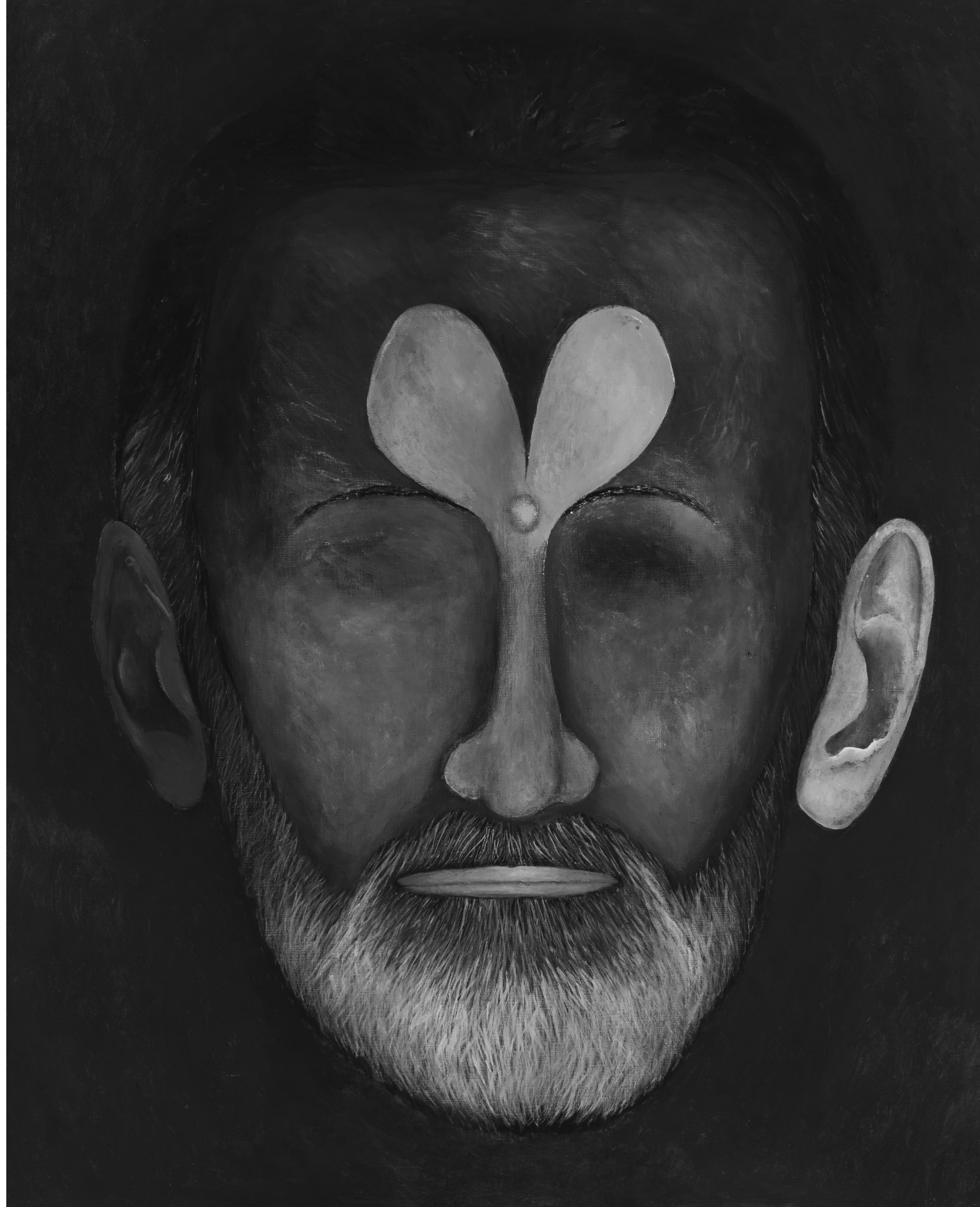


Afrikaans, as poet and painter Breyten Breytenbach notes from prison in *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*, “bears the stigma of being identified with the policemen, the warder, the judge and the White politician”, and as such is “the language of oppression and of humiliation, of the boer.”¹ Sanctioned as the language of apartheid governance – which is to say, fascist torture – Afrikaans not only became emblematic of the enunciation of racist violence, but constituted racism and violence in and of itself.

Abri de Swardt

Wat On Praat Contemporary Art & Afrikaans Jy!

1. Breyten Breytenbach. 1984. *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*. Taurus: Emmarentia. p. 321



This slippage between representation and act finds its apotheosis in a June 16th 1976 protest poster against the injurious imposition of the language reading *TO HELL WITH AFRIKAANS*. Yet, the transmission of brutality not only occurred in Afrikaans, but *unto* Afrikaans: the grand narrative of apartheid (still) functions to co-opt, coerce and condition Afrikaans as monocultural and White, as something with a singular tribal ascendancy, which is why Breytenbach's delineation published in 1984 will to many read as contemporary.

This intralinguistic capture is not a secondary violence, but is rather the concurrent, ineluctable force entrenched and reiterated in each adage of the apartheid State – that *Die Taal* is not the tongue inaugurated at Camissa by the likes of Autshumoa of the Goringhaikona, a linguist and diplomat versed in Dutch, Portuguese and Khoekhoe languages active prior to the encampment of Van Riebeeck; or that *Die Taal* is not the Cape Vernacular creolised amongst Ghanaian, Indonesian, Malagasy, and Malay slaves and indigenous peoples during the first two centuries of colonisation; or that *Die Taal* is not predominantly spoken, and kept flourishing, by Brown people.

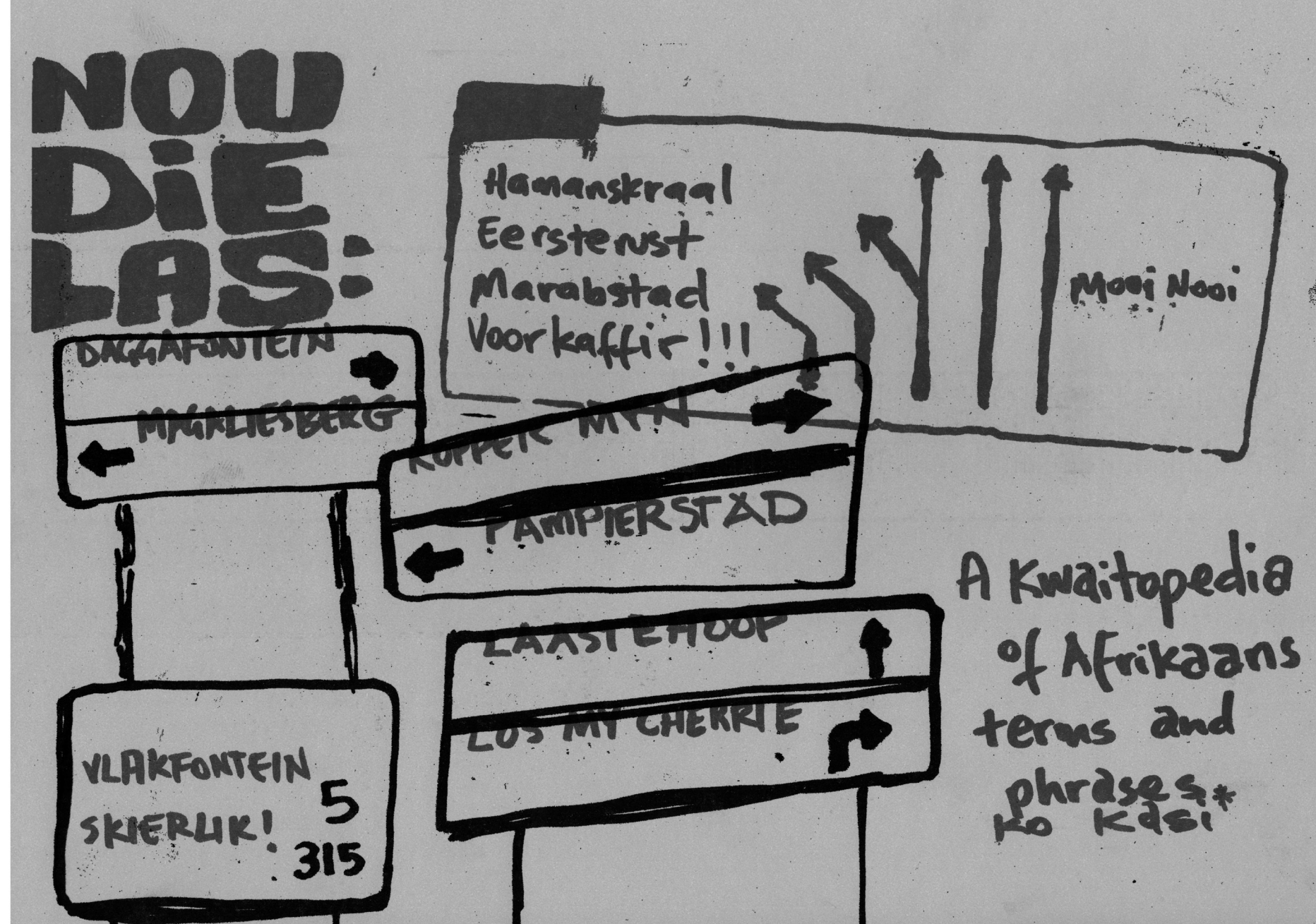
As an enclave, this monopolised versioning of Afrikaans is sustained by the post-democratic transfer of White Afrikaner cultural activity into privatised national arts festivals that feign inclusivity and theatricalise stagnancy. Although moments of self-criticality and opening up (as opposed to decolonisation) are enacted, these become recuperated as the intellectualised, diversified veneer of a system that has yet to address its positionality and use to a larger Southern African constituency.

Zebulon Dread, peddling his self-published *Hei Voetsek!* zine in the guise of a pariah at the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (the cover reading *Hei Dji Cape Town, Your European imitation Ma Se Poes Otherwise Holland se fokken Moer*), withdrew from the event in 2001, affronted by the “tannie and oompie affair” in which the preposition “national arts festival” is deployed “so loosely”. It was clear that Afrikaans remains there indelibly *apart*, and Dread dwells upon Breytenbach's epithet of the festival as “die bont begrafnis van die

Afrikaner (the motley graveyard of the Afrikaner)”²

Negotiating participation within Aardklop Nasionale Kunstefees in 2017, Keleketla! Library began the ongoing project *NOU DIE LAS: A Kwaitopedia of Afrikaans terms and phrases ko kasi*, in which the titular *las* can be translated into both “burden” and “join”. Facilitated as a series of workshops situated in Potchefstroom and the bordering township of Ikageng by Rangoato Hlasane, Masello Motana, Kgomo Neto Tleane

2. Zebulon Dread. 2001. “Arts festival or Boerfest”, in *Mail & Guardian*. 20 April



and Vuyiswa Xekwane, the project aggregates and indexes the lexical unorthodoxy of Afrikaans in Kwaito musicology.

Here the legacies of Tstotsitaal, instituted in the early apartheid years as the occupation and inversion of Afrikaans through confluences with Setswana, Sepedi, and Sesotho, detaches itself from overt referents to the encroachment of White Afrikanerdom, towards a defiantly Black orality instrumental in township cultures. Several A4 RISO prints chronicle particular Kwaito etymologies excavated from Afrikaans: *Tussen*,

meaning “in between” is described as “A Kwaito hit... released in 2003 by Trompies member Jakarumba”; *Ipompe*, a song by Mdu Masilela (see also: MDU, MM Deluxe, Mashamplan) derives from *pomp*, “to pump”; *Die Poppe Sal Dans*, an idiom that directly translates to “dolls will dance”, and figuratively to “shit will hit the fan”, is a “popular township forewarning” and *treffer* by Arthur Mafokate (“example: ha o ka tswa ka lefestere go ya besheng; die poppe sal dans”); and *Is Vokol Is Niks*, a track by Kwaito supergroup Mashamplan from their second album *Hey Kop* (1995), “related

THE CAPE JAZZ COLLECTION
AFRIKAANSE SPELREELS

BO KAAP

McCoy MRUBATA

GOEMA

♩=124

8♭ E♭ 8♭ F 8♭

INTRO

SIMILE

حروفت بنشلس دي افركاش سيلغ قبل

8♭ E♭ 8♭ F7

دي الخمين حبرايكلك انتسيراك ان بسكافد

8♭ E♭ 8♭ F7 8♭

افركاش ائن خروئتسلغ انقاز

8♭ E♭ 8♭ F 8♭

دي سيلغ فت فندخ امينلك ان نيدرلنت اركن ورد

8♭ E♭ 8♭ F 8♭

SOLOS OVER FORM

3- شفير موزيكل دي بنشلس من خلايلفورمخايت

terms: Fede Vokol, Jinda Dai Ding, Ang Na Niks”, sardonically implements the Afrikaans *fokol* and *niks*, a double, hollow depletion. As mnemonic prompts, the prints disseminate linguistic genealogies developed in conversation with elders from Ikageng.

Communal re-inscription is elegiacally literalised in *Straatpraatjies: Bo Kaap* (2016), a site-responsive performance by Burning Museum on the decisive influence of Islam in the formation of Afrikaans through the motif of the scribe. Roughly translated to “Street Talk” the work saw the collective affixing or *plak*-ing enlarged images of sheet music of McCoy Mrubata’s composition *Bo Kaap* along the exterior of a derelict home in the nominal Capetonian neighbourhood. This action was underscored

in real-time by jazz musicians Reza Khota and Garth Erasmus, whose improvised performance drifted with, and from, Mrubata’s original arrangement.

In turn, this sounding assembles readership for the vocals beneath the notation, superimposed in Arabic and Roman script – both Afrikaans extracts from the *Afrikaanse Woordelys en Spelreëls* (AWS), a textbook devoted to regulating the language. Transliterated by scholar Saarah Jappie into Arabic-Afrikaans, her handwriting invokes the mid 19th century madrassas: Muslim schools where the first Cape Dutch Afrikaans texts were published, phonetically written in Arabic.

The work makes public and legible divested and unsung Brown histories anterior to Afrikaans being sequestered as a fledgling

GOEMA

♩=124

8♭ E♭ 8♭ F 8♭

INTRO

SIMILE

سوس هير اندر فردايدلايڭ، فند ماڭ.

8♭ E♭ 8♭ F7

1. GRONDBEGINSELS Die Afrikaanse spelling wil:

8♭ E♭ 8♭ F7 8♭

1. die algemeen gebruiklike uitspraak in beskaafde Afrikaans as grondslag, aanvaar;

8♭ E♭ 8♭ F word; 8♭

2. rekening hou met die spelling wat vandag amptelik in Nederland erken

8♭ E♭ 8♭ F 8♭

3. sover moontlik die beginsel van gelykvormigheid, soos hieronder verduidelik, handhaaf. SOLOS OVER FORM

Bo Kaap is one of the most important historical sites in Cape Town. It is a residential area where freed slaves, craftsmen and free traders first settled almost two centuries ago. Today it overlooks the city’s bustling Central Business District.

Germanic tongue, a latter narrative which organisations such as The Fellowship of True Afrikaners fostered since 1875, by removing most terms that do not accede to the “grondbeginsel” (fundamentals) of what the AWS lists as “beskaafde” (civilised) Afrikaans, “amptelik”, “erken” (officially recognised) in the Netherlands.

Cardinal to this linguicide is the dictate of “gelykvormigheid” or likeness, maintained in order to whitewash and Christianise the language. In refuting standardisation, dialects such as Kaaps counter homogeneity through revitalising the roots of Afrikaans as *‘n mengelmoe plattaal* – a medleyed horizontality “more closely in touch with the reality of languaging as a type of prostheticisation” as Rey Chow notes, “whereupon even what feels like an inalienable interiority” is

the grand narrative of apartheid (still) functions to co-opt, coerce and condition Afrikaans as monocultural and White

Burning Museum, *Straatpraatjies: Bo Kaap* (2016). Reworked sheet music of the song ‘Bo Kaap’, composed by McCoy Mrubata. Superimposed lyrics are taken from an old Afrikaanse *Woordelys en Spelreëls* (AWS) textbook, transliterated into Arabic-Afrikaans by Saarah Jappie. Also presented in Roman script.

“impermanent, detachable, and (ex)changeable”.³

Khota and Erasmus’s synchronous delivery anchors the work in the musical heritage of ghoema, cultivated by freed slaves in the very *Slamse Buurt* of the performance, a space where the survivability of community is at risk, by syntax just as much as by gentrification.

The social existence of the body is made possible by language, as Bronwyn Katz’s video *Wees Gegroet* (2016) recites through the dynamic interplay of salutation as a calling into being and as an opening up to address. Upon an untreaded expanse of red soil, Katz intones an Afrikaans variant of the *Ave Maria*, in which the refrain “Wees gegroet, Maria, in die uur van ons dood” (Be greeted, Maria, in the hour of our death) is modulated to “Wees gegroet,

die uur van ons dood.” (Be greeted, the hour of our death.)

Aired in the round, the proclamation becomes increasingly resolute as utterance gives sway to paralinguistic gestures, which include strident, methodic clapping and the removal of her *kopdoek* and shirt. Katz exalts an iconography of dissent, meeting and purging trepidation, erasure, and non-existence. As her Afrikaans subsides from conferred mimesis into a new wording, questions are raised as to the primary audience hailed by her call, and if repetition itself can be “both the way that trauma is repeated”, as Judith Butler asks, but “also the way in which it breaks with the historicity to which it is in thrall?”⁴

Timely recurrence marks Koos Prinsloo’s 1987 short story *Die Hemel Help Ons* (Heaven Help Us), in which a Yeoville writer’s inchoate tale of

3. Rey Chow. 2014. *Not like a Native Speaker – On Languaging As A Postcolonial Experience*. Columbia UP: New York. p. 14-15

4. Judith Butler. 1997. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. Routledge: New York & London. p. 36-37

Bronwyn Katz, *Wees Gegroet*, 2016. Video still. Image courtesy of blank

queer romance, *HEMEL*, is – after replacing his typewriter with a word processor – punctuated by snippets of unrest and affliction he had not penned, such as “die brand gesteeek. In ‘n ander voorval is seepwater in ‘n bruinman se keel afgedwing voordat hy met messe doodgesteeek is...”⁵ As the insertions accrue algorithmically, refusing attempts at deletion, the writer ultimately concedes to this parallel narrative.

The work, as a State of Emergency allegory on blindness and the modalities of resistance, suggests that White Afrikaner cultural production must necessarily become, without recourse to didacticism, an unabated political technology. In part, this involves an unravelling of the regimented uses of State Afrikaans towards a hitherto *Kombuis Taal*, a kitchen language: slight, tender and familial.

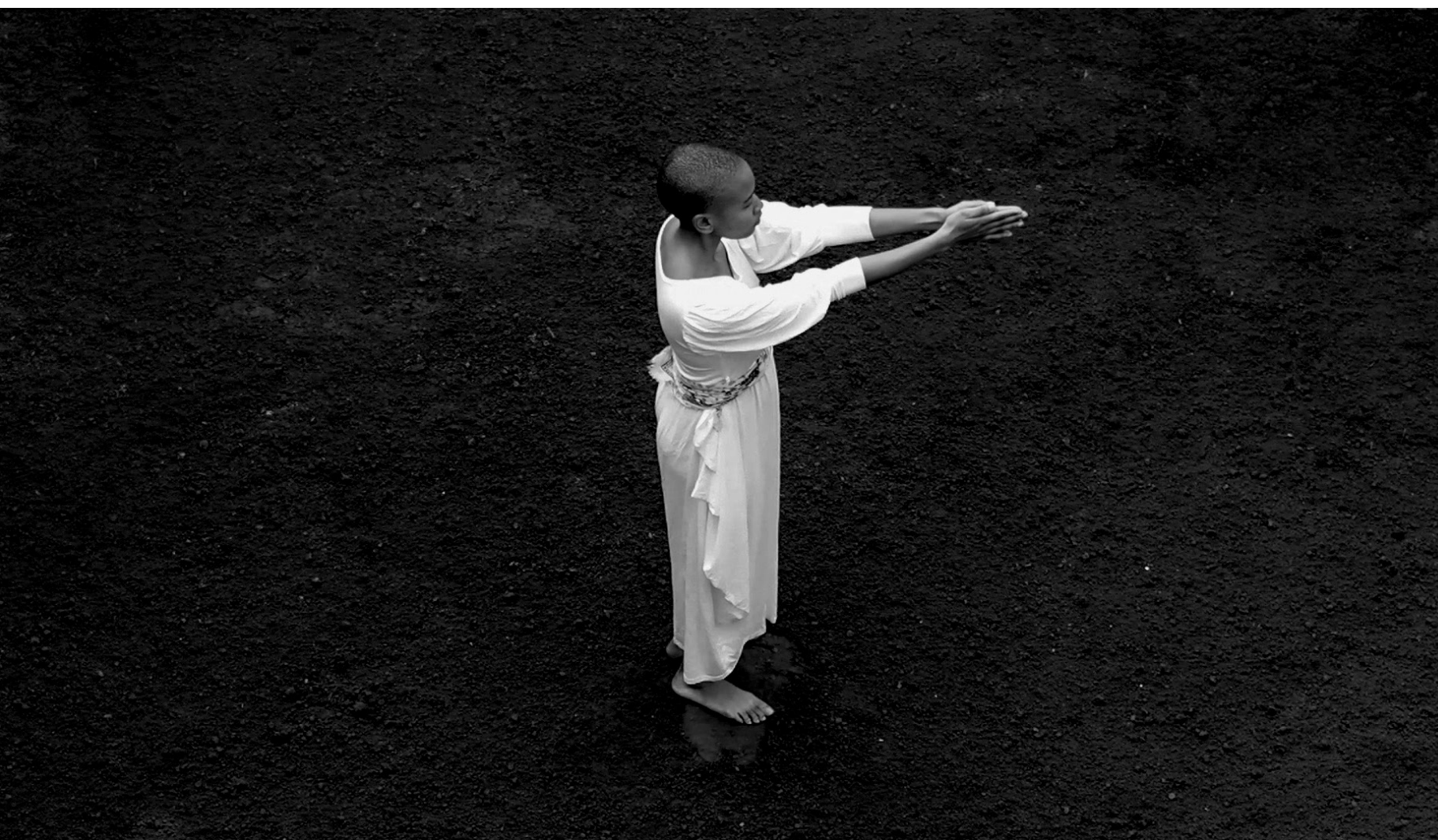
5. Koos Prinsloo. 1987. *Die Hemel Help Ons*, in *Die Hemel Help Ons*. Taurus: Emmarentia. p. 87

Much like Rainer Werner Fassbinder grappling aslant with Nazi Germany in the 1970s, the task of White Afrikaner voices is to situate themselves outside of expedience and detachment, and to recognise this as an interminable practice.

In *Post-Boland-Pre-Peruvian-Plaaspunk* (2017), the debut record by Metode en Tegniek, a ribald *troebadoer* recasts the Boland Arcadia as feudal, ushering the listener past “die leë dam van die werklikheid/ die bos vol mondsoldate/ en die prinses van ontoeganklikheid” (the empty dam of reality/ the forest full of mouth-soldiers/ and the princess of inaccessibility) (*F.R.B.*).

Seething and guttural, the record is at the crossroads of folk, cabaret, bluegrass and hardcore punk. Throughout, Afrikaner self-pitying is met with a cavalier sneer, as in “*Druk my aartjie*” (Squeeze my tiny little vein): “lees visioene tussen die reënwater en sente/ lyk-wense kamerade gesterwe/ kamp gaar hier byrie klub boulevard” (read visions between rainwater and cents/ corpse wishes comrades passed away/ camp cooked here at the club boulevard). “*Kom sit hier op my pa*” (Come sit here on my pa) attests to blunt disidentification – “kom sit hier op my pa!/ sy woorde rus skaars koud mar kyk/ sy kak’s nog lank nie klaar” (come sit here on my pa!/ his words are barely cold but see/ his bullshit’s far from over.) Elsewhere, Metode en Tegniek wade through the quagmire of White affluence and pedestrianism: in “*La Fayette*” they sit on the “curb” outside a Tuscan bistro in Stellenbosch, variably deemed a “hoek” (corner) and a “vloek” (curse); and in the coda “*Die Kriekie*”, a parable on agitation, they observe a cricket cavorting in a swimming pool, “Hy skierts met sy bientjies en speel in die water/ die blink outeur van chloornat traktrate/ hy skop en hy rol om/ en lewe daarsonder” (He flicks with his tiny legs and plays in the water/ the burnished author of chlorine-wet treatises/ he kicks and he rolls over/ and lives without it...)

The anarchic disposition of *Post-Boland-Pre-Peruvian-Plaaspunk* might read as anachronistic, even balmy, but there is an uncanny revisionism at play here electrifying Afrikaans semantics. Metode en



IS VOKHOL, IS NIKS

ORIGIN: From the Afrikaans words Vokhol and Niks which both mean "nothing" or empty/without anything.

DESCRIPTION: Vokhol is Niks is a super song by skwato Supergroup Mashamplan from their second album, Hey Kop released in 1995

EXAMPLE:

RELATED TERMS: Fele Vokhol, Snyman, Jinda Daa Ding, Ang'na Niks, MM Deluxe.

SEE ALSO: Mashamplan, Mdu Masilela, Obu-malawyer, Tokollo Magash.



Tegniek's lyrical density carries with it complex circuitries of speech, something that Angelo (alias Tshepo) in K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001), distinguishes at the home of West (alias Andries), a fellow sex worker at Steamy Windows, as "textured language":

I listen to them laugh, sometimes forgetting to speak in English, muttering things that sound like they could only be said in Afrikaans. Like Marlene talking about her brother in Zimbabwe, saying, "Ek is lief vir hom." A simple thing – I love him, I love my brother. There is poetry in the way the words fall out and how they force the mouth open, unlike English. Ek is lief vir hom – it is like saying "I have love for him." It sounds more urgent, more daring than the way the English would say it. There is the same depth, the same vivid expressions I find in African languages.⁶

Later that evening Andries, a straight man, would make love to Tshepo. One wonders if Duiker's chapter on encountering Afrikaans is insubordinate or marked by Rainbowist daze and wonderment. He could have gone further, and proposed this sonorous orality as African itself. Maar vir hierdie gedagtegang om volstrek pos te vat, is daar egter nog baie wat hernuwe én ongedaan gemaak moet word. ♦

5. K. Sello Duiker. 2001. *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*. Kwela: Cape Town. p. 483