of authentication for subjects of an

emerging national community, has constituted a post-apartheid national biopolitics of the heart. At a moral level, one must have an anti-apartheid conscience to be an authentic post-apartheid South African.

This injunction is complicated for Afrikaners by the entanglement of apartheid and Afrikaner identity. Although Afrikanerdom predates apartheid, apartheid was the inductorium of Afrikaner identity; apartheid legislation, the cauldron in which it was forged. The conflict produced by the commandment to live against apartheid is well put by Afrikaans author and poet Antjie Krog (2002), who asks in *Country of My Skull*, her book on the TRC, 'How do I live with the fact that all the words used to humiliate, all the orders given to kill, belonged to the language of my heart?' (p. 238). To continue to identify as an Afrikaner is to be located in a language of domination, but to vacate an Afrikaner identity amounts to an alienation from the world as it has been known and the loss of a coherent sense of self. Critical scholarship employing the idea of melancholia frequently invokes a primary loss of an unremembered union with the world, wherein subjects must pursue what has been lost through the compromise of language. As Julia Kristeva (1989), following Hanna Segal, has put it, '[T]he child produces or uses objects or vocalizations that are *symbolic* equivalents of what is lacking' (p. 23). What we have here, though, is a secondary loss, a loss of the order and ordering principles of apartheid as the narcissistic support for Afrikaner subjectivity and an abandonment in the limited freedom of the new order of anti-apartheid post-apartheid South Africa.

We can proceed, then, on the assumption that, much as was the case in post-war Germany, the post-apartheid nation has occasioned a loss for Afrikaners, a loss that should not be a loss at all but should be a sign of moral progress, a cause for celebration only: love for apartheid is a limitation imposed on the group 'because it has shown itself unworthy of love' (Freud, 1921, p. 83), as fundamentally unlovable. It is, in other words, a melancholic loss, a loss that 'is in some way related to an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness, in contradistinction to mourning, in which there is nothing about the loss that is unconscious' (Freud, 1917, p. 245). To be specific, we should say that this is true for Afrikaners with interests in being authentic post-apartheid South Africans. Apartheid, for post-apartheid South Africans, cannot be anything but an unconscious loss, an unthinkable loss: how, indeed, does one mourn the loss of what has been officially declared a crime against humanity? As Freud continued, speaking of the unconsciousness of melancholic loss, 'This, indeed, might be so even if the patient is aware of the loss which has given rise to his melancholia, but only in the sense that he knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him' (p. 245). It follows that, while it is clear enough that apartheid as an ideal is dead, what, precisely, it is about this ideal and the life that it enabled that was loved and has been lost is unavowable.

In following this path paved by the Mitscherlichs (1975), I draw on research conducted on the Oppikoppi music festival, an event that has drawn thousands

of young, white Afrikaners, since South Africa became a democracy in 1994, on an annual pilgrimage to a dusty, thorny, 150-hectare game-farm called Nooitgedacht (never would have thought), located a short distance from the mining town of Swartklip, in the northernmost province of Limpopo, South Africa. My overarching objective here is to use the festival to understand some of the ways in which young Afrikaners are adapting to the post-apartheid nation, to the 'renunciations and limitations' (Freud, 1921, p. 131) imposed by the nation, and the ways in which Afrikaner subjects have formed themselves and stylized themselves according to the conditions of the new nation.

Describing group formation, directly before his discussion of the cultivation of melancholia implicit in group formation, Freud (1921) offered a provocative thought on the function of festivals: 'In all renunciations and limitations imposed upon the ego a periodical infringement of the prohibition is the rule; this indeed is shown by the institution of festivals' (p. 131). Festivals, for Freud, offered the opportunity for 'transgression of what are at other times the most sacred commandments ... [for an] abrogation of the ideal' (p. 131). In contradistinction to Freud's thoughts on the socio-psychological function of festivals, the transgression of the event on which I focus here is given form primarily as the thwarted rebellion of melancholia, rather than straightforward transgression of the 'sacred commandments' of post-apartheid South Africa. Let me illustrate this by turning to a brief description of Oppikoppi music festival.

'Hemel op die Platteland': Oppikoppi as Ironic Retreat

Festival organizer Misha Loots (2004) said, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the event, '*Oppikoppi is basies soos Fokofpolisiekar sing, 'Hemel op die Platteland'* [Oppikoppi is basically like Fokofpolisiekar sing, 'Heaven in the farmlands']' (p. 5). The song he is referring to, by Afrikaans rock band, Fokofpolisiekar [Fuck off police car], off their EP, 'As Jy met Vuur Speel Sal Jy Brand' [If You Play with Fire You'll Get Burned], is a far cry from a romantic invocation of rural Afrikanerdom: '*Reguleer my, routineer my. Sit my in 'n box en merk dit veilig. Stuur my dan waarheen al die dose gaan. Stuur my Hemel toe, ek dink dis in die platteland. Dis Hemel op die platteland* [Regulate me, give me routines. Put me in a box and mark it safe. Then send me to where all the boxes/cunts go. Send me to Heaven, I think it's in the farmlands. It's Heaven in the farmlands]'. Fokofpolisiekar enjoy a massive following at the festival; it would not be an exaggeration to say that they have been, for some years now, the poster boys of the event. Their song 'Hemel op die Platteland' captures the affective ambivalence over traditional Afrikanerdom that the festival has been able to bind in an ironic retreat from everyday post-apartheid life, a retreat to a place that is loved but is also, in a reflexive move, depicted as a place where all the 'cunts', the boxed, regular Afrikaners go: the *platteland*.

Originally intended as a *vakansie oord* [holiday resort], as farm owner, Boors Bornmann put it in an interview in October 2009, the farm on which Oppikoppi is held was bought by the Bornmann family in 1992 'to get away from everything' (cited in Kombuis, 2009, p. 210), quite significantly, at a moment when the country was on the brink of drastic and inevitable political change. As Koos Kombuis (2004), the first musician to perform on the farm, has put it, 'For us, Oppikoppi all too quickly became a kind of holy land, a Mecca. ... For us it was a place to get away from the city, nothing more, a hiding place for the ex-Alternative Afrikaner youth' (pp. 9–10). The trope of escape and withdrawal is one we find taken up in the promotion of the festival, too. Although there were fundamental departures from this original plan for the farm in the years that followed, the early events on the farm conjured, much in line with this original intention, a withdrawal to the 'wild and empty' *platteland*, 'absolute escapism', as festival organizer, Carel Hoffmann (2004, p. 4), has put it.

There are few places more conservative of the mythology of Afrikanerdom than a farm. The nostalgia on which the festival initially traded certainly has not aided the authentication of its place within the new nation. It has conjured a withdrawal, even if only a temporary one, from post-apartheid society and a privatized retreat, with an entrenched Afrikaner identity of place providing insulation from social transformation. Of course, the festival has received its share of criticism for precisely this reason. What the festival had to confront, then, was that the area into which it was withdrawing was, rather than being 'empty', already *full* of racialized social and economic inequalities, the product of colonial and then apartheid oppressive legislation and exploitative force. The farm was *possessed* by white farmers, so to speak, owned, but also haunted by the force with which farms have been acquired through dispossession. In putting this myth of an empty wilderness to work, there was an inevitable need to find a way to deal with, to accommodate discursively the sedimentary layers of inscription that the farm bears and the ghosts (not to mention living people) that crowd this site and its surrounding areas. Outside of festival time, for instance, the bar on the farm is occupied by white miners under a contract the farm has with the nearby mine. Another guest house owned by a family in the neighbouring town of Northam accommodates black employees of the mine. That is, white miners are housed on the farm, black miners in the guest house in Northam. As Bornmann rationalized the separation, black employees would prefer to stay in town in Northam, in 'their comfort zone', not on the farm, while white miners 'prefer the farm'.

Bringing together South African musicians from different musical and social backgrounds is partially responsible for generating the mythology of the festival and has helped legitimize a withdrawal to what is a notably conservative part of the country. Alongside this trope of withdrawal has also been the active promotion and celebration of South African music. Along with white South

African rock music, there was also active promotion of a diversity of music styles and genres. Diverse as the performers have been, though, it has only really been since 2001 that Oppikoppi began drawing a multiracial audience, which has not swelled significantly.

Moreover, heavy drinking and hedonism have characterised the festival. The construction of a 'wild and empty' land has enabled this wild behaviour: the harshness of the place depicted, its wildness, corresponds with a mode of conduct; that is, one conducts oneself wildly in accordance with the place. As Kavish Chetty (2008) put it in a review of the festival, somewhat tongue in cheek, 'No man can survive here without surrendering himself entirely to the primitive and the primordial.' If in the writing on the festival in the media there is always a photograph from the hill overlooking the festival, there is also frequently one of a wrecked young white Afrikaner male, passed out, in the dirt.

We have here what we might loosely call a set of cultural symptoms, most notably, a kind of self-destructive heavy drinking that characterized the early festivals, which has continued until today, as well as a withdrawal from a changing social world. Coupled with this withdrawal, though, are attempts to adapt to the changing national scene. What has enabled this adaptation, at least in part, is that the festival has maintained an intensely critical relation to Afrikanerdom by appropriating that most sacred of Afrikaner places, the farm, and turning it into an abomination of itself. Each year, people who attend the festival destroy the farm they love, or at least put this place sacred to Afrikaner mythology – the farm, where the order of patriarchal authority can be conserved – to use in ways that upset and unsettle conservative Afrikaners. The sanctity of the farm is restored after each festival, but this cycle of defilement and restoration is a part of the manic pleasure and self-destructiveness of the festival. Oppikoppi has been, for as long as South Africa has been a democratic nation, a refuge for Afrikaners who hate Afrikanerdom and the old country, for Afrikaners who have rejected being inducted into traditional Afrikaner identity but nevertheless remain Afrikaners. There is thus a continued investment in, and attachment to, the rural nostalgia of Afrikaner identity, as well as a defilement of various signifiers of Afrikanerdom.

One of the most interesting features of the festival in respect of the submission of Afrikaner identities to the post-apartheid nation through a critical relation to Afrikanerdom is, as the title of this article indicates, that Oppikoppi has become, increasingly over the years, a convergence point for parody of Afrikanerdom. While bringing together people, primarily musicians, of different backgrounds has offered one means of assisting the festival to take up a place within a post-apartheid ideological universe, we find yet another strategy at work in Afrikaner self-parody.

Although self-parody is a phenomenon that has recently become more prominent, it can be traced back to the very beginnings of the festival – and

further still to the Voëlvry movement of the late 1980s (for analyses of Voëlvry, see Grundlingh, 2004; Laubscher, 2005; Hopkins, 2006). In this regard, there have been parodic performances, at Oppikoppi, on and off stage, from the late 1990s. Although I consider only a select few examples of parody here, it is important to bear in mind that, although parody may not define this festival, each event does attain a kind of generalized parodic intensity. The parodic double of Afrikanerdom, frequently stereotypical Afrikaner masculinity, is given form at various levels, ranging from an organisational one, where festivals are themed as an ironic repetition of a problematized Afrikaner motif, with corresponding festival flyers, press releases and onstage performances, to a less formalized offstage performative repertoire of parodic repetition. What is more, zef musicians, Die Antwoord [The Answer] and Jack Parrow, enjoy something of a cultlike following at Oppikoppi. A brief description of zef is thus warranted.

The term *zef* is derived from the Ford Zephyr, a model popular with working-class Afrikaners during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Zef is a term commonly associated with poor white Afrikaner culture, with a 'white-trash' Afrikaner aesthetic, though necessarily implying an ironic distance from what it appropriates and repeats. On one hand, the 'poor white problem' was of major concern to the apartheid government. Thus, what was problematic about Afrikanerdom to the apartheid regime becomes a salvageable element of Afrikanerdom in post-apartheid South Africa; it is, at least partially, compatible with the post-apartheid nation. But because zef is a particular form of Afrikaner culture that was formed during apartheid, it requires some work of adaption, of 'rehabilitation' (Wicomb, 1998). We could say that zef images and ideas can be conjured only if they are negated. As Freud (1925) put it, 'A negative judgement is the intellectual substitute for repression' (p. 182). We might restate his words by saying that a parodic negation of Afrikanerdom as it existed during apartheid is the performative substitute of repression. The emergence of the zef movement in post-apartheid South Africa, which has received a significant amount of national and international media attention, thus gives wider relevance to this phenomenon.

Stephen Frosh (1991) offers a useful point of orientation in my task of providing an account of Afrikaner self-parody. He argues that 'any culturally pervasive pattern of selfhood can be seen as a kind of barometer of social processes, reflecting the quality of environmental conditions' (p. 4). If there is a widespread pattern of Afrikaner self-parody (that is, a parodic pattern of selfhood) evident in post-apartheid Afrikaner youth culture – one that is also concentrated at this festival – then what can this pattern tell us about broader 'social processes', particularly those related to post-apartheid nationalism and nation building? Afrikaner self-parody has offered Afrikaners a way of being authentic post-apartheid South Africans by turning against the past and the past as it lives on in the present. This pattern of parodic selfhood is also a pattern of

melancholic selfhood as the technique of self-parody preserves, as a spectacle, precisely what it negates. It is a rebellion against the social world that has occasioned the loss and has rendered lament for the object unavowable. I am suggesting that Afrikaner self-parody, as a pattern of melancholic selfhood, both transgresses (through identification with problematized features of Afrikanerdom) and fulfils (by parodically negating these features) the injunctions of the post-apartheid nation. Self-parody figures, in other words, a form of what I want to call national melancholia, a form of melancholia cultivated in Afrikaner subjects by the post-apartheid nation.

In critical scholarship engaging the notion of melancholia, there has been a kind of celebration of melancholia as resistance (see Forter, 2007, for a critique of this celebration), which would be, in the post-apartheid context, clearly misplaced. Butler (1997), offering a more critical line of approach, writes that, in melancholia, '[i]nstead of breaking with the object, or transforming the object through mourning, this *Aufhebung* – this active, negating, and transformative movement – is taken into the ego' (p. 176). She means here that the force of the social world, which has declared it an unavowable loss over which even ambivalence is forbidden, is taken over by the ego 'as its own destructiveness' (p. 176). Conscience, with self-beratement as its instrument, does the work of preserving the lost object as a problematic feature of oneself. What we need to be alert to, then, is melancholia's 'satisfaction in self exposure' (Freud, 1917, p. 247), the ways in which melancholia continually draws attention to its own problematic features and in so doing transforms a forbidden object-cathexis into a problematized identification. The question is thus whether self-parody does, in fact, function along the same lines as this melancholic self-beratement. Let me now examine a more detailed case of Afrikaner self-parody.

'The Republic of Oppikoppi'

The April 2009 festival fell one day after the national election in which Jacob Zuma became the fourth democratically elected President of South Africa. The event was themed as a campaign to garner support for Twakkie – who together with fellow comedian, Cornè are *The Most Amazing Show* (TMAS) – to become the next president of the country (Figure 1).

Twakkie is played by actor, producer and comedian Rob van Vuuren, who, incidentally, grew up on a farm in rural Eastern Cape. He had recently won the television competition, *Strictly Come Dancing*, hence the 2009 festival name, *Strictly Come Twakkie*. TMAS are a much lauded and laughed at mirror ball of white South Africa, of fragments of post-apartheid South African life. They bring into their performances several distorted reflections of the country: their moustaches join the national chorus of Afrikaner parody; their accents are

Figure 1: Presidential candidate Twakkie, as he appeared on the official poster for *Oppikoppi (Not-Quite) Easter 2009*.

recognizably those of Afrikaners trying to speak English, but not quite, as they are also those of white, English-speaking South Africans imitating Afrikaners trying to speak English. They are a parody of a parody, of which the moustache, as much as the ridiculous accent, is a part. The act ridicules traditional Afrikanerdom but also self-consciously makes fun of those who ridicule backward Afrikaners. TMAS are characterised by an appropriation of fragments of speech patterns and styles and a presentation of the ridiculous as the real and legitimate.

The party line for the three-day festival, as it appeared on the official Vote Twakkie t-shirt, was, 'I believe in you if you couldn't believe in me. Yes, you couldn't'. The intentionally ironic question posed, through the appropriation of Barack Obama's slogan, was: could South Africans live to see a white president? And on the Friday night during the proceedings Twakkie was named President of the 'Republic of Oppikoppi', which in that moment became a kind of parodic *volkstaat*, a pseudo-separatist independent Afrikaner state. The opposite number of the ironic 'Republic of Oppikoppi', its serious counterpart, which it degraded and inverted, would be another farm, strangely enough also bearing the name Nooitgedacht, which makes up the larger part of Orania, the separatist Afrikaner *volkstaat* in the Northern Cape – although, officially, Orania does not enjoy the status of a *volkstaat* either and falls within the Republic of South Africa. In Orania they celebrate, for example, some of the old South African public holidays; they have an annual H.F. Verwoerd memorial lecture, where the contribution of the architect of apartheid is explored (De Beer, 2006) and there is a statue of the former president in the centre of the town. Such a serious and open display of nostalgia for apartheid would not be tolerated in the post-apartheid nation. This is precisely what the performance and its reception at the festival over the three days ridiculed.

Effects of contrast were thus created between itself and this other problematic farm. What should be kept in mind, though, in understanding this as a purely distancing move, is the withdrawal to the farm just described. What is more,

festival organizer Carel Hoffmann first came to attend the early informal events on the farm because he was a miner working on the nearby platinum mine at Swartklip. Likewise, farm owner, Boors Bornmann, was a cattle farmer from Northam before Oppikoppi started. Many of the people involved in the organisation of the festival grew up in the district and were socialized there. Labour for the festival is also provided cheaply from the surrounding areas, from poor black communities in Swartklip and Northam. Job creation here should not be overlooked in a post-apartheid context where the alleviation of poverty is a government priority. But neither should the fact that these people – the cleaners who work around the clock for low pay, keeping toilets unblocked, fires going and rubbish in the bins – receive close to nothing of the money spent. Not only do they not benefit economically, they are the nearly invisible nonfestival goers at the event, a different category of person very much in line with the order of apartheid. They are the stain the ironic reconstitution of the farm cannot remove, the excess haunting the picture of a legitimate post-apartheid event. The parody is thus undeniably also a form of self-parody.

Both farms, the serious farm and the parodic one, have thus enjoyed an identification with problematized elements of apartheid. There is, of course, a crucial difference between the two farms. Orania preserves its identification by locating it outside the post-apartheid nation – Oranians go as far as speaking of exportation to South Africa (Vestergaard, 2001). The festival, on the other hand, has retained its identification by repeating it as an ironic double of itself, by pairing this identification with its own parodic negation, by being that which is negated. In this way, investment in what is problematized is spent in the parody of those problematized features. Butler (1997) is again very useful here. Discussing the way Nietzsche and Freud approached conscience, she states, 'Prohibition reproduces the prohibited desire and becomes intensified through the renunciations it effects. The "afterlife" of prohibited desire takes place through the prohibition itself, where the prohibition not only sustains, but is sustained by the desire that it forces into renunciation' (p. 81).

In that example we see the prohibition of 'forbidden desire', enacted through parodic negation of such desire, the instantiation of an ironic distance from what is prohibited. It is a problematized identification, an identification you can believe in, 'Yes, you couldn't', as the party slogan for the event went. In a sense, Twakkie, the President of 'The Republic of Oppikoppi' gives his blessing to those who believe in him and cancel out this belief, to those who identify with him and find that identification problematic. The parody domesticates and negates what it evokes; it banishes the spectacle to the status of a joke, a domain that is outside serious, real life. Laughter lights up, galvanizes, the identificatory circuit whereby a rebellion is launched and put down in a single move, nevertheless providing a compromised quantity of satisfaction. Self-parody thus functions as an instrument of conscience (by putting down the rebellion), 'nourished precisely by the aggression it forbids' (Butler, 1997, p. 70). In this

way, not only is what is forbidden retained in its negation *as* prohibited desire, but also the negation itself is animated by forbidden desire (Freud, 1920). Effectively, the problematic features of Afrikanerdom are conserved in the parody by being those very problematic Afrikaner features which are ridiculed. Self-parody, in other words, allows one to continue to be an Afrikaner, even if only as an ironic double.

We can therefore say that, to prolong the life of elements of Afrikanerdom thought to be too entangled with apartheid, those elements are incorporated and reflexively problematized. Rather than disinvesting in problematized elements of Afrikanerdom, in a sense mourning them and forging new attachments, we see their melancholic preservation through the technique of self-parody. Certainly there is a preservation of a lost object at work here, one that resembles the thwarted rebellion of melancholia, but there are some niggling questions regarding the absence of some of the key clinical markers of melancholia. Freud (1917) described the presentation of melancholia as follows: 'a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment' (p. 244).

In the picture we have of Oppikoppi, the full range of melancholic symptoms is simply not present. Although there is a withdrawal as well as a kind of self-destructiveness, as I have noted, and we can infer a degree of psychic pain anesthetized with alcohol, little mention is made of despair in the performance or in the festival discourse in general. Furthermore, the disturbance of self-regard, which is the single feature distinguishing melancholia from mourning (Freud, 1917, p. 244), is notably absent. In fact, there is a prominent elevation of self-regard. While this could be interpreted as a form of mania into which, Freud argued, melancholia frequently lapses, we can be relatively certain that what we see is not the kind of melancholia he envisaged, nor does it closely approximate its typical clinical presentation. That being said, the picture presented (withdrawal to the farm, heavy drinking, self-parody) can still be accounted for by recourse to the dynamic of melancholia.

One means of assessing whether or not Afrikaner self-parody amounts, dynamically, to a form of melancholia would be to probe the potential benefits of 'self-exposure', to examine if the motivation for drawing attention to one's own wretchedness in self-parody is that of the melancholic. We find the clearest expression of this symptom of self-beratement in the rise of the zef movement. We might consider here the song, 'Doos Dronk' [cunt drunk], a collaborative performance between zef rappers Die Antwoord and Jack Parrow and Fokofpolisiekar, in which the musicians parody the heavy drinking that has characterized the post-apartheid Afrikaner youth, of which they are a part. The song ends in a scene where Ninja of Die Antwoord beats female zef rapper, Yolandi, to the ground. At this point, Jack Parrow tries to intervene but to no

avail. Parrow then assumes the role of a policeman in the performance; a siren sounds, '*Dis die polisie, meneer staan weg van die meisie*' [This is the police, sir, stand away from the girl]. Yolandi shouts at Ninja from the floor, '*Kyk vir jou nou, jy's n fokken sissie man*' [Look at you now, you're a fucking sissie man], at which point everyone shouts in unison, '*Ag, Fokoffpolisiekar*', ending the performance in a climactic chorus. Significantly, this song was performed at Oppikoppi on Women's Day in 2009.

In examining the self-exposure in this performance, we find quite another dimension of Afrikaner self-parody, one that not only preserves a disguised attachment to a foreclosed object in the circuitry of conscience, as I have described, but also uses its own problematized features (a racial, gendered and ethnicized position of historical dominance) in carrying out the injunctions of the post-apartheid nation. It does so by amplifying these problematized features into an outrageous and ridiculous misogynistic spectacle and relegating this problematized libidinal organization to the status of farce. As in the example of the parodic election campaign, the flash of reconnection with the object of loss is accomplished by occupying a staged revenge fantasy of the nation to which the subject belongs. Here, too, this momentary reconnection occurs within the circuitry of conscience, a conscience instituted by the foreclosure the nation has occasioned by leading to the melancholic incorporation of the object in the first place. Consequently, the performers and their audience are able to assume the very position of that which has been problematized, creating space for an ironic 'afterlife' for what has been forbidden. But (and here we can begin to extend the argument) melancholic identification, even as it preserves its lost object, *transforms* that which is incorporated.

This transformation is a kind of psychic work, analogous to Freud's (1916–1917) dream-work, disguising and distorting what is forbidden according to the conditions of a post-apartheid morality. This distorting and disguising – we might even say mutilating – what is forbidden according to an anti-apartheid post-apartheid morality is carried out by the technique of self-parody, which requires a problematized past as its raw material. The past is incorporated, identified with and turned against. It is precisely this turning against, this mutilation, that offers a new kind of narcissistic yield within a new sociopolitical context that values turning against the past.

The loss of apartheid as an ideal was, for Afrikaners, a narcissistic blow. In this context, we can begin to understand Afrikaner self-parody as the emergence of a new aesthetic form and a new parodic pattern of selfhood structured on the ethical imperatives of the post-apartheid nation. This stylization of the self authenticates Afrikaners *as* post-apartheid South Africans. It stands as a form of prosocial, superegoic violence that acts on the artefacts of a discredited past. Afrikaner self-parody figures, in other words, the installation and workings of a post-apartheid conscience, a submission to the conditions of the post-apartheid nation. Self-parody functions, then, as a

spectacular technique that not only preserves but also participates in the denigration and transformation of the past in its ironic repetition as parody, a move that stages a perverse elaboration of the 'sacred commandments' of the post-apartheid nation, simulating its submission to the nation's 'renunciations and limitations' (Freud, 1921, p. 131).

If we understand self-parody to be a form of reflexivity, a form of acting on the elements of oneself that are, according to social norms, problematized, then the inflation accompanying this kind of parody stands to reason: it is motivated by the proscriptions advocated by the norms and ideals of post-apartheid South Africa, which compel the repudiation of apartheid. As Butler (1997) argues, the force of the social world, which has declared apartheid an unavowable loss, is taken over by the ego 'as its own destructiveness' (p. 176). As Fokofpolisiekar sing in a song from the same album referred to earlier, which has become an anthem for this generation of young Afrikaners, '*vernietig jouself*' [destroy yourself]. Following Butler's line of thought, the masochism of this parodic spectacle, its self-exposure and self-ridicule, can be understood as the dissimulated force of post-apartheid nation building. We gain a sense from this dissimulated force how, in melancholia and self-parody alike, the 'ego can consent to its own destruction [only]... if it is able to direct against itself the hostility which relates to an object' (Freud, 1917, p. 252), in this case the object against which the post-apartheid nation has constituted itself. The corollary is that negative affective investment in the figure of the ironic double, as a reflexive move, accretes moral value and, as a result, is able to represent itself as authentically South African. The parodic double is a highly marketable product and thus also accrues cultural capital, as this sort of irony is, above all else, appreciated as cool. And therein lies the motivation for self-exposure and the real melancholic strategy of preservation at work in Afrikaner self-parody: it profits from apartheid, preserved as a denigrated feature of oneself, thus retaining a dominant position enabled by apartheid in the first place, albeit in a new form. As Derek Hook (2011) argues, the narcissistic gains of antiracist whiteness depend on a position of racialized privilege: it is precisely this position that is confessed, or perhaps, in extremely limited ways, generously and heroically given up. It is the structural racism on which this position was built that is acknowledged and it is past complicity with racist ideology for which apologies are made. For the antiracist whiteness Hook problematizes, racialized privilege is not eroded or dismantled but is converted into antiracism. Melancholic incorporation suggests one process whereby this conversion takes place.

Love for Afrikanerdom as it existed during apartheid and love structured according to an apartheid libidinal organization gains a compatible surrogate in post-apartheid South Africa in the form of self-parody not only because this technique provides a compromised form of satisfaction through negation, or because one can ironically continue to be precisely that which is problematized,

but also because this negation authenticates one's post-apartheid national status by sufficiently crushing this identificatory rebellion.

The objective for future research on this phenomenon, I think, should not be to unmask Afrikaners masquerading as authentic South Africans so as to reveal Afrikaners who, despite their displays of post-apartheid conscience, secretly long for a return to apartheid and who are actually old-fashioned racists. As Kaja Silverman (2008) has put it, 'To judge someone for unconscious impulses is absurd, since these impulses would not be repressed if they were not as abhorrent to that person's consciousness as they are to our own' (p. 124). One cannot, however, overlook the fact that the figure of the Afrikaner parodic double, *zef*, as it portrays itself in its elevation of what is most worthless in Afrikanerdom, does preserve a position of social privilege, which it is unable to relinquish and which is concealed in the spectacle of self-parody.

Conclusion

In the association of melancholia with sadness there seems something quite saddening about being able to feel a part of a national community only by making fun of oneself. It seems all the more saddening on account of the lack of recognition of the other it entails, as I described regarding the cleaners and security staff at the festival. Despite its creativity, social change is indeed stuck in the flourishing – we might even say, in a seemingly paradoxical way, *happy* and *inflated* – melancholia of Afrikaner self-parody. It is neither the complete and compliant surrender of a forbidden object nor the total rebellion of its preservation. It is the inhabitable, ambivalent symptom of a loss that cannot be declared, yet is spoken in a repetition compulsion that converts a problematized position of historical of dominance into the currency of an anti-apartheid/post-apartheid disposition (Hook, 2011). In Afrikaner self-parody we find a lost past, incorporated and used to narcissistically buoy a cultural formation that has experienced a socio-political situation as devastatingly threatening. It figures, in other words, a form of national melancholia: a submission to the conditions of the post-apartheid nation, which at the same time is a form of resistance to the mourning of apartheid and the loss of a fallen order.

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