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**The subversive Afrikaner:  
An exploration into the subversive stance  
of the *little magazine Stet* (1982–1991)**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

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October 2007



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I declare that **The subversive Afrikaner: An exploration into the subversive stance of the little magazine *Stet* (1982–1991)** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

JJH Deysel

12 October 2007

## SUMMARY

Title:	The subversive Afrikaner: An exploration into the subversive stance of the <i>little magazine Stet</i> (1982–1991)
By:	JJH Deysel
Degree:	Magister Artium (Information Design)
Supervisor:	Stella Viljoen
Summary:	<p>This study explores the subversive stance taken by the Afrikaans <i>little magazine Stet</i> (1982–1991) against the then current ideologies of Afrikaansness, apartheid, and censorship in South Africa during the 1980s. A narrative exploration of the context and circumstances from which the publication emerged, provides a base from which the visualisation of the subversive stance on the covers of <i>Stet</i> is semiotically analysed. The oppositional and alternative nature of the covers of <i>Stet</i> is discussed from within the Barthesian paradigm of myth construction and the discipline of social semiotics.</p>
Key terms:	<p><i>Little magazine</i>, literary magazine, censorship, resistance press, subversion, opposition, apartheid, semiotics, magazine covers, Afrikaans, Afrikaansness, Afrikaner identity, cultural myth, Nationalism, pre-democratic South Africa, anti-establishment, publishing, visual culture, Tienie du Plessis.</p>

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF STUDY

Thirteen years into a democratic South Africa (2007) much is still being written on the struggle against apartheid, and doubtless there will always be something to say about valiant South Africans who opposed a brutal and inhuman regime. In research on the pre-democratic South Africa, it seems that the “black, democratic” and “English, liberal” tendencies are contrasted to a “white, Nationalist Afrikaner” tendency. This white, Nationalist Afrikaner tendency comprised the state and establishment, who fiercely protected their constructed myth of the Afrikaner as superior being, even when faced with “international condemnation and internal resistance” (Giliomee 2003:xv). As such, Afrikaans-speaking South Africans as a group have long had to bear the brunt of responsibility for apartheid. Indeed, seminal Afrikaans author Breyten Breytenbach wrote “that it was foolish to believe that apartheid was the work of a few bureaucrats and ideologues. ‘The Afrikaners are responsible for apartheid, collectively and individually’” (Giliomee 2003:556). This dissertation proposes, however, that there were also white Afrikaners who opposed apartheid while aiming to reevaluate the notion of an Afrikaans identity<sup>1</sup> propagated by the establishment, and that these dissident Afrikaners have not been the focus of adequate study. Waddy (2004:59) concurs, stating that historians’ enthrallment with an official post-democratic narrative of “‘good’ Africans versus ‘bad’ Afrikaners” has caused historians to neglect processes and personalities that lie outside the official post-democratic narrative of apartheid.

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1 In this study, the concept of ‘Afrikaans identity’ refers to the white, Nationalist tendency propagated by the state and establishment, as outlined above. Likewise, the term ‘Afrikaansness’ (unless stated otherwise) refers to the widely-accepted stereotype of the Afrikaans-speaking South African as conservative and racist. The ‘subversive Afrikaners’ referred to in this study had the express aim of subverting this stereotypical view of ‘Afrikaans identity’ and ‘Afrikaansness’ to include liberal, non-racist, Afrikaans-speaking South Africans who were, nevertheless, proud of speaking Afrikaans.

This dissertation has as focus the *little magazine*<sup>2</sup> *Stet*, a publication produced from 1982 to 1991 by white, Afrikaans South Africans who formed part of an anti-establishment, liberal tendency. They seem to have attempted to reevaluate the notion of Afrikaansness by aligning themselves with ideologies of freedom and liberalism lacking in the traditional ideology of Afrikaansness. In the process of questioning themselves and their context, they were critical of apartheid, war, and censorship. This critique seems to have taken the form of a subversive and oppositional attitude towards the state, the establishment, and the Afrikaner identity they were part of. Thus, any attempt to understand the critical stance that the editors of *Stet* took, needs to take cognisance of the context within which it originated.

The importance of Afrikaans *little magazines* as subversive manifestations has not been documented.<sup>3</sup> Even the literary merit has sadly not been the focus of study. During the 1930s and 1940s, a number of theses were completed researching the literary reviews of the Dutch / Afrikaans publishing context (Rall 2004:3). Since then, little research has been conducted in this field. While their influence is noted, in contemporary research they have been discussed as either interesting asides or subjects of content analysis (see, for example, the studies of Kannemeyer 1998 and Rall 2004). Afrikaans *little magazines* may, nevertheless, be exemplary avenues through which to understand the changing attitudes of the liberal Afrikaner, and are thus worthy of analysis not only in literature studies, but also in terms of their worth to the study of visual culture in South Africa. The analysis of the visual representations of identity and cultural myth in these periodicals may provide for interesting conclusions of a peripheral sub-culture of Afrikaners critical of the paradigm that they lived in.

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2 The concerns and particularities of a *little magazine* is discussed in Chapter Two. For the purposes of this chapter, it may be understood as an avant-garde literary magazine, un-commercial and typically with oppositional tendencies.

3 There is a body of scholarship on South African oppositional media and publishing (see, for instance, Merret 1994 and Switzer & Adhikari 2000), but the contribution of oppositional Afrikaans South Africans “and their contribution to the struggle against apartheid, remains a largely untouched focus area” (Venter 2007:[sp]).

The aims of this study are therefore:

- To introduce the *little magazine* as a sub-genre of the literary magazine and, in doing so, investigate the suitability of the *little magazine* as subversive avenue.
- To chronicle the context of the South African literary environment that *Stet* was situated in, focussing on the role of censorship in South Africa and other Afrikaans *little magazines* that may have influenced *Stet*.
- To provide a narrative of subversion from within specifically Afrikaner ranks during the 1980s when *Stet* was published and position the emergence of *Stet* within this context of opposition and subversion.
- To analyse the covers of *Stet* in order to explore the visualisation of the subversive stances that may have been represented on the covers.

## 1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

The cultural myth of what constitutes an Afrikaner and the exposing of that myth by dissident Afrikaners is the thread that runs through this dissertation, thus situating this study in the Barthesian paradigm of myth construction. The theoretical framework within which the exploration of the myth takes place is largely restricted to the discipline of semiotics.

This dissertation has three broad methodological incentives: firstly, it is a narrative exploration of the context and circumstance from which the *little magazine Stet* emerged in South Africa. Secondly, it is a semiotic analysis of the covers of *Stet* in order to explore subversive messages displayed in the visual representations and text on the covers of *Stet*. This analysis may be positioned as ‘social semiotics’ as the analysis is focussed on the context of the images. Thirdly, this study utilises the methodology of a literature review, since it collates information from primary archival sources, secondary sources and a semi-structured interview, dealing with the production of *little magazines* in South Africa.

## 1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is largely based on secondary sources that provide the historical framework and discourse on Afrikaner ideology and the subversion thereof. The studies of Giliomee (1992 and 2003) give a historical narrative of the politics and conflicts in South Africa

within the Afrikaans context. The nature of the establishment Afrikaans publishing environment is provided by Kannemeyer (1998), while Barnard (1992), Brink (1983), De Klerk (1967), De Lange (1997), Gordimer (1988) and Gordon (1974) focus particularly on the issue of censorship in the pre-democratic South Africa. The studies of Berger (2000a and 2000b), Claassen (2000), Cloete (2000), Gready (1993), Stemmet & Barnard (2004) and Venter (2007) provide the principle discourses on the resistance press / alternative publishing within the South African paradigm. The emergence and concerns of the *little magazine* in South Africa is explored by Oliphant (1992), Rall (2004) and Siebrits & Gardiner (2005), while Du Plessis (1970) and Gray (1977) are useful because they narrate the concerns of specific *little magazines*.

The notion of subversion from within Afrikaner ranks is discussed, with focus on specific modes of subversion, by Grundling (2004) and Hopkins (2006) (the *Voëlvy* movement), while Du Preez (2005) focuses on the newspaper *Vrye Weekblad*. The historical narrative of Venter (2007) on the publishing house Taurus is also relevant to understanding the subversive stance of *Stet*.

The semiotic analysis of the covers of *Stet* is informed by the studies in magazine design of Johnson (2002), Leslie (2000), and Storey (1996), while Bignell (1997) and Lupton (1996) provide further insight into visual culture and cultural semiotics. The study of Heller (2003) places Afrikaans *little magazines* within a context of international avant-garde periodicals.

## 1.4 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One has introduced the main aim of the study, namely to explore and expose subversive narratives on the covers of a peripheral but important publication *Stet*. It has positioned the study within the relevant theoretical framework that underpins the investigation. The chapter has articulated the position of the author as being supportive of the stance that the editors of *Stet* took, holding the belief that *Stet* was subversive in its stance against the state and the establishment and was seeking to reevaluate Afrikaansness within the context of the time.

Chapter Two focuses on the Afrikaans literary context of South Africa from which *Stet*



eventually emerged as a dissident voice. The chapter initially situates *Stet* within the sub-genre of the *little magazine*, and then very briefly describes the publishing environment of South Africa since the 1970s, noting the differences in publishing opportunities between white Afrikaans, white English, and black South African writers. The role of censorship and the legislation pertaining to censorship is discussed in some detail, indicating the constraints imposed on South African writers. The chapter concludes by noting the publishing circumstances of five Afrikaans *little magazines* that predated and probably influenced *Stet*.

Chapter Three introduces the notion of subversion from within Afrikaner ranks during the 1980s, noting that Afrikaner dissidence was peripheral but nonetheless important in assisting Afrikaans South Africans to examine the identity forced on them by the state and establishment. Four avenues of Afrikaner dissidence are described as contextualisation of the environment from which *Stet* would emerge. The experiences of Tienie du Plessis, the designer of *Stet*, are incorporated in this description as illuminating the position he took in his designs of the covers of *Stet*. The chapter concludes by pointing out the emergence and particular concerns of *Stet*.

Chapter Four analyses the covers of *Stet* semiotically in an attempt to expose subversive messages in the design that confirm the anti-establishment stance of the periodical. The chapter briefly investigates all the covers, aiming to illustrate the general subversiveness of the design. A specific semiotic analysis is then made of six sampled covers, aiming to decode the particularities of the subversive elements within each cover.

The concluding chapter summarises the preceding chapters. It considers the contributions of this study as well as its limitations. Chapter Five, furthermore, posits suggestions for further research that have become apparent during the course of this study.

## 1.5 CONCLUSION

The nature of Afrikaansness has been the subject of much analysis by nationalist and liberal historians. Hermann Giliomee (2003:xvi) notes that liberal historians have focused on the Afrikaners' "racial prejudices, their Calvinism and xenophobia, and ... their civil religion", while nationalist historians have "recounted the establishment of white su-



premacv and nationalist struggles against British Imperialism". Giliomee (2003:xvii) takes special interest in the interrelationship between language and nationalism in the forging of the traditional Afrikaner identity as "a means of overcoming ... feelings of inferiority ... and as a unique form of cultural expression". It is also the position of this author that the relationship between the Afrikaans language and nationalism (and, by extension, apartheid) cannot be stressed enough.

The language of the Afrikaner became a binding element against influences from outside the perceived notion of Afrikaansness, and the state acted viciously against any Afrikaner who attempted to renew the language or incorporate foreign ideas into the literature. Therefore, it is important to introduce the South African publishing environment from which *Stet* would eventually emerge.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF STUDY

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The concluding chapter summarises the preceding chapters. It considers the contributions of this study as well as its limitations. Chapter Five, furthermore, posits suggestions for further research that have become apparent during the course of this study.

## 1.5 CONCLUSION

The nature of Afrikaansness has been the subject of much analysis by nationalist and liberal historians. Hermann Giliomee (2003:xvi) notes that liberal historians have focused on the Afrikaners' "racial prejudices, their Calvinism and xenophobia, and ... their civil religion", while nationalist historians have "recounted the establishment of white su-

premacY and nationalist struggles against British Imperialism". Giliomee (2003:xvii) takes special interest in the interrelationship between language and nationalism in the forging of the traditional Afrikaner identity as "a means of overcoming ... feelings of inferiority ... and as a unique form of cultural expression". It is also the position of this author that the relationship between the Afrikaans language and nationalism (and, by extension, apartheid) cannot be stressed enough.

The language of the Afrikaner became a binding element against influences from outside the perceived notion of Afrikaansness, and the state acted viciously against any Afrikaner who attempted to renew the language or incorporate foreign ideas into the literature. Therefore, it is important to introduce the South African publishing environment from which *Stet* would eventually emerge.

## CHAPTER 2

### AFRIKAANS *LITTLE MAGAZINES* AND THEIR CONTEXT

A man is entitled to write down his thoughts on paper, providing that he does not have hostile intent and provided that he does not intend to spread these thoughts but merely to keep them, for instance, in his desk (Judge Myburg, 22 November 1983, quoted in *Stet* 2(1):2).

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The making of a *little magazine* is a “socially based activity involving a wide range of processes which constitute, reproduce, oppose, resist, and transform the socio-cultural environment” (Oliphant 1992:91). Naturally, the emergence of the *little magazine Stet* was subject to these processes, and before one can draw any conclusion from the magazine itself, one needs to examine the context from which it emerged. The objective of this chapter is to situate the Afrikaans *little magazine Stet* within the historical framework of the *little magazine* as literary genre, and within the South African literary context.

Firstly, the particularities of the literary magazine and *little magazine* are specified. In order to situate the *little magazine* in the South African context, this chapter secondly contextualises the South African literary field, with specific reference to censorship, which was one of the most important factors that compelled authors to create *little magazines*. Such was the impact of censorship on South African authors that Nadine Gordimer (1988:210) stated that censorship is “as necessary to maintain a racist regime as that other arm of internal repression, the secret police”. Finally, this chapter describes the development of the Afrikaans *little magazine*, citing relevant examples (chronologically) to indicate the eventual emergence of *Stet* as political voice. This historical narrative aims to provide a solid contextual base from which *Stet* may be viewed as subversive to the apartheid state.



In order to be subversive, it is necessary to identify a suitable vehicle for publishing subversive material. The sub-genre of the *little magazine*, as discussed below, provides an exemplary vehicle for the publication of alternative material.

## 2.2 THE *LITTLE MAGAZINE* AS LITERARY MAGAZINE

### 2.2.1. Characteristics of the literary magazine

The *little magazine* is a specific sub-genre within the genre of the literary magazine. There are a number of defining characteristics of literary magazines. Suzanne Rall (2004:29) supplies the following genre-conventions:

- The content is of literary nature;
- The magazine is published at least twice yearly;
- The magazine has a number of physical characteristics that distinguish it from other occasional printed media. These include printing on heavier stock (typically 80 gsm, rather than the typical 48 gsm for newsprint); the small physical size (very seldom larger than A4, typically sizes ranging between A5 and A4); a separate cover of heavier stock, often in colour; and method of binding (typically saddle stitched, stitched or perfect bound).

Literary magazines present opportunities for authors that books cannot. Rall (2004:29) includes the following opportunities:

- The literary magazine presents more frequent publishing opportunities for the author;
- The author can present work initially in the magazine, and use the material in compiling a book or collection;
- The magazine provides a platform for discussion for a new generation or field;
- The magazine is inherently current and contemporary;
- The magazine has the freedom to be more experimental than more permanent published media;
- The magazine may function as advertising agent for an established publishing house;
- The magazine may be diverse in its content, including articles, drama, fragments from novels, graphic material, poetry and translations;
- The magazine has a relatively longer lifespan than other periodically printed media such as newspapers.

Looking at these characteristics, it may be thought that literary magazines are exemplary avenues for the subversive voice in literature: the vanguard of new ideas and possibilities. In a limited sense, this is true. Literary magazines offer far more freedom than books, which are not as transient in nature. However, the publishing of literary magazines is still costly and time-consuming, and literary magazines are typically quickly linked to academic institutions or publishing houses from whom they receive funding. Literary magazines have an important role to fill in the literary context, but because of the constraints mentioned above, they seldom voice dissent or provide avenues for real experimentation. It is this void which is filled by the *little magazine*, endeavouring to renew the present by appropriating new tendencies in literature, philosophy, the arts and the like.

### 2.2.2. Characteristics of the *little magazine*

Literary critic Arthur Scott (1980) gives a succinct definition of the *little magazine*, and maintains that it is “a literary magazine, small in format and usually un-commercial”. The advent of the international *little magazine* movement has been given as 1912 (Bixler 1992:75), and Heller (2003) proposes that new technologies since the 1900s made possible the publication of independent periodicals by scattered groups of individuals. These types of publications feature experimental writing, and attract a small number of readers, owing not only to their limited print run and distribution. They typically therefore aim to challenge the “sanctity of art, politics, society and culture” (Heller 2003:6). Thus, it is clear that *little magazines* are twentieth-century publications, made possible by advances in printing technology, and made necessary by twentieth-century issues.

*Little magazines* have limited life spans as they are bound to their context. While literary magazines may run for decades (as the South African *Contrast*, now publishing as *New Contrast* attests), *little magazines* typically run for less than five years, while some only endure for a few issues. Of the Afrikaans *little magazines*, *Taaldoos* (1980–1981) and *Inspan* (1978) ran only two numbers. Others published only a handful in a decade, while *Izwi* (1971–1974) was remarkable for publishing a staggering 20 numbers in three years. Andries Oliphant (1992:91) states that it is precisely this transient nature that inevitably links periodicals to the concerns of a particular time.

In contrast to literary magazines, the contributors to *little magazines* are usually not paid

for their work (Rall 2004:30). The contributors and content are generally of an anti-establishment nature. Typically, *little magazines* may be said to have three defining characteristics in the position that they take. They reflect the social and political context within which they appear by means of written and graphic content. They often reflect upon their position and upon themselves within the literary establishment. And, most importantly, they challenge both these contexts. In the case of Afrikaans *little magazines*, there was much to challenge, as the South African publishing context since the 1960s was characterised by not only censorship and political repression, but also literary repression.

## 2.3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT FROM WHICH THE *LITTLE MAGAZINE* EMERGED

Apart from addressing the void left by literary magazines, *little magazines* are formed in, and necessitated by, their respective contexts. The American Beat Generation of the 1950s, rebelling against staid norms in American literature, was represented by periodicals emerging in free-thinking San Francisco. In South Africa, the Afrikaans *little magazine* emerged within the repressive literary and political environment brought about by the apartheid state. Acclaimed literary critic JC Kannemeyer (1998:459) notes that Afrikaans *little magazines* had a number of defining elements:

- A strong feeling of opposition against censorship in any form;
- A vehement dislike in the prevailing political order of the day;
- The authors would contribute to more than one periodical at a time, and few had an official “house journal”;
- Though Afrikaans contributions made up the bulk of the content, contributions in English were accommodated, and contributions by black authors were actively sought;
- The editors and contributors would continually call for an inclusive publication, accommodating South African authors of any language, colour, race or creed.

### 2.3.1 The Afrikaans publishing field

A very succinct historical narrative of Afrikaans and Afrikaansness is given here as introduction to the alternative Afrikaans voices that emerged during the 1960s. Afrikaans is a relatively recent language and has a short spoken and printed history. In a sense,

Afrikaans has always had a dissenting voice in its history of antagonism against, specifically, the British. The so-called *taalstryd* during the early nineteenth century was a movement against Imperial Britain and Holland, aimed to promote Afrikaans as a distinct language. Rudi Venter (2007:[sp]) writes that “[t]he Afrikaner’s rise to power did not start with the foundation of a political party but with the foundation of the language movements, which already contained political aims like Afrikaner / Christian Nationalism and Christian National Education.”

Therefore, when the Nationalist regime came to power in 1948, Afrikaans was promoted through state-funded literary magazines and publishing houses that led to a “snug relationship” between the National Party and the mainstream Afrikaans press (Stemmet & Barnard 2004:154; see also Mpe & Seeber 2000:19). The state aimed to bind Afrikaners together in a cohesive group by protecting the language from outside influences. Hence, there was little opportunity for an alternative Afrikaans voice to speak. Indeed, *Die Kerkbode* described the function of literature as being “on the one hand to positively influence the reader with a conservative and clear message and on the other hand to amuse” (Lijphart, translated and quoted by De Lange 1997:15).

By the 1950s, Afrikaans, English and black authors had very different publishing possibilities. The constraints imposed on them differed in terms of the regime of the day and their respective reader pools. English authors had few publishing opportunities within South Africa, and were mainly published by British and American publishers. They had to fight for South African English to be accepted as worthy publishing medium, and were struggling to create an indigenous literature in English. Through the apartheid state, black authors were especially repressed and, out of necessity, they turned to literary magazines in order to be published.

Afrikaans was published aggressively, but only as an intrinsic part of Afrikaner Nationalism. However, from the late 1950s Afrikaans authors began producing work that, though not overtly critical of the regime of the day, presented alternative possibilities (through the displaced novel) and uncomfortably apt descriptions of what was happening in South Africa (utilising the realist tradition previously so popular in Afrikaans fiction). These Afrikaners and their so-called ‘betrayal’, together with their English and black counterparts, roused the attention of the authorities, who implemented a series of Pub-

lication Bills in an attempt to curb the publication of alternative material among South African writers.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.3.2 Legislation that controlled publishing in South Africa

The impact of legislation and the attempted subversion thereof were important contributing factors to the rise of the *little magazine* in South Africa. Foreign publications imported to South Africa were controlled since 1934 by customs officials. Up to 1963, they seized 12 629 titles judged “on the strength of their jackets or words in titles” (Merrett, quoted in De Lange 1997:7). Clearly, this only controlled publications published outside South Africa. The government realised that some other stringent measure was necessary to control authors within South Africa. In 1957, a committee installed by the Nationalist government submitted the Cronjé Commission Report. It proposed some system of censorship to control what was written in and about South Africa. Initial Bills of 1960 and 1961 were crystallized in the 1963 Publications and Entertainment Act.

#### 2.3.2.1 *The 1963 Publications and Entertainment Act*

The 1963 Publications and Entertainment Act was the first mode of outright censorship to be applied in South Africa. The Act aimed to “uphold a Christian view of life in South Africa” (Venter 2007:[sp]) and identified six categories of undesirable material. It stated that a publication or object would be deemed undesirable if it or any part of it:

- a) Is indecent or obscene or offensive or harmful to public morals;
- b) Is blasphemous or is offensive to the religious convictions or feelings of any section of the inhabitants of the Republic;
- c) Brings any section of the inhabitants of the Republic into ridicule or contempt;
- d) Is harmful to the relations between any inhabitants of the Republic;

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1 It is important to remember, however, that in South Africa there was no *pre-publication censorship* (De Lange 1997:3). In a sense, censorship took place in the public domain. Apart from the inevitable self-censorship, South African authors thus had far greater freedom than, for instance, their Russian counterparts. They were only challenged by the authorities once their material was printed and distributed.

- e) Is prejudicial to the safety of the state, the general welfare or the peace and good order;
- f) Discloses with reference to any judicial proceedings
  - i. any matter which is indecent or obscene or is offensive or harmful to public morals;
  - ii. any indecent or obscene medical, surgical or physiological details the disclosure of which is likely to be offensive or harmful to public morals (Section 26 (2) of the Act of 1963 in *Statutes of the Republic of South Africa*, quoted by De Lange 1997:7–8).<sup>2</sup>

Afrikaans literature was usually banned because it was deemed offensive under sections (a) and (b). The so-called *political sections* (c), (d) and (e) were used to suppress the work of a political nature, generally English work by black authors (De Lange 1997:28).<sup>3</sup>

According to Kannemeyer (1998:238), the fact most disturbing to authors was that a publication could be banned based on a single word or paragraph, without the literary merit being taken into consideration (the so-called ‘isolated passage criterion’). Censors seemingly did not wish to admit that Afrikaans authors could be critical of the socio-political environment, and for the first ten years of the Publications and Entertainment Act no literary work in Afrikaans was banned (De Lange 1997:34). In 1972, *Kennis van die aand* by André P. Brink became the first Afrikaans literary work to be banned. In June 1975, Breyten Breytenbach’s *Skryt* was banned: a book published in 1972 and long since out of print. According to De Lange (1997:37), though the banning served no actual purpose (as it was not available to the potential buyer, however subversive this buyer might have been), it indicated that, in the future, censors would also close the ranks on Afrikaans authors.

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2 It should be remembered that, with regard to a periodical, the law “provided the possibility to ban all future issues” (De Lange 1997:147).

3 Publications were banned on many grounds, including that of their potential readership. English publications clearly had a far greater potential readership than Afrikaans works. From 1975 to 1977, “roughly 1500 English publications were submitted each year against 25 in Afrikaans and 4 in Bantu languages” (De Lange 1997:76). Black authors were compelled to write in English, on the one hand because publishing in the so-called Bantu languages was almost unheard of, and on the other in order to reach a wider readership (the myriad of languages and dialects hampered the formation of a reading culture). De Lange (1997:126) notes that, in contrast to the experience of white authors, censorship of work by black authors was the rule rather than the exception.



### 2.3.2.2 *The 1974 Publications Act*

In 1974 the Publications Act (applicable to all publications produced in South Africa and all imported publications) replaced the 1963 legislature. Though the wording remained the same, the criteria would now be read in terms of the *average man*, rather than the *likely reader*. This meant that the level of education or context of the likely reader would be discounted. Previously, some publications were overlooked because few people would likely read them. The “isolated passage criterion” remained. Indeed, in determining undesirability, “no regard shall be had to the purpose of the producer or distributor” (Gordon 1974:20). The new legislation included the amendment that possession of a publication could be prohibited. The decision to prohibit possession would be made known by notice in the Government Gazette. Thereafter, possession would be a punishable offence. *Taaldoos* (1980–1981), for instance, was possession banned, the only Afrikaans *little magazine* to receive this dubious recognition.

In an attempt to further curtail publishing in South Africa, the definition of what constituted published material was very broad. According to Gerald Gordon (1974:19) the definition of “publication or object” as issued in the legislation included:

any book, periodical, pamphlet, poster or other printed matter and any written or typescript which has in any manner been duplicated or made available to the public or section of the public; including any drawing, picture, illustration, painting, woodcut or similar representation, any print, photograph, engraving or lithograph, any figure, cast, statue or model, and any record of sound for reproduction.

By 1985, literary censorship had been greatly relaxed: the government faced more immediate and pressing issues through the armed struggle. The state of emergency had suspended all normal legal procedure (De Lange 1997:3), and appeals to court were discontinued. Decisions by the Publications Committee were largely ridiculed by the literary environment. This is also the stance that many *little magazines* took: the legislation was begging for satirical response. The government became so incensed with the criticism of the alternative media that it soon became an offence to “insult, disparage or belittle any member of the appeal board” (Gordon 1974:22).

### 2.3.3 Other means of censorship:

#### The banning of persons and self-censorship

The Publications Acts were not the only form of legislation attempting to silence authors. Various other laws and regulations were put in place:

- In 1963, 102 South African authors were branded as communists and prohibited from publishing or preparing to publish any material.
- In 1966 Prime Minister BJ Vorster declared that the work of 46 South Africans living abroad was not allowed to be read in South Africa. *Little magazines* defied these laws by, for instance, publishing poems by banned authors without crediting their names (Siebrits & Gardiner 2005:[sp]) or using assumed names. This indicates the subversive stance that these magazines took.
- The Internal Security Act of 1976 amended the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, and provided for the banning of persons. The provisions relevant for authors (and which applied to third parties also) included that they could not “be concerned in any way with the preparation, printing, or publication of any newspaper, magazine, pamphlet, book, handbill, or poster” (Moroney, quoted by De Lange 1997:10).

Though relatively few Afrikaans literary works were in fact banned, the possibility must have left authors wary. Self-censorship by publishers and authors would arguably influence the Afrikaans publishing field more than the actual statutes (De Klerk 1967:42). Authors instituted self-imposed pre-censorship: silencing themselves while writing, taking heed of possible persecution they might later face. Publishers would not touch sensational material as they feared becoming involved in court proceedings. Furthermore, there were no independent publishers during the 1960s; all had ties with or received funding from the government (De Lange 1997:35). When publishers did engage with these manuscripts, numerous ‘corrections’ were made to the page proofs, sometimes without the consent of the author. This is why the *little magazine* came to the fore in the late 1960s: small, independent groups of likeminded authors had to create their own means of being published.

In 1975, an independent publishing house was founded with the express aim of publishing worthy material that established publishing houses would reject due to fears of censorship. Taurus (1975–1991) was formed with the money collected from like-minded au-



thors for the appeal against the banning of *Kennis van die aand* by Brink. Taurus became an important role player in the publishing of subversive material<sup>4</sup> and the support of the *little magazine Stet*. Thus, Taurus is situated not in ‘mainstream publishing’, but rather in ‘alternative publishing’, where the publishing mission (the publishing philosophy) is more important than the business mission (the economic objective) (Cloete 2000:43).

As early as 1974, Gordon (1974:15) noted in *Contrast* that: “As long as men hold dear the values of freedom, so long shall the right freely to illuminate society by the written word survive the restraints of the censor”. The *little magazine* in South Africa became one of the avenues through which authors and artists would attempt to subvert the restraints forced upon them by the government and the literary establishment.

## 2.4 THE AFRIKAANS LITTLE MAGAZINE: EXAMPLES AND PRIMARY CONCERNS

Various *little magazines* were published in South Africa during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, outside “the strongly controlled establishment channels” (Venter 2007:[sp]). All were critical of the literary establishment, and some were also critical of the political dispensation. Literary critic Oliphant (1992:93) has noted that a survey of South African literary magazines reveals that they can be located within “clearly discernible interest groups with particular ... perspectives on literature and culture”. His interest groups are:

- A white English liberal tradition (*Contrast*, *New Contrast*, *New Coin*, *Sesame*) (see Figure 1);
- A white Afrikaans conservative and racist tradition (*Standpunte*, *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*) (see Figure 2);
- A black Africanist tradition (*The Classic*) (see Figure 3);
- A non-racial democratic tradition (*Staffrider*) (see Figure 4);
- A liberal white and black Afrikaans tendency (*Stet*) (see Figure 5).

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4 The founders of Taurus were “completely anarchistic in their publishing philosophy and invented underground tactics to ensure production and distribution of their clandestine titles” (Venter 2007:[sp]). Taurus used, for instance, their subscription system to subvert the censors. Copies of a new publication were posted to all readers on their list before a copy could be submitted to a publications committee (De Lange 1997:38). By the time the publication was seized, most of the copies would already have been ‘inadvertently displaced’.



Figure 1: Examples of the covers of *Contrast* (1960–), a periodical in the “white English liberal tradition” as located by Oliphant (1992) (Siebrits & Gardiner 2005:[sp]).



Figure 2: Examples of the covers of *Standpunte* (1945–1986) and *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* (1963–), periodicals in the “white Afrikaans conservative and racist tradition” as located by Oliphant (1992) (personal collection).



Figure 3: Examples of the covers of *The Classic* (1963–1971), a periodical in the “black Africanist tradition” as located by Oliphant (1992) (Siebrits & Gardiner 2005:[sp]).



Figure 4: Examples of the covers of *Staffrider* (1978–1993), a periodical in the “non-racial democratic tradition” as located by Oliphant (1992) (Siebrits & Gardiner 2007:[sp]).



Figure 5: Examples of the covers of *Stet* (1982–1991), a periodical in the “liberal white and black Afrikaans tendency” as located by Oliphant (1992) (personal collection).

*Stet* (an example of a literary magazine that subscribes to the liberal white and black Afrikaans tendency) is the focus of later chapters in this study. For the purposes of this chapter, it is important to indicate that *Stet* was not the first Afrikaans *little magazine* to take a critical stance on the South African context. Earlier *little magazines* such as *Wurm* (1966–1970) and *Izwi* (1971–1974) and contemporary periodicals such as *Graffier* (1980–1982) and *Taaldoos* (1980–1981) may all be included in the liberal white and black Afrikaans interest group of Oliphant.

### 2.4.1 Initial attempts to publish alternative material

As the first attempts by the government were made to censor writing, a new wave of Afrikaans literature was being written. The experimental and ground-breaking work of the so-called *Sestigers*<sup>5</sup> received acclaim, but very little exposure. Through careful intercession, a number of younger authors' work appeared in the literary magazine *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* in 1963. However, the nature of the work rankled against the views of the more established inner circle of the state-funded periodical. Fearing that state funds would be withdrawn, the authors were asked to remove themselves from the periodical. In reaction to this, *Sestiger* was founded in November 1963. Though a literary rather than *little magazine*, it did much to establish an alternative possibility in Afrikaans publishing. Kenneth Parker (quoted in Siebrits & Gardiner 2005:[sp]) characterises the importance of the *Sestigers* and their literary magazine thus:

What made the *Sestigers* so important was ... that their challenge to the state was *not limited to literary practice only*; for the first time, writers in Afrikaans not only renewed the language but did so quite deliberately *by confronting the taboos of Afrikaner culture*, especially the particularly pernicious versions of Calvinism expounded by the dominees (*my emphasis*).

In the wake of the short-lived *Sestiger*, there appeared the first *little magazines* in Afrikaans. These periodicals provided the vehicle for initial opinions against the current literary and political order and, in addition, consisted mainly of experimental poetry based on

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5 The *Sestigers* ("Generation of the Sixties") "embraced secularization, modernity, racial tolerance and sexual freedom, and used modern literary techniques and subject matter to explore these themes" (Giliomee 2003:554).

European and American models. Though the work of the *Sestigers* can be viewed as avant-garde in literary terms, these new periodicals attempted to extend the boundaries even further.

#### 2.4.2 The first generation of Afrikaans *little magazines*

During the late 1960s, Afrikaans *little magazines* emerged that were to pave the way for the highly politicised Afrikaans *little magazines* of the 1980s. For the purposes of this study, two of these early *little magazines* are described: *Wurm* (1966–1970) and *Izwi* (1971–1974). They may be seen as two of the first subversive Afrikaans voices, albeit far less militant and politically dissident than the *little magazines* of the 1980s with their overt political agenda.

##### 2.4.2.1 *Wurm* (1966–1970)

Pretoria-based *Wurm* (see Figure 6) attracted a diverse range of contributions and contributors, and avidly experimented in form and content. Kannemeyer (1998:405) states that the establishment of *Wurm* was mainly owing to the contributors being rebuked by established literary magazines for the literary worth of their material, rather than their theoretical or idealist stance. Michael Gardiner (Siebrits & Gardiner, 2005:[sp]) concurs, and writes that the group “was not seeking political change but space in which to pursue literary and cultural alternatives to the dreary, deadly, decent orthodoxies of their time”. Editor of *Wurm*, Phil du Plessis (1970:39, 41), notes in his defence that their aim was to be as inclusive of new avenues of expression as possible, and that work of lesser quality was an unfortunate but necessary compromise. This attempt to include alternative and silenced voices was a primary concern for *Stet* also.



Figure 6: Covers of *Wurm* numbers 4 (1966), 7 (1967), 10 (1968), 11 (1969), and 12 (1970) (personal collection).



The first number included a manifesto stating that any contribution would be considered: work by poets, authors, literati, critici, the layman and the expert (*Wurm* 1 1966:3). The editors were at pains to note that *Wurm* was independent, not receiving funding from the state or any institution, and not censored in any way other than the editors' consciences. In the editorial of *Wurm* 3 (1966:9), the editors note that *Wurm* publishes work by young contributors because the only poetry that receives recognition by the establishment is that by: "N. P. van Wyk Louw, Elizabeth Eybers, N. P. van Wyk Louw, N. P. van Wyk Louw, Uys Krige, N. P. van Wyk Louw and N. P. van Wyk Louw". This reflects the literary subversive tendency of *Wurm*. The periodical's title was inspired by the worm in a poem of Eugène N. Marais: a worm that would break down the walls of the establishment; that would feed on the dismal apples of Afrikaans literature; something phallic that would make people writhe (Du Plessis 1970:33).<sup>6</sup>

The first four numbers of *Wurm* were produced by De Waal Venter, once editor of a police journal and the son of a colonel in the Security Police (Du Plessis 1970:33). His hand-printed linocut appeared on the first cover. As from *Wurm* 5 (1967), Walter Battiss' Dadaism as "destroying angel" was embraced. Battiss produced a rubber stamp that was used in *Wurm* 6 (1967), and from this issue onwards English and Flemish contributions were included. *Wurm* 9 and 10 (1968) featured similar linocut artwork on the cover by artist and poet Wopko Jensma, who attempted to integrate text and graphic. *Wurm* 11 (1969) included content from as far afield as America, Zambia, Greece, Czechoslovakia and Belgium.

*Wurm* was discontinued in 1970 with a satirical issue paying homage to the Sestigers "as their decade ran out" (Gray 1977:43). A disillusioned Du Plessis (1970: 41) noted that the discontinuation was due to both financial and personal reasons, and that Afrikaans literature thereafter had no outlet other than the "wholesale disappointment" of *Kol* (1968–1969). The Afrikaans literary field had only "flower arrangements" with no substance (Du Plessis 1970:41).

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6 After the demise of *Wurm*, the cover of *Izwi* 4 (1971) features a graphic by Gus Ferguson asking *waar is jy wurm?*, questioning both the *little magazine* and the "worm" that was supposed to renew.

*Wurm* had a strong tradition of Dadaist and related typographical experimentation, with links to the American Beat Generation of Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti (Du Plessis 1970:35). Through chance and some misinterpretation, the Belgian and Flemish concrete poets came to think that *Wurm* was on the forefront of the avant-garde in South Africa. This made for some interesting collaborations; and the experimentation of Afrikaans poets in the realm of concrete poetry later to become epitomised by Willem Boshoff's *KYKAFRIKAANS* (1980).

*Wurm* challenged the literary establishment through a series of homages to and satirical articles on establishment Afrikaans literary figures. Its handcrafted ideal threw mud in the face of established publishers and authors, and the embracing of the layman was to be continued in *Stet*. *Wurm* challenged antiquated norms of Afrikanerdom, but was mostly silent on the political front.

#### 2.4.2.2. *Izwi* (1971–1974)

*Izwi/Stem/Voice* (generally referred to as only *Izwi*) (see Figure 7) was founded by Phil du Plessis after the demise of *Wurm*. It ran for 20 numbers from October 1971 until December 1974 when it was disbanded, like many of its 150 contributors and 50 artists, “banned, jailed, exiled, suicided, buried” (Gray 1977:43). Indeed, members of the police force sat spying in trees while the launch party was held. They arrested eleven of the guests (together with the mine manager next door, as he was seen having intercourse with a black woman). The founders had as their aim to be “frequent, be hand-made, duck publicity, and it wouldn’t go for smart, undying literary quality – live, younger writers

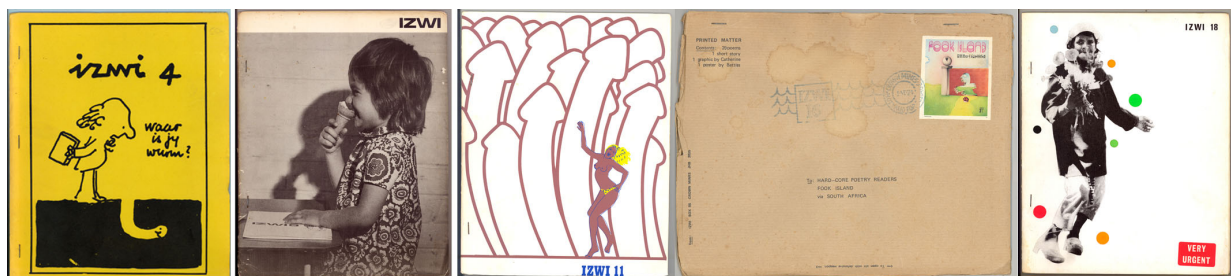


Figure 7: Covers of *Izwi* numbers 4 (1971), 7 (1972), 11 (1973), 16 (1974), and 18 (1974). The cover of number 7 shows the white girl eating an ice-cream (with the black boy eating an ice-cream on the back of the number), and the cover of number 16 is the Fook Island number, designed by Walter Battiss (personal collection).

could have their say" (Gray 1977:43). Indeed, in their manifesto (*Izwi* 1 1971:4), the editors note that the inexpensive format was intentional: "Censorship or politically inspired confiscation will thus ruin nobody's finances." Typical of the neurotic Afrikaner government, the editors were accused of attachment to factions not in line with the traditional view of Afrikaansness: "Support of tribalism, paternalism, liberalism, progressivism, exploitation, verkramptheid, verligtheid, extortionism, intelligence" (*Izwi* 1 1971:5). The manifesto refutes this by stating: "None and all of these are true, IZWI is the voice of All Africa".

Early on in the lifespan of *Izwi*, Phil du Plessis, previously editor of *Wurm*, was 'entertained' by the Special Branch on John Vorster Square. Apparently they told him off for being involved with "ex-drug addicts, hippie communes and 'non-White literary figures'" (Gray 1977:45). Du Plessis fled to Lüderitz, but remained editor with Stephen Gray and Wilma Stockenström. From the first number, *Izwi* carried original artwork, though some subscribers and art dealers bought multiple copies for 50c and sold the silkscreens for R5.00 (Gray 1977:47). These artworks include signed and numbered work by Walter Battiss, Casper Schmidt, Alexis Preller, Wopko Jensma, Christo Coetzee, Norman Catherine, Peter Clarke, Gus Ferguson, Cecil Skotnes and Sipho Magudulela.

To my knowledge, *Izwi* 7 (1972) was the only number that received unwanted attention from the authorities, apparently for featuring toddlers, a white girl and black boy – separated by a table – eating ice cream. No-one, though, noticed the "obscene, naked orgy by Battiss" (Gray 1977:47). *Izwi* 16 (1974) was a Battiss inspiration: a Fook Island number bound and posted in a sealed envelope addressed to HARD-CORE POETRY READERS with the notice: "Contents: 20 poems; 1 short story, 1 graphic by Catherine, 1 poster by Battiss". To open the number, readers were told to "slit with defensive weapon". This number was "personally cut licked stamped rubbered photoed roneoed collated stapled licked franked posted by IZWI staff and associates" (1974:3). And each copy was unique. *Izwi* closed shop with a double issue in 1974. It challenged literary and political views in South Africa, and its editors and contributors were constantly harassed by the government for being inclusive and experimental. It was the first *little magazine* to actively include visual material, and its covers reflect the staid norms and values of South African society.

In the wake of early *little magazines* such as *Wurm* and *Izwi*, which focussed on literary innovation, Afrikaans *little magazines* appeared that actively sought to subvert not only the literary paradigm, but also the political paradigm in South Africa.

### 2.4.3 Little magazines of the 1980s: the emergence of a political voice

From the late 1970s, a new generation of avant-garde periodicals, *little magazines* and related underground publications came to the fore (Kannemeyer 1998:458). Building on the foundations of *Wurm* and the like, this second generation was more aggressive in their challenge to the government and literary circles. It was only in the 1970s that “Afrikaner authors seriously started to write about the contemporary political scene” (De Lange 1997:33). The mouthpiece of this dissent was the *little magazine*. The dissent was more vocal; many numbers got into serious trouble for their frank dismissiveness of norms of morality. Faced with more stringent government control, the editors of the *little magazines* resorted to satire and caricature in an attempt to circumvent censorship. As in the international context of subversive literary material, routine confiscation and detainment only strengthened the “satirists’ resolve to find ever more inventive means of challenging authority” (Heller 2003:14).

The South African material during this time is reminiscent of the range of periodicals emanating from post-World War I Germany. The German left-wing press “attacked political foes with all the intellectual and satirical weaponry at its disposal” (Heller 2003:70). Similarly, the political *little magazines* of the 1980s realised that intellectual dissent was necessary to aid the armed struggle already underway. The most eloquent were *Taaldoos* (1980–1981) and *Stet* (1982–1992), supported by *Spado* (1980–1981) and *Graffier* (1980–1983).

#### 2.4.3.1 *Spado* (1980–1981) and *Graffier* (1980–1983)

*Spado* (see Figure 8) had as its base the northern regions of South Africa, specifically the then Transvaal. It was later incorporated into *Graffier* (see Figure 8), which was based in the southern part of the then Cape Province. *Spado* challenged the staid nature of Afrikaans poetry and music, and had little political overtone. It aimed for an “open” magazine, free of the dust of academia (*Graffier* 4 1981:3). Before the first number could



be distributed, the editors received a call saying that all copies were to be confiscated before distribution. The decision was later reversed, but alerted Afrikaans authors that not even music reviews were immune to state interference (*Graffier* 4 1981:3).



Figure 8: Covers of *Spado* 3 (1981) and *Graffier* 2 (1980) and 4 (1981) (personal collection).

*Graffier* had representatives in academic institutions, but these were young academics who agreed that renewal was necessary. Through this, it tread a thin line between being a literary or *little* magazine. In the editorial of the second number (1980), *little magazines* are mentioned for the important role that they play without having to be too concerned about a “Beweging van Tagtig, of avant-garde-heid” (*Graffier* 2 1980:3). *Graffier* received funding from Perskor Publishers, but only for four numbers. In *Graffier* 5, a plea was made for funding or patronage. The editors lamented the fact that *Graffier* already outlived other *little magazines* such as *The Bloody Horse*, *Kaberkarnimfe*, *Spado* and *Taaldoos*. In the sixth number, the editors thanked subscribers and readers who sent money for their cause; even the staff of a Wimpy Bar contributed.

The covers incorporated graphic material by South African artists such as Nick Curwell, Pienaar van Niekerk and M. Müller. It folded after the sixth number. The *little magazine* *Taaldoos* would only publish two numbers, but was aggressively subversive of traditional Afrikaansness and flaunted its disregard for authority and the state so aggressively that it was banned.

#### 2.4.3.2 *Taaldoos* (1980–1981)

Uitgewery Pannevis (publisher of Boshoff’s seminal *KYKAFRIKAANS* in 1980), published *Taaldoos* (see Figure 9) in a limited print run of 500 copies with limited distribution. In a possible attempt to circumvent governmental interference, copies were not sold, but

given away *gratis*. The second number included a statement that anyone who wished to subscribe only needed to send their name and postal address to the editor.

*Taaldoos*, as the name suggests, was deeply critical of the Afrikaans literature of the day. It revelled in creating consternation and being sensational in its use of crass language. Through the auspices of Dada, it parodied pornography in an extremely explicit manner. Dan Roodt and his wife Karen Konsentrasiekamp (Karen Bredenkamp) edited this *little magazine*. They claimed that they attempted to trespass in every way they could think of (*Taaldoos* 1+1 1981:2). And according to Koekie Ziervogel, writing in *Graffier* 6 (1983:8), this was to be admired. Ziervogel claimed that the times called for total opposition, albeit on paper and not on the streets. The illicit stance of *Taaldoos* is indicative of the aggressive attitude that the later *Stet* also took.

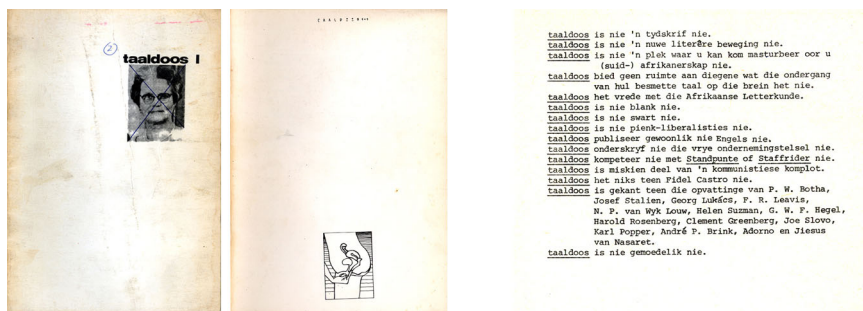


Figure 9: Covers of *Taaldoos* 1 (1980) and 1+1 (1981) and the subversive manifesto discussed below (personal collection).

In well-documented legal proceedings, the first number of *Taaldoos* was banned. By this time the second number had also been published, and both were subsequently banned and possession-banned in 1981. The reason for the banning hinged on a short story published in the first number by K Vorster, '*n Moffie chaff 'n kaffer*' ("A homosexual flirts with a black man"). This, together with a poem by Konsentrasiekamp titled *Hoe om 'n hoender te naai* ("How to fuck a chicken") and the photograph of establishment author and academic Henriette Grové as archetypal Afrikaans mother, outraged the Publication Committee.

The 'anti-manifesto' published in the first number of *Taaldoos* is worthy of comment (see Figure 9). Its subversive humour and aggressive nature is indicative of the content placed. Avant-garde periodicals are filled with manifestos, for example the Dadaist periodicals explaining that "Dada is a tomato. Dada is a spook. Dada is never right. Dada is

idiotic. Everything is Dada" (Heller 2003:50). In the second number of *Taaldoos*, the editors welcomed any contribution that would *torring aan die hegemonie van onnoselheid waaronder ons tans leef* ("gnaw at the hegemony of stupidity in which we live") (*Taaldoos* 1+1 1981:3). Through this subversive attitude, the editors proclaim a disregard for the government and a distrust in rationality. These are themes that the *little magazine Stet* also embraced.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter aimed to indicate that the stifling literary context of South Africa initially provided the impetus for the publication of Afrikaans *little magazines*. It is, however, clear that the *little magazines* of the 1980s went further than just proclaim to be anti-establishment in a literary sense. They were also critical of the political dispensation of the time. It is argued that these publications were the forerunners of the overtly politicised *little magazine Stet*. *Stet* is examined in the next chapter from within the paradigm of subversion. The next chapter examines subversion from within Afrikaner identity and relates these alternative movements to the concerns of *Stet*.

## CHAPTER 3

### *STET* AND SUBVERSION

The cardinal principle of the NP is the retention, maintenance, and immortalisation of Afrikaner identity within a white sovereign state. Apartheid and separate development is merely a means to achieve and to perpetuate this (Prime Minister John Voster, quoted in Giliomee 1992:347).

At the heart of the apartheid lie was the violence done to, and through, language and the written word. Meaning itself was rewritten (Gready 1993:492).

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter described the context of the Afrikaans publishing environment under apartheid up to the 1980s, indicating that various constraints were placed on freedom of expression. Until then, Afrikaans literary disaffection was largely restricted to academic circles, attempting to publish alternative 'literary' works. As indicated in Chapter Two, a few *little magazines* were in circulation, but they had little or no political overtone. During the 1980s, however, political activism and resistance against apartheid grew within both literary works and the younger segment of Afrikaans speakers. Inherent in this political awareness is the realisation that with resistance to apartheid, a reevaluation of Afrikaansness is necessary. In this chapter, specific attention is given to young Afrikaans South Africans who attempted to subvert the Afrikaans identity forced on them by the white Afrikaans government, and in doing so, voiced their distaste for apartheid and the government. The avenues used by these subversive voices were varied and not organised as a single movement. Rather, independent groups realigned their identity and resisted the government and society.

The aim of this chapter is to indicate the various avenues through which certain groups of white Afrikaners' deep-rooted disaffection with society and the government was made visible. The groups discussed in this chapter include a music movement, a newspaper,

and a *little magazine*. Only the *little magazine* (*Stet*) and the newspaper (*Vrye Weekblad*) consciously used graphics as a mode of subversion on a large scale. The particularities of this “graphic subversion” are dealt with in the next chapter.

Although the avenues of dissent operated more or less independently from each other, the members were aware of other subversive movements, and some form of solidarity did exist between them. As an indication of one individual’s wholehearted entrenchment in the cause, the experience of Tienie du Plessis (designer of *Stet*) is described in this chapter, which concludes with the emergence of the *little magazine Stet*.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.2 SUBVERSION AND THE APARTHEID STATE

For the purposes of this chapter, *Stet* may be viewed as the pinnacle of the *little magazines* described in Chapter Two, combining literary innovation and a subversive attitude toward the apartheid state. *Stet* used both graphic material and the written word to subvert South African society and the government, and in doing so became one of the avenues through which Afrikaners attempted to redefine their identity in a changing society.

This white Afrikaans society was one far removed from the struggle that black South Africans had to endure. The wave of nationalism that swept through Africa during the 1950s, culminating in de-colonisation and independence for many countries, passed over South Africa, which was firmly entrenched in apartheid ideology. However, since the 1950s a movement of subversion by predominantly black South Africans attempted to harass the system of apartheid within South Africa. By the 1970s, the struggle of the black population against the bonds of apartheid became more overt. Years of struggle culminated in the 1980s in a “cycle of on-going black protest orchestrated by the United Democratic Front (UDF)<sup>2</sup> and other extra-parliamentary anti-apartheid organizations and the declaration of successive states of emergency by the predominantly Afrikaner

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1 The translations into English throughout this study are by this author.

2 The UDF was established in 1983, “the first such mass movement, ... active above ground, since the banning of the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress in 1960” (Clingman, in Gordimer 1988:219). The UDF was instrumental in organising and continuing

National Party government” (Grundling 2004:484). Inherent to this was an “extraordinary number of resistance posters and other graphics” (McQuiston 1993:37). Liz McQuiston (1993:37), in a publication on subversive graphics, writes that these graphics acted as “important tools for motivation, consciousness-raising and solidarity”. These subversive messages were produced under extremely trying times, and the originators were often at risk of being imprisoned or banned. However, this protest was predominantly from the black population, with white English South Africans supporting them. There seems to have been very few white Afrikaans South Africans who voiced any dissent or objections to the *status quo*.

Afrikaans historian Albert Grundling (2004:484) confirms that “overtly anti-apartheid Afrikaner voices were relatively mute during this period”. As was stated in Chapter Two, the 1950s and 1960s was a period of economic strength for white South Africa. A strong economy and “the promise of a secure future” (Grundling 2004:488) led Afrikaans South Africans to be complacent about the social injustices being wrought around them. In fact, within white Afrikaans circles “a conformist youth culture flourished” (Grundling 2004:488). Herman Giliomee (1992:342) agrees that “the apartheid state long had a motivation to preserve Afrikaner political unity as one of its main bases”. He writes that the Afrikaner leadership manipulated the concept of ethnic identities, not only of the black population they forcibly subjugated, but also the ethnic identity of Afrikaansness (Giliomee 1992:343). In fact, apartheid “drew Afrikanerdom together in a tight political unit”, enhancing the “cultural distinctiveness and common interests of Afrikaners” (Giliomee 1992:343).

By the late 1970s it became increasingly clear, even to white Afrikaners, that apartheid as a system could not insulate white South Africans much longer.<sup>3</sup> This caused a division in Afrikaans political circles (notably in 1982, when conservative National Party members

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the struggle since the “banning of the ANC and the arrests or flight of its leaders left a huge void that, together with an ill-advised emphasis on the armed struggle, kept the organization on the sidelines until the end of the 1970s” (Giliomee 2003:553).

- 3 The system came under strain because “apartheid failed to stop the vital manufacturing sector from becoming increasingly dependent on black workers” (Giliomee 1992:349). It seems that white South Africa generally only started thinking about apartheid as unsuccessful after their livelihoods were compromised.



of parliament split to form the Conservative Party). This gave rise, according to Giliomee (1992:342), to “sharply conflicting conceptions of Afrikaner identity and interests”. While politicians were discussing further ways of propagating their belief in the superiority of the Afrikaans culture, the Afrikaner youth at schools and universities were seemingly “firmly locked into the grid of the communal institutions which bound together Afrikaner society” (Giliomee 1992:356).

This view was challenged by a few young Afrikaans individuals who realised the possibility of “exploring other forms of identification” (Grundling 2004:490). Nadine Gordimer (1988:256, from a speech given in 1985) wrote about young South Africans: “Concurrent with engagement in the political struggle for the end of apartheid, there exists an awareness of the need for a new conception of culture, particularly among whites”. These whites included Afrikaans individuals who appropriated various mediums to voice their disaffection with the *status quo*.

### 3.3 AFRIKAANS SUBVERSIVE MOVEMENTS

In the absence of “other overt forms of specifically Afrikaans anti-apartheid political protests” (Grundling 2004:490), dissident young Afrikaners initiated anti-war protest (the End Conscription Campaign (ECC)); participation in the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa; the *Voëlvy* music movement; and the resistance press through newspapers (especially *Vrye Weekblad*) and *little magazines* (especially *Stet*) in order to provide Afrikaans South Africans with an alternative viewpoint on current affairs in South Africa.

These actions were vehemently opposed by the apartheid state, that seemingly felt betrayed by the fact the Afrikaners were joining in protest critical of the establishment. As acclaimed author André P Brink (1983:19) wrote: “If the Afrikaner dissident today [1983] encounters such a vicious reaction from the Establishment, it is because he is regarded as a traitor to everything Afrikanerdom stands for.” These individuals were initially ridiculed, but the government soon realised that it faced a revolt from within ‘its’ ranks, particularly from the white conscripts who were ostensibly protecting South Africans from communists outside its borders.

### 3.3.1 The End Conscription Campaign

Conscription in the so-called Border War in Angola (1976–1986, officially 1979–1986) became one of the most stringent forms of government control over the white population. Resistance to conscription served as a unifying factor of young white Afrikaans speakers. “Conscription would become a core issue of growing disaffection among Afrikaner youth” (Hopkins 2006:50) as fighting intensified and these young men realised that this was a futile war in which South Africa held no moral ground.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, with the internal cycle of states of emergency, troops were deployed in the townships, which intensified the feeling that this was a war that was “morally questionable and destined to drag on in a futile fashion” (Grundling 2004:490).

National service became compulsory for white males in 1967; first for nine months, then one year, then two years with further compulsory ‘camps’ after completing their service. Long before his involvement with *Stet*, Tienie du Plessis was sent to the Infantry School in 1968 for his national service year, and his experiences may be viewed as typical of South African males who objected to the war. His problems with authority started here. “*Ek het ’n probleem met outoriteit in die Army gehad. En, ja. Ek het dit in die Army gehaat.*”<sup>5</sup>

After his basic training, he had to attend compulsory meetings on Saturdays at the Parade Ground: “*Doen ’n bietjie gun drill, marsjeer op en af en skree hoera. Daai soort van ding.*”<sup>6</sup> By 1976, Du Plessis was called up into Angola for Operation Savannah for three months. After trying to dodge this, he was commissioned to work for the Army’s information outlet *Uniform*. Here he consciously attempted to subvert authority. He was told by his superiors to find out where the action was, so that the group could move there to

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- 4 “It was far from a clearly defined struggle to defend the homeland. The government presented the Angolan war as one against a communist threat in the region, but the fact was that the battle zone lay more than three thousand kilometres beyond the South African border and the SWAPO fighters, at least, were fighting for their own land” (Giliomee 2003:593).
- 5 “I had a problem with authority in the Army. And yes, I hated being in the Army” (Du Plessis 2007).
- 6 “We would do a bit of gun drill and march up and down screaming hooray. That sort of thing” (Du Plessis 2007).



report on the action. “*En wat het ek gedoen? Ek het gaan uitvind waar is daar NIE aksie nie. Dan sê ek vir die dudes, ons moet môre soontoe gaan.*”<sup>7</sup> After his stint in Angola, he still had to attend Information Evenings on Tuesdays, but after a while he received the coveted *Blou Pas*, discharging him from the Armed Forces: “*Toe ek terugkom, was ek ’n raving pasifis.*”<sup>8</sup> This pacifism would permeate all his subversive actions: his would be a war with words and images, rather than an armed struggle.

Du Plessis’ growing disillusionment with the Army reflects the general feeling of many Afrikaans conscripts. By the mid-1980s, a large part of white South Africa was protesting against its involvement in Angola and deployment in the townships with anti-war protests and demonstrations. In addition, there were a number of underground anti-war publications. Notable was *Aapsurd* (a play on the Afrikaans for “ape” and “absurd”), a publication by disgruntled troops, who used the photostat machine of the Army itself to reproduce the publication: “*Ons gebruik hulle eie blierie instellings om die dinge te doen.*”<sup>9</sup>

The End Conscription Campaign (ECC) (see Figure 10) was formed in 1984 to “oppose national service and provide a support network for conscripts who objected to being



Figure 10: Four posters that demand an the end of forced national service distributed by the ECC (1984; 1987; 1987 and 1986). The sinister and sombre imagery supports the message portrayed on the posters. The question *WAT SOEK JY IN DIE TOWNSHIPS TROEPIE?* (“What are you doing in the townships, trooper?”) condemns the deployment by the state of troops in South African townships (The Posterbook Collective 2004:129, 131, 133, 135).

7 “And what did I do? I found out where there WASN’T any action and told the dudes that we have to go there” (Du Plessis 2007).

8 “When I returned, I was a raving pacifist” (Du Plessis 2007).

9 “We used their bloody institutions to get the things done” (Du Plessis 2007).

called up” (Hopkins 2006:61).<sup>10</sup> It was a special-interest group loosely under the helm of the UDF, the umbrella body for “a coalition of essentially independent interest groups, whose leadership and strength lay in individual communities” (Switzer & Adhikari 2000:24). The members of the ECC “... defined their position as not pacifist but as a refusal to defend apartheid” (Gordimer 1988:254, from a speech given in 1985). It is important to take note of Gordimer’s position. The ECC identified as an anti-apartheid movement rather than a pacifist movement. It “identified itself with the cause of the oppressed and sought to contribute to the struggle for liberation” (The Posterbook Collective 2004:127). Though the ECC was mainly a white English movement, it opened up another space for Afrikaans speakers to challenge the *status quo* in a subversive manner, as non-compliance with the national war effort was a criminal act. As Du Plessis says:

*As jy enigiets publiseer van die ECC, dan is dit 'n kriminele oortreding. Ons het toe spesifiek dan goed van die ECC in Stet gepubliseer om te kyk wat doen die wetters. Daar het niks gebeur nie. Die Weermag het besef, hoe meer publisiteit ons vir die ECC gee, hoe meer troepies gaan wegloop. Hulle het net nie opgedaag vir hulle diensplig nie (Du Plessis 2007).*

Should you publish anything for the ECC, it is a criminal act. So, we deliberately published stuff of the ECC in *Stet* to see what the government would do. Nothing happened. The Army had realised that the more publicity they give the ECC, the more troops would walk away. They just didn’t pitch for national service (Du Plessis 2007).

*Stet* had close ties with the ECC, and assisted with the printing of posters and pamphlets for the ECC. The printing was usually done in Mamelodi by white and black designers, and both the printing and distribution of ECC material constituted a criminal act: “... it is a treasonable offence, in South Africa, to incite anyone to refuse military service. The ECC is not yet a mass movement, and maybe will not be, but the government is sufficiently alarmed by it to have detained several members” (Gordimer 1988:254, from a speech given in 1985). By 1988, the ECC was restricted by the state.

The ECC reacted against the government controlling South Africans by having them

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10 “Its central demand was for the right of conscripts to choose not to serve in the SADF [South African Defence Force]” (The Posterbook Collective 2004:127).

participate in an unjust war against an ‘imagined’ enemy, communism. Another protest movement, IDASA, formed by academics and literary figures in South Africa, was also labeled “communist” by the state.

### 3.3.2 IDASA

The Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA) was formed in 1986 by Frederik van Zyl Slabbert and Dr Alex Boraine. It was viewed as a communist front by the government, but in fact it aimed at providing South Africans with a different viewpoint of current affairs, and attempted to create a dialogue for future possibilities in South Africa. This was difficult to do, as “apartheid’s ‘power of writing’ served to isolate, to discredit, to destroy, to rewrite everything and everyone to serve a political end” (Gready 1993:492).

The predominantly white members of IDASA had ties with the banned freedom movements, specifically the ANC. After an initial meeting with the exiled ANC leadership in Dakar in 1987 (in alliance with France’s *Liberté* Institut and the African Jurists’ Association), the so-called *Watervalberaad* was held in 1989 in Zimbabwe. Here, a number of Afrikaner literary intelligentsia met with ANC delegates and exiled authors. Through his work at *Stet* and *Taurus*, Tienie du Plessis was a member of this group. The anti-apartheid activists attempted to consolidate their resistance against the government. The authors and publishers of alternative media in South Africa met with the ANC in order to discuss methods of furthering the anti-apartheid message in South Africa by mobilising more white South Africans to the cause.

IDASA had an academic and philosophical orientation. Another subversive movement from this time was not in the least academic, but rather filled with youthful exuberance and a general dissident attitude. This was *Voëlvy*, an Afrikaans rock and roll music movement that toured the country in 1989, “voicing the smouldering irritation with apartheid’s grip on the personal freedom of Afrikaners” (Bezuidenhout 2007:[sp]).

### 3.3.3 *Voëlvy*

*Voëlvy*'s main proponents were Johannes Kerkorrel (Ralph Rabie), Koos Kombuis (André Letoit) and Bernoldus Niemand (James Phillips), but the movement consisted of a number of individual and group acts playing rock and roll in Afrikaans. As Max du Preez, editor of the subversive *Vrye Weekblad* wrote, they realised that "there was more to Afrikaans and being an Afrikaner than Christian National Education, fighting on the border and authoritarian finger-wagging politicians" (in Hopkins 2006:6). Although Tienie du Plessis was not a part of this movement, *Stet* did publish advertisements for their records and some commentary on the movement.

The musicians of *Voëlvy* (see Figure 11) were branded as anarchists who did not even have good command of the *Taal*. Their lyrics were regarded as unsophisticated by establishment Afrikaners who did not realise that *Voëlvy* deliberately sought to emancipate the language from the traditional Afrikaner bonds. Kerkorrel became their mouthpiece, and said that:

they [the establishment] obviously don't realise that our whole idea is to write naïve lyrics. We are liberating the language. If you can make a language into rock and roll, it can't be an oppressive language anymore. It's got to be free. It is just an African language like any other and it is certainly not the exclusive property of the 'volk' (in Grundling 2004:495).



Figure 11: The album cover and publicity material of the *Voëlvy* tour (1989) proclaim their anti-establishment stance by poking fun at icons of Afrikaner identity. Their publicity photograph show them as a motley group with no pretensions to respectability (Hopkins 2006:166, 169).



Pertinent to this “liberating” of the language was a radical reevaluation of Afrikaansness by appropriating the language in irreverent ways. Rather than “destroying the symbols of Afrikaner nationalism, irony was used to appropriate them for a different project” (Bezuidenhout 2007:[sp]). *Voëlvy* represented a broader formulation of Afrikaansness, rather than a rejection of Afrikaner identity. They parodied the Afrikaner, “history and the disaffection with middle-class establishment values ... often expressed in swear words on stage” (Grundling 2004:502).

In contrast to the ECC, the principal focus of *Voëlvy* was not an end to apartheid. “We wanted the same thing as freedom fighters: to be free”, writes Koos Kombuis:

In that respect we knew about them and they about us. But our contribution to their cause must not be underestimated, because at a crucial point in history we took from government its greatest power base, the youth (in Hopkins 2006:19).

*Voëlvy*’s “irreverent and creative probing of politics can ... be seen as potentially the movement’s most enduring legacy” (Grundling 2004:509). Thus, though their lyrics contained political dissention, it was voiced from a white Afrikaans point of view. Their “... foundation ... was a critique of what apartheid did to the ‘self’, not the ‘other’” (Bezuidenhout 2007:[sp]). The weekly newspaper *Vrye Weekblad* would move beyond this. It aimed to generate debate on changing the political scene in South Africa, and specifically attempted to give a voice to anti-apartheid sentiment from a white Afrikaans perspective.

### 3.3.4 *Vrye Weekblad*

This independent newspaper was established in 1988 by Max du Preez and a small group of journalists, all disillusioned with the warped news coverage published by Afrikaans newspapers, that had the tendency “to hire editors loyal to the National Party, who used journalism as simply a springboard to political advancement” (Claassen 2000:422). It had a distinct anti-establishment attitude, with “no respect for authority, and we saw it as our duty to make fun of the Father of the Volk. We had a general fuck-you attitude, and didn’t believe the 1980s was a time of subtlety and good manners” (Du Preez, quoted in Hopkins 2006:6). Their mast motto was initially *Die Nuwe Stem vir die Nuwe Suid-*

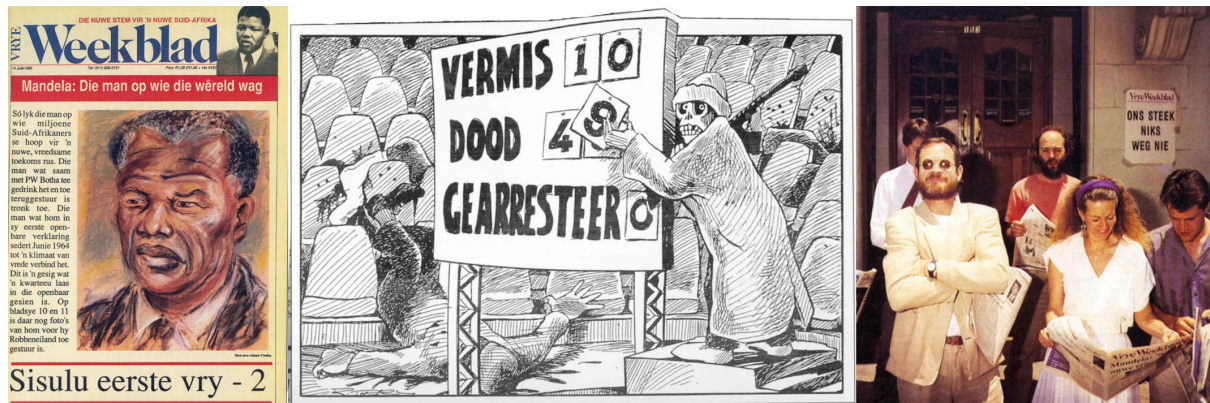


Figure 12: A cover, cartoon and publicity shot taken from *Vrye Weekblad* (1989) indicates the periodical's interest in topical issues pertaining to the Afrikaner. The press photograph taken of the editorial staff after they won a court case against them portrays their irreverent attitude to traditional norms of Afrikaner identity (Du Preez 2005:85, 44, 5).

*Afrika* ("The New voice for the New South Africa") long before 'New South Africa' became a household term. It would later change to *Ons is die Nuwe Suid-Afrika* ("We are the New South Africa"), *Ons steek niks weg nie* ("We hide nothing"), and during the last year of circulation *Onafhanklik. Onverbonde. Onverskrokke* ("Independent. Non-aligned. Undaunted").

*Vrye Weekblad* (see Figure 12) had a distinct hard-news inclination, and routinely uncovered the "corrupt, immoral and violent essence of white domination" (Du Preez 2005:167), exposing security police death squads. Indeed, "the capacity to generate lies, and to a lesser extent have them believed, was essential to the generation of apartheid political power" (Gready 1993:493). *Vrye Weekblad* realised that uncovering lies was, perhaps, even more important than presenting the truth. But it also reviewed music and film (it sponsored the *Voëlvy* tour), had a vibrant literary supplement, and above all, wrote in progressive Afrikaans. It "gave Afrikaners hope. It gave them an intellectual debate outside the borders of the mainstream Afrikaans press" (Terreblanche, quoted by Claassen 2000:435). *Vrye Weekblad's* last edition as newspaper appeared in 1993.

*Vrye Weekblad* was one of a few Afrikaans newspapers<sup>11</sup> that attempted to uncover the true horrors of apartheid. It realised that "the 'higher truth' resides not so much in

11 According to George Claassen (2000), other Afrikaans newspapers part of the South African resistance press were *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, *Saamstaan* and *Namaqua Nuus*.

proclaiming the ‘truth’ as in contesting the lie, in constructing an oppositional ‘power of writing’” (Gready 1993:493). This oppositional writing is also evident in *Stet*, the only Afrikaans *little magazine* to have as aim subverting the political and societal views of white South Africa. As is clear from the other subversive avenues discussed above, *Stet* was not a lone voice. These movements all existed to voice disaffection to some extent, be it anti-war, anti-apartheid, or just anti-establishment. *Stet* naturally had less of a hard-news inclination than *Vrye Weekblad*, and more political dissent than the *Voëlvy* musicians. It had the freedom to incorporate all these views in its attempt to create a sounding board for “all Afrikaans voices that weren’t allowed to be heard” (editorial in *Stet* 2(1) 1983:2). Of course, these were predominantly the progressive leftwing voices that the state tried to suppress.

### 3.4 STET AS POLITICALLY SUBVERSIVE *LITTLE MAGAZINE*

As a leftwing publication that formed part of the resistance press, *Stet* had a distinctly political inclination. It occupied a peripheral position in the struggle against apartheid when one considers the armed struggle as a whole. But, in terms of voicing dissent from within Afrikaner ranks, it may be viewed as instrumental in seeking to realign Afrikaansness. A historical overview of the emergence and concerns of *Stet* is given below from the viewpoint of Tienie du Plessis, with the aim to provide a context for the analysis of the cover in the next chapter.

*Stet* ran for 10 years (1982–1992) under the editorship of Gerrit Olivier and was designed by Tienie du Plessis. Afrikaans literary critic Kannemeyer (1998:244) writes that *Stet* was the most important of the avant-garde publications. It had the largest readership of any of the Afrikaans *little magazines*, with an iconoclastic orientation and a “distinctly non-elitist attitude to literature”, according to literary critic Oliphant (1992:101). Oliphant (1992:101) attests that it served as a “forum for the new rebellious voices in Afrikaans which began to emerge in the early eighties”. He writes that *Stet* was “clearly opposed to the conservative values which have dominated Afrikaans literary circles for decades, and its opposition often takes on the form of subversive humour and a calculated indifference to reactionary morality” (Oliphant 1992:102).

In the tradition of the resistance press, *Stet* was “rooted in, and reflected, a wider resist-

ance movement. And ... also served to further 'manufacture dissent', intensifying [an] ever-deepening reaction against apartheid" (Berger 2000a:xii).

*Stet* was established by like-minded literary figures in 1982. The narrative behind how the publication was founded is indicative of how many of the subversive movements started almost by chance. Du Plessis' involvement with *Stet* also occurred through an interesting course of events.

### 3.4.1 The emergence of *Stet*

Tienie du Plessis started lecturing in graphic design in 1980 at the then Pretoria Technikon and the University of the Witwatersrand. Through his connections with artist Willem Boshoff and writer John Miles, he started designing for Taurus, the Johannesburg-based anti-apartheid publishing house founded in 1975 by a group of academics (Ampie Coetzee, Ernst Lindenberg and John Miles). Taurus had as express aim the publishing of worthy material that the established publishing houses rejected for fear of censorship, and "operated according to a non-profit business model and profit derived from previous publications was directly reinvested in ensuing publishing activities" (Venter 2007:[sp]). This group of dissident writers included Dan Roodt, Karin Konsentrasie-kamp, John Miles, MC Botha, Lettie Viljoen, and Koos Prinsloo. In literary terms, these writers' work was "as experimental as that of the Sestigers, but it was also more explicitly politicized" (Barnard 1992:83). Gerrit Olivier was also involved with Taurus at the time.

Du Plessis recalls that one evening, he and Gerrit Olivier were having oxtail and red wine at writer and Taurus founder Ampie Coetzee's house, when they started talking about the *dooie kol* (the "dead spot") in Afrikaans literature. The hegemonic Afrikaans literature excluded so many voices that they felt compelled to rectify it by publishing a *little magazine* with the financial backing of Taurus. The idea was not to publish an overtly literary magazine. Their idea was rather to be inclusive of different voices in Afrikaans, in order to create a mouthpiece for the Afrikaner who was critical of the government and establishment: "*Daar was nie 'n spreekbuis vir die Afrikaanse lefties nie.*"<sup>12</sup>

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12 "There wasn't a mouthpiece for the Afrikaans lefties" (Du Plessis 2007).



Venter (2007:[sp]) succinctly states that *Stet* “dedicated its editorial space to contemporary alternative Afrikaans cultural and literary opinion”. Du Plessis explains that many white Afrikaans speakers realised that they needed to oppose the system, to subvert it from within. But where? If one were a member of the ANC, you would go to jail. There were very few opportunities at that point in South African history for Afrikaans speakers to voice their dissent against the current political dispensation. As Du Plessis (2007) says, he was searching for an avenue and found that both white English and black South African movements were sceptical of white Afrikaners who claimed that they opposed apartheid. Because of this, he realised that he would have to be part of a group that created their own avenue of dissention:

*Jy vind 'n plekkie waar jy voel jy kan 'n bydrae maak. Ons Afrikaners is baie swak ontvang in die bevrydingsorganisasies. Ons moes harder probeer as enigiemand anders sodat die ouens ons vertrou. Hulle het almal gedink, hulle dink dit nou nog, ons weet mos hoe is die Wit Afrikaner. Die Engelse outjies was baie skepties oor Afrikaners wat dit gedoen het. Ons moes eintlik double summersaults maak om in te kan pas ... Ons het inderdaad eintlik op die periferie gewerk. Ons is nie die ouens wat bomme gegooi het nie. Ek sou ook nie. Julle moere. Ek gaan nie bomme gooi nie (Du Plessis 2007).*

You find a spot where you feel that you can make a contribution. We Afrikaners were poorly received by the freedom movements. We had to try harder than anyone else to gain their trust. They all thought, they still think it, we know the typical White Afrikaner. The English dudes were very skeptical about the Afrikaners who dissented. We actually had to do double somersaults in order to fit in ... And we were indeed on the periphery. We weren't the guys who threw bombs. And I wouldn't have thrown a bomb. No way (Du Plessis 2007).

### 3.4.2 Content and publishing philosophy of *Stet*

Looking at *Stet* now, the content and design seem fairly frivolous. But Du Plessis (2007) is emphatic that people today have no idea what it was like to live under the yoke of the Nationalist government:

*Die Afrikaners wat in beheer was, was BRUTAAL. Hulle het niks geduld nie. 'As jy nie saam met ons is nie, is jy teen ons.' Hulle het jou vernietig. Hulle het jou absoluut uit die sisteem gehaal. En jy kon waarskynlik jou lewe verloor. Soos met die kwansuis geborgde selfmoorde. As iemand vandag byvoorbeeld so maklik sê: 'Julle het moeilikheid gesoek', dan dink mens net aan die sogenaamde selfmoorde.*

The Afrikaners in charge were BRUTAL. They did not tolerate anything. 'If you are not with us, then you are against us.' They would destroy you. They totally took you out of the system. And you could lose your life, like with the so-called sponsored suicides. Today, people easily say 'But you were just looking for trouble'. Then one just remembers the so-called suicides.<sup>13</sup>

Flaunting their so-called communist views, the editors of *Stet* attempted to subvert the myth of the superior Afrikaner from within. They feared that they might be banned, although this did not happen. The editors even had the gall to apply for funding from the state. Apparently, their request was politely declined. Apart from the sponsorship by Taurus, the publication primarily relied on a few advertisements and its subscribers for funding. Taurus did, at times, receive funding from outside South Africa, though the amounts it received also indicate its peripheral presence:

*Ons het saam met die SA Writers gewerk. Met IDAF, International Defense and Aid Fund. Die Sweedse PEN. Maar nie die Engelse of Amerikaners nie. Breyten [Breytenbach] het groot goed belowe van die Franse, maar dit het nooit gebeur nie. Die Hollanders, ja. Maar meer met die ECC. Ons het nooit bucks gekry soos ander organisasies nie. SIDA het op 'n stadium vir ons R70 000 gegee. Maar daai stadium het COSAR R8 000 000 gekry, so ons was nie hoog op die lys nie (Du Plessis 2007).*

We collaborated with the South African Writers' Association. With IDAF [the International Defense and Aid Fund]. The Swedish PEN. But not with the British or the Americans. Breyten [Breytenbach] had promised aid from the French, but it never happened. The Dutch, yes. But they aided the ECC more than they did us. We never received big bucks like the other organisations. SIDA [the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency] gave us R70 000. But at this stage COSAR [the Congress of South African Writers] received R8 000 000, so we weren't high on the list (Du Plessis 2007).

The print run of *Stet* was usually 1000 copies, printed at printers who declined to put their imprint on the publication. When times were good, the thousand copies were sold, but as a rule, they worked on a sale number of 850. Typically, the edition would be discussed in the weekly newspapers, where it was ridiculed for being communist. The

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13 Stemmet and Barnard (2004:159) concur, writing that, by the mid 1980s, "State President Botha and his Government were prone to take an either-for-us-or-against-us stance when it came to dealing with criticism".

editors of *Stet* always posted the subscription copies before making the publication available. The edition was distributed to bookshops two weeks later.

At times, *Stet* used guest editors (as with the “Stellenbosch Edition” edited by Lettie Viljoen, the writer’s name of Ingrid Winterbach), but as a rule Gerrit Olivier handled the editorial content. The contributors were primarily Taurus authors and their affiliates, though there was some unsolicited material. *Stet* included articles of academic calibre, though it remained anti-establishment and critical of the political order. Even the academic-minded contributions sometimes had to be placed under assumed names (such as O. P. Stoker, *opstoker*: inciter, agitator). *Stet* placed material mainly in Afrikaans, though Dutch contributions were included together with an increasing number of English pieces in the later editions.

The content of the *little magazine* included the genres of aphorisms; academic articles (by authors such as Leon de Kock, Joan Hambidge, Daniel Hugo, Leonard Koza, Koos Prinsloo, Dan Roodt, Henriette Roos and Hein Willemse); letters; dramas (by Hennie Aucamp and Lettie Viljoen); extracts from novels (by Theunis Engelbrecht, Christoffel Lessing, Fransi Phillips and Wessel Pretorius); short stories (by Arnold Blumer, MC Botha, Ryk Hattingh, André Letoit, Hansie Pienaar, Paul Riekert, Alexander Strachan, Etienne van Heerden, Chris van Wyk, Eben Venter and George Weideman); poetry (with contributions by Breyten Breytenbach, Daniel Hugo, Rosa Keet, Antjie Krog, Peter Snyders, Wilma Stockenström, Barend J Toerien and Marlene van Niekerk); translations; comics; photo essays and interviews. This arbitrary list of contributors illustrates both the wide-ranging nature of the contributions and the calibre of the contributors. Most of these contributors are now praised for their anti-apartheid and anti-establishment publications, many of which were published as extracts in *Stet*.

The editors were aware of the other *little magazines* and related subversive movements, but there was little overt cooperation between them. This seems counter-productive now, but in those days it was deemed safer to work on one’s own. So many organisations were banned that it made more sense to have many small avenues of subversion that made it more difficult for the state to pin one down. However, according to Du Plessis (2007), one has to remember that everyone was distrustful of everyone else:

*In apartheid was daar soveel verwydering. Never mind die verwydering tussen swart en wit; daar was verwydering tussen Engels en Afrikaans. So ons het goeie verhoudings gehad met die sogenaamde bruin Afrikaanse skrywers, maar daar was min ander samewerking. Dit was 'n politieke ding. As jy iets gedoen het, was dit politiek. Jy kon nie daarvan ontsnap nie.*

During apartheid there was so much estrangement. Never mind the estrangement between black and white; there was alienation between the English and the Afrikaans. We had good relations with the so-called brown Afrikaans writers, but apart from that there was little cooperation. It was a political thing. If you did anything, then it was Political. You couldn't escape from it.

*Stet* folded in 1992, along with a number of subversive anti-apartheid movements. The country was changing: the Border War was over, apartheid was at an end, and the participants in these movements now focussed on integration and the dawn of the so-called 'New South Africa'. The main factor was thus a form of struggle fatigue (see Venter 2007:[sp] and Berger 2000b:87). Also, "we were tired", says Du Plessis (2007):

*Jy moet onthou, ons doen dit nie vir geld nie. Daar is geen salaris nie; mens doen dit vir die love van die saak. En dan, teen drie-uur die oggend begin mens wonder: 'Waar is die fokken love?' Maar little magazines gaan dood. En toe Stet doodgaan, het ons nie gehuil of iets nie. Ons het nog 'n bier gedrink.*

You have to remember that we didn't do it for the money. There were no salaries; we did it for the love of the concern. And then, at three in the morning you start wondering 'Where is the fucking love?' But yes, *little magazines* die. And when *Stet* died, we didn't cry. We had another beer.

Du Plessis started another publishing house, HOND, which published the first *Bittercomix*, the irreverent strip art of Anton Kannemeyer and Conrad Botes. Du Plessis is still involved in the publishing industry. The editor and contributors to *Stet* are likewise still part of the Afrikaans literary scene, and most of these literary figures are still challenging the dominant Afrikaner notions about self, but are doing so within the context of the new political dispensation.

### 3.5 CONCLUSION

*Voëlory*, *Vrye Weekblad*, *Stet* and a number of other small movements came about more or

less independently of one another. These alternative Afrikaners rallied “against PW Botha, about conscription and the militarisation of society, about apartheid and racism, about the cosy mediocrity of white middle-class suburbia, about patriarchy, about white and Afrikaner ethnic identity” (Du Preez, quoted in Hopkins 2006:7). They undermined the “traditional Afrikaner culture of respect for authority and older people” (Du Preez, quoted in Hopkins 2006:8). The dissent emerged in what the *Cape Times* called “an unprecedented orgy of Afrikaner anarchy” (Hopkins 2006:14), when there was the “Total Onslaught, countered by a Total Strategy, war, conscription, death squads, corruption, censorship, hyperinflation, sanctions, boycotts, a general insanity and President PW Botha’s wagging finger” (Hopkins 2006:16). But, particularly, these subversive Afrikaners took back the power of the word, and the image, and the voice, from the oppressing government that continually tried to silence them:

... especially in a situation like the one in South Africa, the written word in itself can assume the weight of significant action. If this were not so, why would authoritarian regimes resort to censorship? Why would governments feel so particularly and peculiarly threatened by the published word? (Brink 1983:205).

This chapter has indicated that, though relatively peripheral, a culture of Afrikaans dissent and subversion was maintained during the 1980s. *Stet* may be included in this group of Afrikaans South Africans who wished to reevaluate their Afrikaansness. The next chapter examines the particularities of the covers of *Stet* through a semiotic analysis in order to gauge the subversive messages inherent to the covers.

## CHAPTER 4

### VISUAL ANALYSIS OF *STET* COVERS

Although words are the building blocks of meaning, visual ideas can be expressed much more persuasively through the medium of graphic design ... the impression portrayed through design must be unsettling, if only at first, in order to provoke the reaction of the readers (Heller 2003:9).

What is also given to us ... is an inescapable injunction, an incomparable provocation to analyse endlessly the complexity of the networks overloaded with causes that make the 'emancipations' of our time possible (Derrida, in Association of artists of the world against apartheid 1995:11).

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter examined various modes of expression through which young Afrikaans South Africans subverted the Afrikaansness thrust on them by the establishment. They seemed to want to subvert their Afrikaans identity by aligning themselves with anti-apartheid and anti-war causes. As indicated in Chapter Three, Tienie du Plessis, designer of *Stet*, strongly associated with anti-apartheid and anti-war ideologies in various ways. His involvement with *Stet* was the most focussed of his efforts to attempt to subvert Afrikaansness, his own and that of the readers of the *little magazine*. The covers he designed for *Stet* may be understood as exemplary reflections of the concerns dissident Afrikaners were grappling with.

This chapter explores the concerns and reflections of one subculture of dissident Afrikaners by analysing the visual codes embedded in the design and layout of the covers of *Stet*. Of course, it can be argued that the *little magazine* should be analysed as a whole in order to explore the "system of messages, a signifying system and a bearer of a certain ideology" as Angela McRobbie (in Storey 1996:82) argues, but the constraints on this study do not allow for analysis that includes the content of the magazines. For the purposes of this study, the analysis is restricted to the covers of the magazines. The covers of magazines are uniformly hailed as indicative of the success of a magazine, and in the case



of popular / consumer magazines, seen as the most important factor in boosting sales and reinforcing the brand in the mind of the buyer (Johnson 2002; Leslie 2000:44). In terms of the popular press, Johnson (2002:[sp]) notes: "Analyzing the covers is useful for at least two reasons. First, the covers provide benchmarks to history. Second, the covers give a sense, generically, of who wields power and influence." Naturally, this is not entirely true for a *little magazine* such as *Stet*, which had a limited distribution and readership. The covers of *Stet* were not necessarily meant to attract new readers / buyers to the brand. Rather, covers of magazines in the alternative / resistance press need to display their ideological stance prominently to their likeminded readers in order to reinforce the messages of the content. In this sense, the covers of *Stet* probably are a suitable benchmark of the historical context in which they were produced, and, in terms of Johnson's sense of power and influence, probably expose the editors' resistance to those in power.

The twenty numbers of *Stet* were published between October 1982 and February 1991, tumultuous years in the history of South Africa. These years saw an end to the Border War, seemingly continuous States of Emergencies; the unmasking of so-called Death Squads; and later the unbanning of persons and organisations previously deemed undesirable by the state. The release of political prisoners and the move to a democratic dispensation followed in the early 1990s. This chapter indicates that these events strongly influenced the design of the covers of *Stet*. It also indicates that the covers showed solidarity with many 'outsiders' in the South African society, aligning themselves with almost anyone or anything contrary to the wishes of the government and establishment, while continually attempting to redirect their Afrikaansness. The editors of *Stet* played the role of the Baudelarian *Doppelgänger* or special agent who, according to Jobling & Crowley (1996:68): "simultaneously belonged to the society in which [they] lived but whose power of observation allowed [them] to ridicule and objectify it as an outsider".

This chapter initially gives a brief description of the physical characteristics of the *little magazine*. Thereafter, a purposive sample of the covers is contextualised. Finally, the purposive sample is analysed semiotically, exposing themes common to the sets and exploring the subversive messages in the design of specific covers. Although all of the covers were designed by Tienie du Plessis, most of them incorporate material by other artists or photographers. Where the context of these individuals may illuminate the analysis, biographical and contextual information is provided.



## 4.2 FORMAL DESCRIPTION OF *STET*

The twenty numbers of *Stet* were uniformly published in A4 format (trimmed) and saddle-stitched. Both content and cover were litho-printed on 90 gsm bond-type uncoated stock. Ten covers were printed in two colours (black and a spot colour), while the other ten were printed in one colour (black). The printing of the content reflects this, as the numbers with covers in colour also have colour sections with the spot colour being used. But, as a rule, the content may be viewed as printed in one colour. As the *little magazine* was printed professionally, the page extent was constrained to sections forming signatures. Ten numbers had 32 pages, while the other numbers ranged between 40, 48 or 64 pages. One issue was published with 80 pages.

The layout of the content (see Figure 13) may be described as arbitrary or irregular (Rall 2004:85) in that the internal structure of elements is not “ordered in linear or hierarchical fashion” (Rall 2004:88, *my translation*). In contrast to the *little magazines* discussed in Chapter Two, *Stet* displays skilful typographical playfulness while maintaining legibility and readability. This is doubtless due to Tienie du Plessis’ training as a graphic designer.

In addition to the literary content discussed in Chapter Three, the relevant and actual text is punctuated with an array of line drawings by Tienie du Plessis and regular contributors (known for their subversive art) such as Karin Konsentrasiekamp (Karin

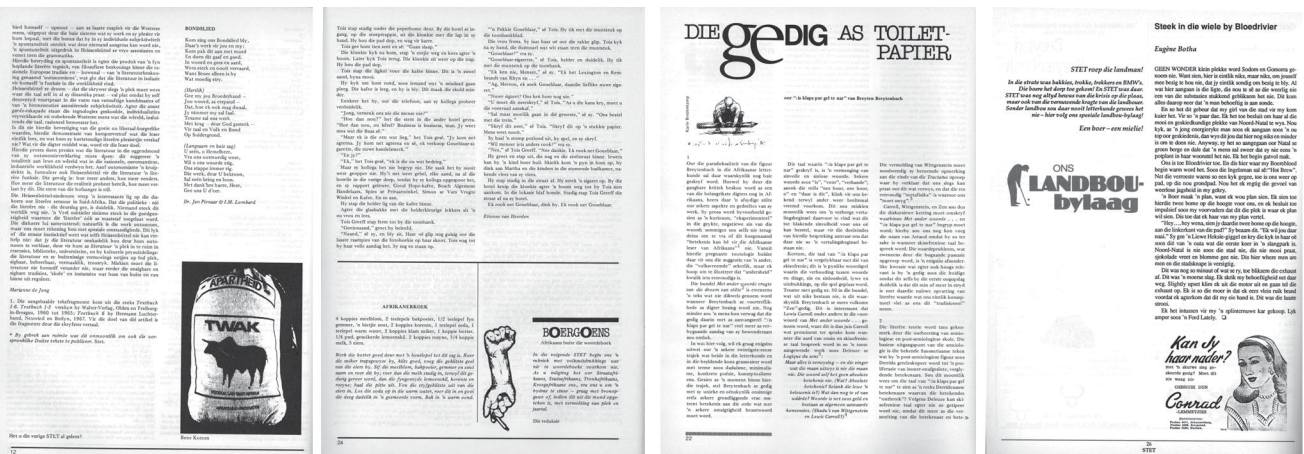


Figure 13: Pages from the content of *Stet* indicate that the layout was readable and legible, but not rigid in a hierarchical fashion. The designer took the opportunity to adapt the layout to reflect the type of content and had freedom in designing the headings of articles (personal collection: 1(2) 1983:12; 2(3) 1984:24; 3(3&4) 1986:22 and 6(4) 1991:26).

Bredenkamp) and André Letoit (Koos Kombuis). Often, this visual material (see Figure 14) would complement a subversive (or thought-provoking) article, but it was also placed as stand-alone commentary of issues the editors grappled with or as feedback on pertinent events in Afrikaans literary circles as well as the political environment. The subversive Afrikaans contributor, positioned within Afrikaans society, has the opportunity to ridicule and objectify Afrikaansness and the dominant political ideologies of the day.

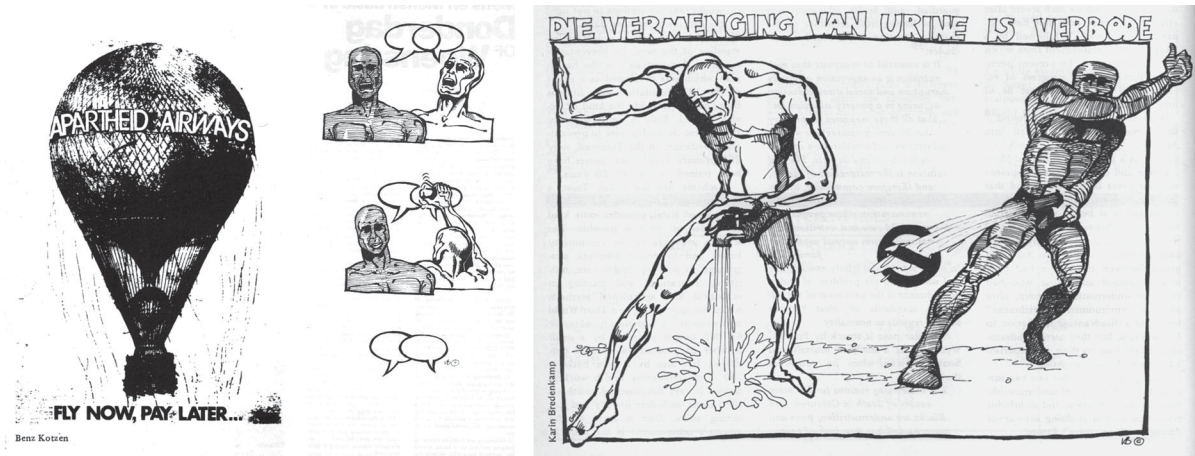


Figure 14: Three examples of the graphic material placed in *Stet* (1(1) 1982:5; 3(3&4) 1986:17 and 4(1&2) 1986:16). The graphic material reflected the subversive stance that the editors of *Stet* took in their ridiculing of censorship and apartheid and its laws (personal collection).

Although the content of *Stet* is fascinating in its own right, the covers comprise the scope of this analysis. In the following section the covers are examined according to the visual sets within which they appear.

### 4.3 SAMPLING OF COVERS

After a cursory examination of the twenty covers of *Stet*, it is clear that they can be divided into six chronological sets. These sets reflect changes in the unifying elements of the covers: the design of the masthead, the mast motto and the various graphic elements. One cover from each set is analysed in the following section. Semiotics is used as mode of analysis in an attempt to expose the cultural myths (in the sense of Barthesian “mythology”) codified in the signs. Naturally, the sampled covers are not consistent in either their eloquence of design or level of subversiveness. Therefore, more attention is given to the covers that exhibit a stronger subversive message.

In terms of popular / consumer magazines, Sumner (in Johnson 2002) has argued that scholars “assume that magazines are supposed to be a ‘cultural artifact’ and in some vague way accurately reflect or influence society”. This argument cautions the viewer from drawing too many conclusions from the cover of a magazine in the popular press. However, in the case of magazines outside the popular press, the covers have the opportunity to almost disregard sales figures as the purpose of these artifacts is not selling power but subverting ideological power structures. This is why Oliphant (1992:91) notes that it is necessary, especially in a study of literary periodicals, to “remain alert to general cultural developments and the particular historical context” in which the production occurred. It is from cultural and historical context that any subversive message emanates. Also, Jonathan Bignell (1997:23) writes that the “myths which are generated in a culture will change over time, and can only acquire their force because they relate to a certain context”. In order to give expression to this general context, each set of *Stet* is first analysed as a group, and then an analysis is made of the sampled cover from each set.

It is usual in the design of a *little magazine* that the first issue give a clear manifesto of intent. In the case of *Stet*, this publishing manifesto is prominently displayed on the first cover. This cover is sampled for full analysis as it sets the tone for all the covers that follow. However, the set as a whole exhibits some interesting common design elements, and an overview of the set is given first.

## 4.4 THE COVERS OF *STET*

### 4.4.1 Set one: The discordant flight of birds

The first four covers of *Stet* (see Figure 15) share a very personal touch: the masthead is Tienie du Plessis’ handwriting. They also show a design element recurring in the first three sets: the use of a distinct found image and random pictographic illustration that will be referred to as the binding element. Apart from the first cover, the other covers in this set have no typographical elements other than the masthead and list of contributors. The mast motto, so subversively used in later sets, is absent here. This set is printed in two colours (black and a spot colour). The choice of images in this set is indicative of the editors’ disillusionment with Afrikaansness. They make no attempt to include ele-



ments of Afrikaansness and distance themselves from the typical view of Afrikaansness by incorporating the photograph of a graffitied, dour slum building on number 1(3) and the graphic of a scantily-clad woman with suspenders and bra on number 1(4). These are not the Christian-National reflections of Afrikanerdom that the establishment used to promote Afrikaansness, especially since 1982 saw a schism in Afrikaner political unity (in the ruling National Party), between ultra-conservative members and relatively more open-minded Afrikaners. This schism “was not in the first place about class issues but about different approaches to Afrikaner survival and conflicting strategies to maintain Afrikaner power” (Giliomee 1992:352). The tenets of Afrikanerdom remained ingrained in the minds of the Afrikaner establishment. The bastion of the Afrikaner establishment remained the Christian-National approach; the Church and the Language were seen as the two factors that would promote Afrikaner identity relentlessly.



Figure 15: Set one of the *Stet* covers. It comprises number 1(1), October 1982; number 1(2), February 1983; number 1(3), May 1983; and number 1(4), August 1983 (personal collection).

The second cover, number 1(2), is notable for its use of a partial photograph of Afrikaans author Breyten Breytenbach.<sup>1</sup> Breytenbach, a fervent opposer of apartheid, had been released from prison in 1982 after serving seven years of a nine-year prison sentence. By placing the image of a subversive enemy of the state on the cover, the editors of *Stet* show solidarity with Breytenbach, and presumably all other opposers of apartheid. This

1 Breytenbach (b 1939) had been incarcerated in November 1975 after being found guilty under the Terrorism Act of 1967. Prime Minister Vorster minced no words in expressing his dislike for Breytenbach: “If he put his foot in the country, I should tuck him away so deeply in the prison building that he would never get out” (quoted in Giliomee 2003:556).

statement has a strong subversive message that would have alienated traditional Christian-National Afrikaners from the publication. By not including Breytenbach's eyes or forehead, the editors seem to intimate that the apartheid system, responsible for Breytenbach's incarceration, has lost any vestiges of rationality; a subversive stance to take as the apartheid state prided itself on its rationalisation of apartheid. The cropping of the image also places the emphasis on Breytenbach's mouth (voice) and demonstrates the extent of his fame – he is recognizable even without his eyes. Perhaps the editors wanted to demonstrate that even when dissident voices are jailed or exiled by the apartheid state (removing their faces from the minds of people), the dissident voice would remain. And through the voice, the message, the struggle would continue.

The images on the last three covers in this set seem disjointed and uncomfortable on the page. By having the images float in impersonal white space, a subversive feeling of separateness and isolation is proclaimed by the editors of *Stet*. The slight rotation of the image on number 1(3) and the expressionist style of printmaker Elza Miles'<sup>2</sup> graphic on number 1(4) reinforce the separatist stance that the editors voiced in their manifesto, prominently printed on the cover of number 1(1).

#### 4.4.1.1 Analysis of the cover of number 1(1)

The first cover of *Stet* (see Figure 16) is sampled for analysis because of the prominent display of the magazine's manifesto. It is also important because it is the first cover of the magazine, and therefore sets the tone for all the covers to follow. It incorporates text and seemingly random imagery to convey the publishing concern of *Stet*. The text of the manifesto is in itself indicative of a subversive stance towards publishing in general, and specifically publishing in South Africa. As with the manifestos placed on and in other *little magazines* (such as the manifesto of *Strife!* (see Carter 1993)), the text in this manifesto represents the mixture of attitudes reflected in the content of the magazine: "bohemian, libertarian, communist, proletarian, anarchist, avant-garde" (Carter 1993:[sp]).

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2 Elza Miles, née Botha (b 1944) studied fine arts and obtained a D.Litt. et Phil. at the Rand Afrikaans University. She married author and academic John Miles, and they were very involved with *Stet* and the publishing house Taurus, where John Miles' controversial novels appeared.

The text of the cover reads as follows:

**stet. 1.** Drukkersterm vir laat bly. **2.** (*na analogie*) eienaam. Literêre tydskrif met belangstelling in politiek en sake van die dag. Gestig in 1982. Onder redaksie van Tienie du Plessis (tegniese versorging) en Gerrit Olivier. Katoliek van smaak, maar met 'n voorkeur vir ongewone bydraes. Teen apartheid, teen sensuur. R1,90 per nommer, R7,50 per jaargang van 4 nommers. Posbus 18666, Hillbrow 2038. **UITDR.:** *STET is boknaai.* **3.** (*by uitbr.*) In STET publiseer; iets publiseer wat elders geweier is. **UITDR.:** *As niemand dit wil hê nie, laat ek dit stet. In 1982 het almal begin stet.*

**stet. 1.** Printing term for leave as is. **2.** (*in analogy*) proper name. Literary magazine interested in politics and issues of the day. Founded in 1982. Under editorship of Tienie du Plessis (technical care) and Gerrit Olivier. Catholic in taste, but with a preference for unusual contributions. Against apartheid, against censorship. R1,90 per number, R7,50 per year for 4 numbers. PO Box 18666, Hillbrow 2038. **EXPRESSION:** *STET is great.* **3.** (*by extension*) To publish in STET; to publish something refused somewhere else. **EXPRESSION:** *If nobody wants it, I will stet it. In 1982 everyone started to stet (my translation).*

The manifesto is a clear invitation for subversive contributions. Even the name of the magazine seems to have been chosen with care as it inherently has a subversive edge to it. The idea of stet as term is far removed from the literary magazines of the era whose titles embrace the status quo: *Standpunte* ("Viewpoints"), *Ensovoort* ("Etcetera"), and the ever-present *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* ("Magazine for Literature").

The reference to Catholicism is pertinently subversive because the Afrikaner establishment had identified it as outlandish and a threat to Afrikaner survival. The government warned Afrikaners against the undermining of Christian-National principles and "urged [them] to resist alien influences on Afrikaner culture" (Heymans, quoted in Giliomee 2003:547). Indeed, Giliomee (2003:547) writes that the Afrikaans leadership of the time attempted to maintain their construct of Afrikaansness by insisting on exclusivity, and warning against the threat posed by "liberalism, Communism, jingoism and Roman Catholicism with their tendency to encourage fraternization of whites and non-whites".

The editors of *Stet* clearly state that they take a subversive stance toward both apartheid and censorship. As indicated in Chapter Two, censorship in South Africa served as an important motivator for the appearance of independent *little magazines* and publishing

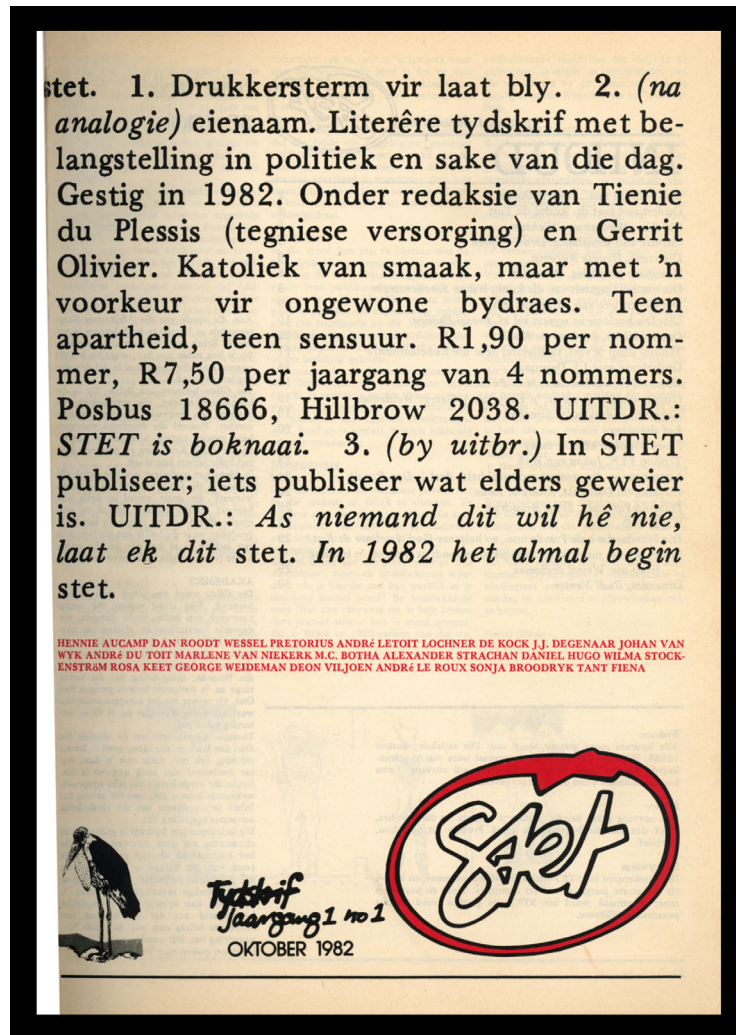


Figure 16: Cover of *Stet* number 1(1), October 1982 (personal collection).

houses. The contents of this first number bear out the editors' wish for "alternative" material, contributions that attempt to scrutinize and redefine Afrikaansness. Formal articles include *Afrikanerdenke & Nasionalisme* ("Afrikaans thought & Nationalism"), "Culture and Resistance", *Keuse vir die Afrikaner?* ("A choice for the Afrikaner?"), while creative submitters include early work by young alternative authors who are now part of the Afrikaans canon: Marlene van Niekerk, Rosa Keet, Fransi Phillips, George Weideman, Alexander Strachan, Johan van Wyk and Wessel Pretorius.<sup>3</sup>

The type of the manifesto is set in a formal manner, reminiscent of dictionary entries.

3 These authors wrote works dealing with apartheid, censorship, and the redefining of Afrikaansness, and many were published by Taurus.



Even the font used seems to invoke a formal, canonised look which is far removed from the content. The kerning and letter-spacing are irregular, further tempting the viewer to regard this as an excerpt from a canonical publication such as the *HAT* (*Handwoordeboek vir die Afrikaanse Taal*, the Afrikaans counterpart to the Oxford English Dictionary). Only when one reads the text, does it become clear that this is not a quotation from an establishment publication, but a subversive text veiled in a manner reminiscent of the establishment.

The masthead is in opposition to the formal manifesto, and is placed as far down the page as possible. It is distinctly informal with no pretensions of sophistication. Both the name of the magazine and publishing information are handwritten by Tienie du Plessis. The publishing information seems to be scribbled in as an afterthought, though the month and year are set in a sober sans-serif typeface. *Stet* is written in freeform cursive with little regard to legibility and circled in haphazard manner. The circling is filled with a rich red spot colour, with the start and end of the circle overlapping, further stressing the informality of the cover. It is strange that this *Stet* is not filled in in colour like the circling (on the other covers in this set, both the circle and title are filled in with the spot colour), but perhaps this serves to demonstrate the sense of inconsistency or spontaneity of the design.

The red colour is echoed in the list of contributors, set in a small-size caps letter. The stark layout of this is difficult to read, but visually it forms a dividing line between the formal and informal elements in the cover design. The combination of black and red, with the surrounding white space, heightens the tension of this cover. The red is an angry, passionate colour, further indicating that the editors are serious in their disaffection. By advertising the names of contributors on the cover, the editors align themselves with authors who were, even then, known for being subversive and dissident. By showing solidarity with these authors, the editors of *Stet* were also publicly accused of being communists. One should bear in mind that, during the 1980s, “anyone who challenged the status quo” (Gready 1993:492) was branded a communist. The government had identified communism as one of the main threats against Afrikanerdom, and purposively fused the themes of the ‘Red Menace’ (the communist threat) and a ‘Black Peril’ (the danger of an African uprising) in its propaganda and rationalisation of the ‘Total Onslaught’ (Giliomee 2003:499 and Visser 2004:107, 126).

The image of a caribou placed in the left lower corner seems to be a completely random image. In a superficial reading, it may be argued that it was placed to balance out the masthead and publishing information. It faces to the left, which heightens the tension on the cover as it would have seemed more comfortable facing right, peering down at the publishing information.<sup>4</sup> However, a further reading would expose these random images as being, in the Greenbergian sense, kitsch elements that are nonsensical. By appropriating images from canonised, scientific publications, the editors introduce the insensibility that Greenberg (1986) identified as kitsch: “using for raw material the de-based and academicised simulacra of genuine culture” (Greenberg 1986:12). The ridiculousness of the stationary bird, probably taken from a scientific ornithological publication, indicates that the editors take themselves lightly, but also reflect on the ridiculousness of the South African situation. By combining the random image with the irreverent text, it creates dissonance by poking fun at empirical reason and indicates that the editors deem the seemingly serious reasoning of the state and establishment ridiculous. The random birds also function to incorporate a sense of continuity within the set. Apart from the masthead and list of contributors, it is the only binding element in this set.<sup>5</sup>

This cover is subversive because of the random elements that are used to create a sense of the ridiculous. When comparing this cover with the design of a typical magazine cover, it is subversive because it breaks away from all canonised ideals: “In a general sense all magazines look remarkably similar: a set of ad-hoc rules has developed to help them fulfil their marketing obligations. The logo always runs across the top of the page; a life-size face with eye contact attracting the reader is deemed essential. As many of the stories as possible should be featured as headlines and teasers” (Leslie 2000:45). The masthead (logo) of *Stet* is informal and in the bottom corner of the page, suggesting that the brand is less important than the message the manifesto presents. There is no human presence, and apart from the manifesto, there is no attempt to ‘grab’ the reader’s attention with the typical photograph or teasers. The discordant elements on this cover differentiate it from anything imbued with establishment values.

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4 All four covers in this set use an image of a bird as binding element.

5 On the covers of sets two and three, this role is fulfilled by the random images of men exercising and wild boars respectively.

The second set of covers perpetuates this aim of differentiation by again using random imagery and graphics that oppose any sense of Afrikaner unity.

#### 4.4.2 Set two: Exercising the right to publish

The discordant imagery and glaring spot colour used on the second set of covers (see Figure 17) reinforce the theme of differentiation from Afrikaner unity present in the first set. The spot colours used on this set of covers are glaring, almost kitsch: popular, not simply providing an accurate description of the world, but over-simplifying the image. In using these colours, the editors align themselves on the surface with the popular and commercial. But when one looks closely at the combination of design elements the subversive message becomes clear. The prowling wild dog on number 2(1) by Julien Venter and the screaming, spitting line drawing on number 2(3) dare the viewer to open the magazine. The luminous pink used to print the photograph (by Simon Ford) on number 2(4) attacks the viewer, and is in subversive contrast to the sombre subject matter. The man has his back turned to society, as the editors of *Stet* seem to turn their backs on traditional Afrikaansness.

This set of covers uses a different layout for the masthead and publishing information, which are set in a robust but sober sans-serif font, perhaps to counter the informality of the images. The formal block of text of the masthead creates tension on the covers as it is in contrast to the almost exuberant imagery. But again the exuberant imagery is placed



Figure 17: Set two of the *Stet* covers. It comprises number 2(1), December 1983; number 2(2), April 1984; number 2(3), June 1984; and number 2(4), September 1984 (personal collection).

in impersonal white space that seems to confirm the editors' position that meaning cannot be fixed, that there cannot be only one truth as proclaimed by the government. In subtle fashion, the dominant image floating in white space subverts the concept of 'truth' as expounded by the apartheid state.

These covers see the introduction of the subversive mast motto. The cover of number 2(1) has the mast motto *Kersuitgawe, waarin ingelyf is TANDPUNTE* ("Christmas Edition, with TANDPUNTE incorporated"). The reference to a Christmas edition is an ironic play on popular magazines like the Afrikaans family magazine *Huisgenoot* that regularly had special editions focussing on Afrikaans traditions and identity, ignoring the deplorable political and social condition of the time. TANDPUNTE refers to the state-funded literary magazine *Standpunte*, largely imbued with "patriotic" Afrikaner literary concerns, disregarding the literary output of a younger generation of Afrikaans writers who attempted to renew the language. The cover of number 2(3) sports the mast motto *The magazine for the hole family*, another snide reference to the popular press, while number 2(4) incorporated the resistance-press newspaper *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, which folded shortly before due to state interference. The mast motto reads *waarby ingelyf sal word DIE SUID-AFRI-KAAN* ("which will incorporate DIE SUID-AFRI-KAAN"). The use of these playfully subversive mast mottos reflect the position taken by other alternative press publications such as the British alternative magazine *OZ* where "political manifestoes and passionate incitements to action appeared in a great number of issues ... [however] the editors often took an irreverent and self-disparaging approach to such material" (Jobling & Crowley 1996:233).

The binding element in this set is a series of exercise diagrams which seem totally out of place on the cover of a magazine concerned with literature and culture. Again, these are found images from a seemingly serious publication and their appropriation as raw material again introduce a Greenbergian element of kitsch. The appropriation of the male body is relevant when one considers that the editors had just returned from military service. The exercising images may be viewed as a reflection on the militarised state in South Africa in which males were forced to exercise according to strict rules in the army. Not only the military but also establishment Afrikaners were preoccupied with masculinity and the male physique as reflections of identity. In an almost Nazi-like fashion, the identity of Afrikaansness was reinforced by group exercising at school in order



to reinforce the concept of Afrikaners being superior. By placing the exercise diagrams on their anti-establishment publication, the editors were subverting this view and ridiculing it.

#### 4.4.2.1 Analysis of the cover of number 2(2)

This cover (see Figure 18) is chosen for analysis because it subverts the myth of the superior Afrikaans identity. The cut and paste execution of the cover seems to indicate that the editors view traditional Afrikaansness as a consumerist and trivial occupation with superficiality.

The mast motto on the cover of number 2(2) reads *Die tydskrif wat 'n mens lees, maar wat jy nie koop nie* ("The magazine that you read, but don't buy"). In the first instance this is



Figure 18: Cover of *Stet* number 2(2), April 1984 (personal collection).

another reference to popular magazines of the day, but also a reflection of the level of apathy the editors perceived in the South African public, specifically the white Afrikaans South Africans, who were presumably more interested in acquiring the new bedroom furniture displayed on the cover, than addressing the injustices and inequalities surrounding them. It reflects the editors' dismay at the fact the Afrikaans population was apparently not buying into a culture of political and social critique.

As mentioned above, the masthead is formalised into a solid block of text, divided by a very definite rule that separates it from the imagery. The list of contributors is set to the left of the masthead, in conservative right-aligned text. Thus, where the masthead was partly playful and the visual centre of the design in the previous set, here it is relegated to a formal position, with the collage being the visual stimulus.

The collage is printed in an almost sickly pink spot colour, which contrasts strongly with the imagery. The design is certainly influenced by a seminal work by British pop artist Richard Hamilton, *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* (1956). In Hamilton's collage, an apartment is decorated with "a haughty female nude and her mate, a musclemán in a typical you-too-can-be-strong pose" (Arnason 1982:614). They are surrounded by paraphernalia of the modern, consumerist age. Arnason (1982:614) notes that Hamilton's approach is "not satirical or in any way antagonistic" towards mass media or popular culture, but a reflection of it. However, I would suggest that the appropriation of this idea on the cover of *Stet* has a clear subversive message.

Rather than forming part of a cohesive collage (as in the work of Hamilton), the elements of this collage are disjointed and thus aggressive. The nude woman gazes blankly out of the page, oblivious of the man showing off his torso and leopard-print briefs. They are removed from the conservative bedroom interior with potted plant. Indeed, the text is clear that this image is not one of domestic docility, "All it needs is belief", with a price tag attached. With the combination of *Kuns is bo in SA* ("Art is tops in South Africa"), it seems to intimate that the systems of image creation in South Africa (both in the popular press and art world) are a farce, that nothing can be believed. But should one wish to buy into the brain-washing of the state, there is a "DOUBLE DEPOSIT DISCOUNT!" This is a subversive reflection on the ideology then current in South Af-



rica that everything was under control, as propagated by the State. The dominant ideology made society “seem natural, common-sense and self-evident” (Bignell 1997:26). It is this ‘dominant ideology’, in the Barthesian sense, that the editors of *Stet* wanted to subvert. In the same way that Barthes decoded the myth about wrestlers reflecting a “natural, common-sense, unchangeable” moral world (Bignell 1997:22), the editors of *Stet* appropriated and subverted elements of the myth constructed by the dominant Afrikaans ideology in an attempt to expose this ideology as a myth.

The collage is roughly executed, with no attempt to smooth the edges, which creates subversive tension between the inherent meaning and the appropriation of populist images. *Stet* is decidedly not popular, and by using a cut and paste style to incorporate images copied from a popular furniture catalogue or advertisement, the difference between the popular press and the resistance press is solidified.

When one looks closely at the text next to the stereotypical macho man’s mouth (almost like a speech bubble), the all-white imagery is subverted with the text “Nujoma: ‘We will continue to struggle’.” This is a reference to Sam Nujoma, leader of the resistance party SWAPO (South West African People’s Organization) in the then South West Africa (now Namibia), against whom the armed forces from South Africa was fighting a losing battle, ostensibly against communism and a credible threat to the safety of white South Africans. This speech bubble is not displayed prominently; in fact, it is quite easy to miss it. By placing it on the cover, it serves as a reminder that the South African political climate seems more conventionally suburban than it is. Indeed, Hans Pienaar, the guest editor of this number, touched on this in his article *Die mites van sensuur* (“The myths of censorship”) in which he proclaims the futility of placing stars on the exposed breasts of a woman, arguing that most viewers find the starred breast even more enticing. This attempt to sterilise Afrikaansness from debasement while actually perpetuating pornography is indicative of the warped measures Afrikaans leaders felt were necessary to protect the nation from outside influences. It is this parochiality that the editors and contributors to *Stet* were attempting to subvert in order to widen the perspective of Afrikaansness.

The subversive elements on this cover combine to create the message that South Africans are moved by numbers and price tags. It is a very serious message, though the

editors indicate that they take themselves lightly by using trivialising images (the exercise diagrams) and dissonant layout (the collage) in a self-deprecating manner to bring some comic relief into the design. This cover subverts the idea of what an Afrikaner should be by ridiculing the myth of the Afrikaans male as strongman. The myth of Afrikaans domesticity is further subverted by the naked woman gazing expectantly at the viewer, as if to dare the viewer to suggest that she fluff the pillows or clean the carpet.

#### 4.4.3 Set three: Disillusionment

The image of the smoking bride on the cover of number 3(1) (see Figure 19) further subverts the myth of the superior Afrikaner, and the entire set has a more sombre mood when compared to the playful previous set. In part, this is explained by the one-colour printing which obviously results in grayscale imagery that naturally has a starker feel. However, the imagery and mast mottos exhibit a feeling of disillusionment ... the editors were probably realising how difficult it is to keep an independent magazine going. Also, the country had “experienced fifteen months of widespread mass violence” (Giliomee 2003:616) which led to the declaration of a partial state of emergency on 20 July 1985. This clearly increased the sombre mood of the editors of *Stet* and the despondent atmosphere of the covers.

Moreover, the black and white imagery on the first two covers in this set seems more evocative of modern photography and avant-garde art than graphic design. This is perhaps why the masthead identity is adapted to something more disjointed and “graphic” than the previous masthead designs. By adapting the masthead in each set, the editors again subvert the notion of what a successful magazine should be. It is reminiscent of the British alternative magazine *OZ*, which used a different masthead design for every issue, “thereby breaking with the convention which maintained that a fixed, easily identifiable logo should occupy a set position on a magazine cover” (Jobling & Crowley 1996:233). The design adopted for this set almost falls off the page, and seems to reflect the disjointed nature of South African society. It challenges the myth of a unified, fixed Afrikaans identity. The first and last letters dominate the title, while the T and E are squashed in between, and perhaps the editors identify with those who feel squashed and marginalised within South African society.



Figure 19: Set three of the *Stet* covers. It comprises number 3(1), February 1985; number 3(2), June 1985; and number 3(3&4), a double issue, February 1986 (personal collection).

Again the mast mottos reflect issues that the editors were focussing on. The cover of number 3(2) says *uitgegee sonder steun van die RGN* ("published without support from the RGN ["Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing", the Human Sciences Research Council]). *Stet* was independent, and therefore could publish material without pre-censorship from its sponsors. The literary magazines of the time were partly sponsored by the HSRC. Number 3(3&4) (the first of three double issues, *dubbelSTET*) appeared eight months later, and a personal retort is placed as mast motto: *julle't mos almal gedink ons is weg, nè. Hier's ons weer!* ("all of you no doubt thought we were gone. Well, here we are again!"). But this cover uses the line drawing of a smoking bicyclist (by Ian Bekker) and the huge word *sug* ("sigh") to indicate that, perhaps, the editors were themselves relieved and somewhat surprised to see another issue. The despondent sigh and stationary bicyclist may also indicate that the editors were waiting on change in South Africa, but realising that it would be slow to come. At this time (in 1986) the country was still embroiled in a partial state of emergency, which seemingly would not be lifted soon.

The first two covers in this set are dominated by the dark images which do not float in white space as in the previous set. The oversized lettering on the last cover also eliminates much of the navigateable white space, seemingly indicating that the margins for free movement had closed with the declaration of the state of emergency. All subversive actions would now be more dangerous as the state attempted to resist uprisings by dissident South Africans. This view is reinforced by the disjointed and squashed mast-head; liberal South Africans were marginalised along with the black population.

#### 4.4.3.1 Analysis of the cover of number 3(1)

This preoccupation with marginalisation is evident on the cover of number 3(1) (see Figure 20), and the editors' inherent solidarity with those on the outskirts of society is why this cover is sampled for analysis.

The change in masthead retains the formal placement of the previous design in the top right-hand corner. The publishing information is stark and formalised in a combination of thin sans-serif and bulky semi-serif type. The mast itself is deconstructed into separate letters in different fonts that seem to coincidentally form the word *Stet*. On this cover, as on the entire set, the list of contributors is rotated and placed in the top left-hand corner, riding piggy-back on the random binding element, a series of labelled



Figure 20: Cover of *Stet* number 3(1), February 1985 (personal collection).

domesticated boars. Again, the placement of these random images is jarring on the eye. These are naturalistic renderings of specific animals and again seem to mock empirical reason, making rationalisation seem trivial and random. This is probably also a reflection on the militarised state which attempted to substantiate its violent action with self-serving rationalisation. Semiotically, boars or pigs are often linked to brutal, authoritarian policemen. In this sense, the boars may be personifications of the Security Council and the state.

The cover image comprises a smoking bride, which is a disconcerting image: the combination of virginal white, lace and tiara looks defiled because of the cigarette in her hand. The bride stares into the camera, and actively smokes the cigarette; this is not a sexy prop. She seems to be making a mockery of her dress and veil. The image dominates the cover, and there is no escaping her piercing gaze. In the same way that her unusual behaviour subverts the idea of a wedding, the placement of this image on the cover of the magazine subverts the idea of decorum, of what a 'respectable' publication should look like. The image is by Ivan Muller, and forms part of a photographic essay placed in the content, a series of images of the decrepit inhabitants of Fairview in Johannesburg. He took the images between June 1983 and December 1984, and it is a memorial of their trying existence. At the time of printing in 1985, their homes were deserted and in the process of being demolished. A note in the content explains the bride's (Jacoba le Roux, who worked at the CNA) discontent: the wedding was called off a month before and this was her chance to pose in the outfit.

In appropriating the image of a so-called white-trash bride, the editors are showing solidarity with another outsider, another outcast in white South African society. In a sense, the editors are drawing a firm line between their aim (to be read and to realign their Afrikaansness) and the aim of the bride (to be respected and acknowledged) vis-à-vis the ruling class, the "power-bloc" of Stuart Hall (in Storey 1996:77). According to Storey and Hall, the power-bloc is a "shifting alliance of the forces of domination, expressed in and through institutions such as the media, the culture industries, government, the educational system etc." (Storey 1996:77). Just as this bride would never have been acknowledged in the (government-restricted) popular media of 1980s South Africa, *Stet* was swept under the rug of obscurity. It seems that, at this stage, the editors of *Stet* also felt voiceless and ignored by the establishment.



By exposing (and providing proof of) impoverished white South Africans, the editors subvert the Barthesian myth of the superior white race as expounded by the establishment. The photograph has a documentary feel to it, and is evocative of the historical concern that documentary photography has with illuminating injustice in the sense that the camera “became a tool for providing authentic visual evidence of social inequities, in particular those relating to industrialisation and urbanisation” (Rosenblum 1997:384). This documentary style embraces two goals, according to Rosenblum (1997:384): “the depiction of a verifiable social fact and the evocation of empathy with the individuals concerned”. In this instance, the editors seem to not only invoke empathy with the impoverished bride, they also appropriate her as one of them, as part of the struggle against apartheid and its related injustices. With this cover, the magazine exposes the fact that not only the black population were marginalised by the state.

The documentary style of the cover is echoed in the content where two topical articles appear. The first article in this number is titled *SWAPO en die wit seun* (“SWAPO and the white boy”), and is written by Anton Lubowski, according to *Stet* the first white member of SWAPO, which again stresses *Stet*’s concern with anti-establishment contributions aimed at widening Afrikaner’s frames of reference. Lubowski is yet another Afrikaner who is disowned by society. He was assassinated in the run-up to the first democratic elections in South West Africa (now Namibia).

Also in the number is a long article that prints passages from Breyten Breytenbach’s book *Seisoen in die paradys* that were omitted in the Afrikaans version by Perskor due to censorship, but remained in the version published in the Netherlands by Meulenhoff. *Stet* suggested that readers could cut and paste these omitted sections in their Afrikaans copies of the book. This subverts the sterile environment that the state wanted to create for its white inhabitants. The editors seem to link the marginalised bride with the marginalised writer who is sidelined by censorship.

This cover is clearly concerned with those inhabiting spaces in the Afrikaans paradigm who are ignored by the establishment. And, in subversive ways, the editors expose these individuals and claim them as South Africans. Subversively, they relegate the power-bloc, the state, as the personification of a pig, a monster, and thereby they provide a sense of humanity to the bride. This idea of the monstrous is embraced in the next set of



covers, in which the monstrous outsider also claims prominence.

#### 4.4.4 Set four: Monstrous Trauma Tea

This set (see Figure 21) seems to invoke the concept of the monstrous outsider, of the Afrikaans South African who needs to peer closely at the self and peel off layers of inhumanity. This is evident in the first place by the placing of artwork that exposes the South African body politic as one of pain and distortion. The abstract rotated face on the cover of number 4(1&2) is disconcerting, especially with the linear zigzag line dissecting the organic face, which stares in amazement at the reader. It is by acclaimed South African artist Christo Coetzee,<sup>6</sup> who was known for a non-conformist stance to art and art making. By placing his work on the cover of their magazine, the editors of *Stet* show solidarity with Coetzee's search for 'truth' in art and his stance as an outsider who was often ridiculed by the public and the art world.



Figure 21: Set four of the *Stet* covers. It comprises number 4(1&2), a double issue, May 1986; number 4(3), March 1987; and number 4(4), August 1987 (personal collection).

One of the figures from the *Butcher Boys* (1985/1986), arguably the best-known sculpture by Jane Alexander (b 1959), is used on number 4(4), and is printed in a muted lilac, suitably enhancing the off-putting monstrous quality of this visual statement. The use of this controversial artwork (by a liberal English artist) on the cover of a liberal Afrikaans

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6 Johannesburg-born Coetzee (1929–2000) examined destruction as a form of construction during the 1970s, and, by the 1980s, engaged in a “surreal dialogue on the nature of perception” in his work (Berman 1994:101).

publication is further indicative of the subversive stance that the editors of *Stet* took. In the first place, it is subversive of them to align themselves with an English artist, as the Afrikaans establishment viewed the English in almost as threatening a manner as they did the so-called *Swart Gevaar*, the 'Black Peril'. But even more subversive is the choice of artwork. The *Butcher Boys* is now seen as one of the most prominent anti-apartheid sculptures of the time: "In their woundedness and their bestiality, [the *Butcher Boys*] are personifications of the appallingly spiralling violence, the necklace killings, the civil war, the police brutality, the child detentions, the burnings and lootings of South Africa in the 1980s" (Powell 2007:[sp]).<sup>7</sup>

In this set the masthead is adapted again, this time the design (again by Tienie du Plessis) is abstracted to near illegibility, printed in two colours. After this the mast motto disappears until a single recurrence on the cover of number 6(1&2). The abstraction of the masthead may serve several functions. It is bold, and the blocks of colour are subtly shifted, almost maladjusted, reflecting the maladjusted nature of South African society. It evokes a visually avant-garde connotation; the content of the magazine was ideologically avant-garde and therefore the designer attempted to make the magazine itself seem visually avant-garde. By adapting the masthead to more of a graphic element than a formal element, the editors are seemingly attempting to align themselves with the avant-garde, the advance guard of society. In showing solidarity with the avant-garde, they are, in a Greenbergian sense, finding a path "along which it would be possible to keep culture moving in the midst of ideological confusion and violence" (Greenberg 1986:8). The typeface is 'dehumanised' in the sense that it appears not to be a typeface but rather blocks of colour, brutally disjointed. This may reflect the state of brutality evident in South African society at the time, the malevolent and dehumanising militarised state that still attempted to control its inhabitants.

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7 Johannesburg-born Jane Alexander has written: "My work had always been influenced by the political and social character of South Africa. My themes are drawn from the relationship of individuals to hierarchies and the presence of aggression, violence, victimisation, power and subservience, and from the paradoxical relationships of these conditions to each other" (Williamson & Jamal 2007:[sp]). She completed this artwork while busy with her Master's degree at the University of Witwatersrand, and the editors presumably made contact with her through this institution where they were also active.

The shifting of the masthead to the right directs the viewer's gaze off the page, almost as an invitation to open the magazine. It also supports the sense of being pulled along in a maelstrom of violence and being unable to counter it. This maelstrom was enforced by a declaration of a national state of emergency on 12 June 1986. The state of emergency remained in place until 2 February 1990, and during this time "the state used massive force to crush the revolt. More than twenty thousand people were detained" (Giliomee 2003:614).

The first and last cover in this set employ a piercing gaze directed at the viewer, as if there is no escaping from the monstrous quality of South African life. In contrast to this, the second cover has no focal point and is, rather, the visualisation of the violent maelstrom that overtook South Africa during this time.

#### *4.4.4.1 Analysis of the cover of number 4(3)*

In contrast to the monumentality of covers 4(1&2) and 4(4), the cover of number 4(3) (see Figure 22) seems frivolous at first glance. It reads as a random cacophony of images and text with little coherence to the design. However, once one takes a closer look at the collection of images and found text it makes for fascinating and fairly cohesive reading. The veiled subversiveness of this number makes this an important cover to analyse. As in *OZ*, the editors used "plundered images ... familiar icons and slogans, often taken from advertising or the mass media, [and] subverted [these] by juxtaposition or the addition of speech balloons" (Jobling & Crowley 1996:234).

The masthead and publishing information is formally placed on the top of the page, while the title is deconstructed to a graphic image, a block of colour, rather than readably spelling out the word *stet*. The monumental lettering contrasts with the detailed collection of random elements below. The random elements may be read as a narrative, a brochure of Afrikaansness in the South Africa of 1987. The eye is drawn to the title of the tale: *Langs die pad van Suid-Afrika* ("Along the South African road"), written in cursive lettering reminiscent of the titles of fairy tales. The brother and sister walking hand-in-hand reinforce this reading ... they are wandering along with bonnet and shoulder bag, blissfully unaware of anything other than the sterile version of South African life that has apparently been forced on them by their parents. This is part of the mythic ideology



Figure 22: Cover of *Stet* number 4(3), March 1987 (personal collection).

of Afrikaansness that the editors wish to expose. Indeed, one of the bastions of apartheid ideology was its ability to rewrite truth, and to remove from South Africans the power of writing their own narrative. “Apartheid’s ‘power of writing’ served to isolate, to discredit, to destroy, to rewrite everything and everyone to serve a political end” (Gready 1993:492). By creating a visual story of life in South Africa in 1987, the editors were reclaiming their version of the truth.

Although the story begins with the unthreatening visualisation of Afrikaansness as juvenile and oblivious, the two children are surrounded by icons of the struggle against apartheid: an assault rifle and a male lion with the label *MKUMAZI*. The *MK* is far more clear than the *UMAZI*, and both this and the lion and weapon are references to the ANC, the banned political party, and its armed wing *MK* (Umkhonto we Sizwe, “Spear



of the Nation"). MK was illegally participating in an armed struggle against apartheid, and of course, mention of banned political parties was a prisonable offence against the state. This is why Tienie du Plessis had to resort to "hiding" the reference while expressing solidarity with the movement. Below these icons is placed a diagrammatic icon in solid black of a worker on a motorised vehicle, seemingly transporting boxes. It is placed on an ethnic border. This may be read as a reference to the black migratory workers in South Africa, bending to the will of their white masters while straining to maintain their cultural heritage.

This reference to a 'black mass' may be linked to the elephants in the quote below: the black population is steadfast as the group of elephants, but they are also strong: "where from time to time they stood out like great statues of basalt against the blue sky". This quote is by Sir William Cornwallis Harris (1807–1848), a Briton who became an engineer in the Indian Army. He earned early renown by "writing a lively account of a hunting expedition which he led ... into the interior of southern Africa in 1836–1837" (Sir William ... [sa]). By linking a "great white hunter" to the icons of the struggle against apartheid, the editors seem to suggest that the black South African population are treated as animals were in the days of Cornwallis Harris. They are persecuted and even killed indiscriminately as trophies or nuisances in the way that animals were killed during colonialism. The extract printed on this cover is presumed to be from Cornwallis Harris' account, published in Bombay in 1838, in which Cornwallis Harris also commentated on the early stages of the 'Great Trek' (1838).

Sombre as these references may be, the snarling (rather than typically smiling) chameleon below says "HOWZIT", hello in colloquial South African parlance. Below the lime-green chameleon the reader finds an abstract rendering, possibly of a chicken.

The central panel, below the image of the lion, seems to be an extract from an academic work, with the publishing information below. The title of the work is *Rasse en rassevermenging* ("Race and the mixing of races"), a central factor that determined the neurotic behaviour of the Afrikaner establishment. It was published in 1942 by the state-sponsored Nasionale Pers in their Tweede Trek-Reeks ("Second-Trek Series", commemorating the centenary of the Great Trek into central South Africa by Afrikaner Boers). The excerpt is a typically obtuse reading of race relations by Afrikaner academics (a Dr Eloff

and his four doctoral colleagues), in this case about the so-called Baster Afrikaners (a mixed-race community). A poem by one of the Basters is placed on the cover:

*Dis jollie om 'n jonkman te wees,  
Dis jollie om 'n jonkman te wees,  
Toe ek 'n jonkman was het ek geld in my tas  
Maar nou is ek oud en gedaaan.*

*Dis beter om 'n witman te wees,  
Dis beter om 'n witman te wees,  
Dan "speul" ek self baas  
En het geld in my tas  
Dan bly ek vet en gesond.*

*Dis treurig om 'n baster te wees,  
Dis treurig om 'n baster te wees,  
Want iedereen het tog 'n skerp oog  
En al wat ek het is die stem.*

It is jolly to be a young man,  
It is jolly to be a young man,  
When I was a young man I had money in my pocket  
But now I am old and tired.

It is better to be a white man,  
It is better to be a white man,  
Then I call myself master  
And I have money in my pocket  
Then I stay fat and healthy.

It is sad to be of mixed-race,  
It is sad to be of mixed-race,  
Because everyone has a seeing eye  
And all I have is the vote<sup>8</sup>  
(my translation).

The subtitle of the book is *Die Boerevolk gesien van die standpunt van die rasseleer* ("The Boer people discussed from the viewpoint of the racial ladder"), a work in which the

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8 During the early parts of the twentieth century, coloured people in South Africa had the vote; this was to change later with the government's increasing focus on racial segregation.



white Afrikaner race is placed at the pinnacle of racial evolution, while darker-skinned races are placed down the ladder, with the black race, naturally, right at the bottom. It seems laughable now, but this was the entrenched wisdom of the time, and one of the principles used to justify apartheid, segregation, and separate education. As Giliomee (2003:470) writes, this ideology

started from the premise that black and coloured people were different, not because they were mostly abjectly poor but because they were racially different. The message that apartheid as a system conveyed, offensively and obscenely, was that black and coloured people were socially inferior, morally inadequate, intellectually underdeveloped and sexually unfit for intimate relationships.

To the right of this, Du Plessis places a satirical advertisement for Trauma Tea. This is a pastiche of the typical advertisements placed in mainstream consumer magazines for tea. Semiotically, connotations with tea advertisements invoke a sense of peace and tranquillity. Tea is typically something to be enjoyed, to calm one down. But here Du Plessis subverts this reading totally. The quaint teapot and steaming cup of tea are still present, but rather than a prim and proper housewife, a man with bulging biceps and strained neck is staring the teapot down. Rather than the inoffensive tag line associated with tea advertisements, there is the line *vir daardie vernietigende oomblikkies* (“for those destructive moments”). This is a reference to both the injustice of racial segregation and the prolonged Border War. The destructive character of the Trauma Tea advertisement is strengthened by the green mamba singing a tune that is the epitome of escapism: “Take me home ... country roads” with a giraffe peering on, oblivious of the danger.

In the bottom left corner is another random found image, part of a cartoon of a recruit saluting his superior officer. This is a clear reference to the Border War, against which many of the contributors of *Stet* were protesting. Tienie du Plessis subverts this image by adding a speech bubble in which the recruit clearly indicates the editors’ vehement dislike of the war and the armed forces:

*SERSANT-KOLONEL*  
*die “army” is kak! ...*  
*ek wil nie hier wees nie! ...*  
*kan ek nie maar vokof nie*

*ek soek nie hiêrdie oorlog nie ...  
Bombardier Kriek is die grootste poes in die army en ...*

SERGEANT-COLONEL  
the army is shit! ...  
I don't want to be here! ...  
can't I just fuck off,  
I don't want this war ...  
Bombardier Kriek is the biggest cunt in the army and ...  
(*my translation*).

The subversive tone employed by Tienie du Plessis demonstrates an antagonistic attitude towards the army. The informal lettering and lower-case text (and the crass language) gives the impression that this is written by a young man. Most of the recruits were 18 or 19, forced to participate in a war that had little resonance for them. As Giliomee (2003:593) comments: "It was far from a clearly defined struggle to defend the homeland. The government presented the Angolan war as one against a communist threat in the region, but the fact was that the battle zone lay more than three thousand kilometres beyond the South African border and the SWAPO fighters, at least, were fighting for their own land".

Next to this image is placed the word **RAIN** in bold font with the diagonal lines indicating rain falling, perhaps a cleansing rain? But the final image in this cover is the grainy image of a woman grimacing, and uttering a disclaimer: "But if it has worried you too much, I am sorry." *Stet* was attempting to convey a truth of the situation in South Africa, not the censored version that state-aligned newspapers published. This number includes an open letter to the State President P.W. Botha by renowned author André P Brink, written on 16 June 1986 (a decade after the Soweto riots), in which he demands an explanation for the declaration of the State of Emergency, knowing that he could be imprisoned for writing it.

This cover is successfully subversive because the combination of elements would all have been decipherable by the dissident viewer. It may be viewed as kitsch because, in combining the random elements, the viewer is able to draw on the precondition for kitsch, a matured cultural condition as described by Greenberg (1986). The "discoveries, acquisitions, and self-consciousness" (Greenberg 1986:12) of a matured cultural condi-

tion are appropriated by kitsch for its own ends. By appropriating signifiers of the myth of Afrikaans-ness (in the Barthesian sense, see Bignell 1997:22) and subverting them, making them seem laughable on the one hand and very serious on the other, the editors were subverting this myth of being an Afrikaner and, in doing so, exposing the inhuman nature of Afrikanerdom.

#### 4.4.5 Set five: Surreal white space

This set (see Figure 23) retains none of the playful references and quirky imagery of the previous sets. Its mood is stark and sombre, with no witty references to lighten the tone. By this time, it was clear to perceptive South Africans that South Africa was steering towards disaster. The state of emergency seemed endless and, for the editors of *Stet*, there was little to be frivolous about. “The deformed and stunted relations between human beings that were created under colonialism and exacerbated under what is loosely called apartheid have their psychic representation in a deformed and stunted inner life” (JM Coetzee, quoted in Williamson & Jamal 2007:[sp]). The covers in this set may, in other words, be understood as manifestations of the deeply maladjusted society.

This set sees another change in masthead. Rather than the bold deconstruction of type of the previous set, here the masthead is stark and uninviting. The full width of the page is utilised to create a masthead with letters that stretch across the white page. A sans-serif font with no apparent sense of character is suitably impersonal. The publishing

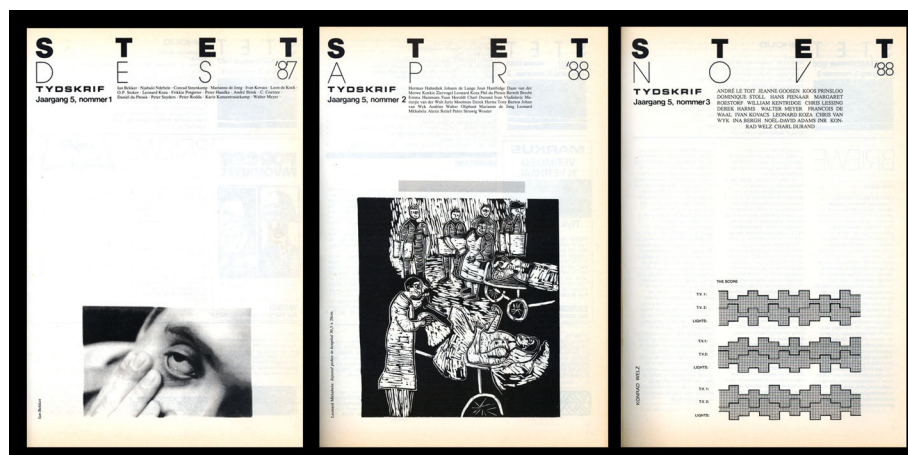


Figure 23: Set five of the *Stet* covers. It comprises number 5(1), December 1987; number 5(2), April 1988; and number 5(3), November 1988 (personal collection).

information is likewise spaced to include white space. Only the list of contributors is set in a semi-serif font, but again it is used as a rule to separate the text from the white blankness below.

The lino-cut by Leonard Mkhabela on number 5(2), and a graphic by Konrad Welz on 5(3) are placed with ample white negative space to intimidate the viewer and enforce the feeling of hopelessness and alienation. The graphic material is placed right at the bottom of the page, but does not float in the white space (in the sense of floating meaning). Instead, the graphic material inhabits the bottom part of the page, seemingly a manifestation of the low morale that South Africans were feeling. These are not covers that invite multiple readings and open endings. They are stark and hostile with an absence of presence that denotes confusion and scepticism.

Where previous covers seemed to be poking fun at reason and science, these covers seem to question the very existence of rational thought and the validity of science. The artwork by Konrad Welz at first seems completely random. It seems to be a graphic, scientific representation of lights and camera placement in, perhaps, a recording studio. This artwork may be viewed as a personification of a “frozen moment”, a recurring theme in Welz’s<sup>9</sup> work. Welz ([sa]:[sp]) has written about the analogue flux that is “converted to discrete, digital units” and has asked the question: “But so what? Isn’t this just a hollow semiotic, pseudo-intellectual game that erodes and denies the richness of experience and our relationship to the earth? Just another symptom of the artificiality of modern life.” His view seems to support the editors’ questioning view and self-reflection evident on these covers and the content of these numbers.

#### *4.4.5.1 Analysis of the cover of number 5(1)*

The use of white space is particularly effective on the cover of number 5(1) (see Figure 24), where a photograph by Ian Bekker confronts the viewer head-on. The image is

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9 Pretoria-born Konrad Welz (b 1967) studied electrical engineering and computer science and was later employed as a post-production sound-engineer at the South African Broadcasting Corporation. The graphic representation on this cover stems from his time as a sound engineer.

placed as low down on the page as possible, and the small size works more effectively in grabbing the attention than bleeding it off the page would have done. The photograph is a cropped image of a man pulling open his eye, as if he is forced to view something distasteful, and is reminiscent of the promotional photographs used to sell the seminal film *A clockwork orange* by Stanley Kubrick (1971).

The photograph is only of the distorted eye. All we see is the open eye and a portion of his fingers holding the eye open; the other elements that make up a human face are cropped off. Semiotically, this seems to indicate that this person can only view, but is unable to do anything but view. He cannot hear or speak or react to what he sees. However, he is not closing his eyes in helplessness, but forcing them open. With this image, the editors supposedly react to their inability to effectively change the paradigm

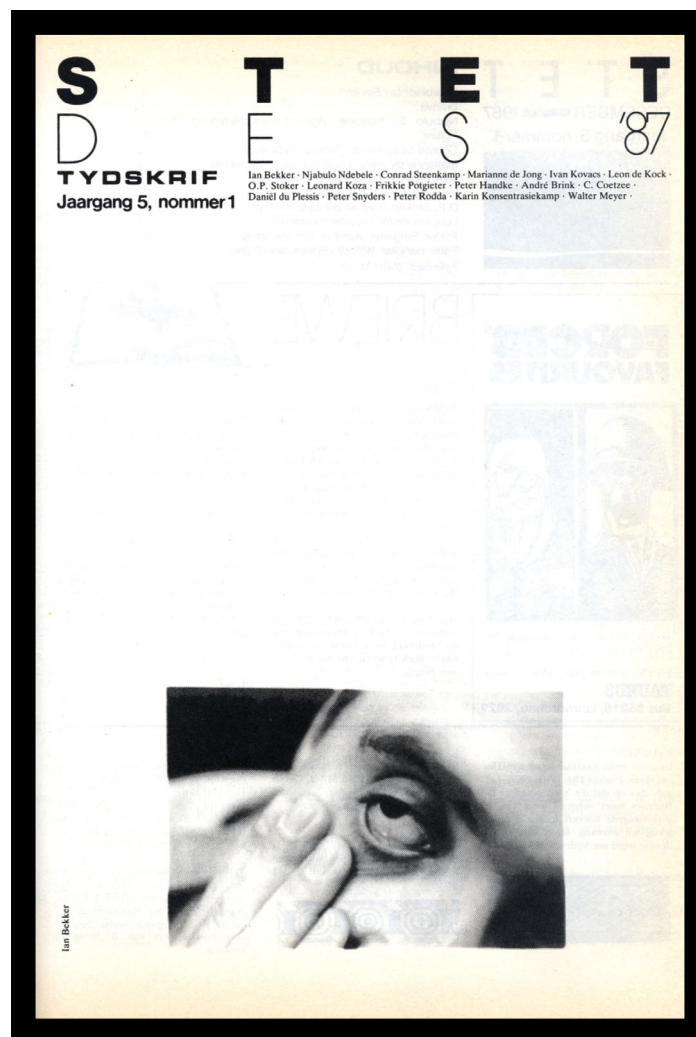


Figure 24: Cover of *Stet* number 5(1), December 1987 (personal collection).

in South Africa, but they also seem to indicate that they do, in fact, see; they are eye witnesses to the injustices and irrationalities of the time, and will continue to expose them. This may also be a reflection on truth construction in South Africa: South Africans who were silenced because the state held the monopoly on the written and spoken word. In this sense, this cover echoes the sentiments portrayed by the *Butcher Boy* figure by Alexander used on the cover of number 4(4). Both these covers have humanoid figures whose faces are distorted with their sensory organs removed: “it is only the searching ambivalent eyes that remain intact” (Powell 2007:[sp]). This is surely related to the profound pessimism of these times. The editors seem to indicate that they are mute and powerless to really promote change in South Africa. And, like Alexander’s *Butcher Boy*, this image is modified / distorted so that any identity is denied, rather than asserted (Powell 2007:[sp]).

The photograph by Bekker is reminiscent of avant-garde surrealist photography, where the camera was not recognized as a tool of vision and the photograph was not viewed as an image of the truth. Surrealist photographers did not rely on reasoned analysis or sober calculation, but rather saw reason as something that blocked the routes to the imagination and the (subconscious) truth. This reading would enrich this cover, as the photograph seems to intimate that there could be no truth as there was no reason in what was happening in the country. The editors may have concluded, in line with Gready’s (1993:492) thinking, that “[a]t the heart of the apartheid lie was the violence done to, and through, language and the written word. Meaning itself was rewritten ... distinctions between the criminal and the political became blurred”. In an article on prison writing, Gready argues that prisoners felt the need to write their histories, their version of the truth in order to counter the lie that was perpetuated by apartheid. “Prisoners write to restore a sense of self and world, to reclaim the ‘truth’ from the apartheid lie, to seek empowerment in an oppositional ‘power of writing’ by writing against the official text of imprisonment” (Gready 1993:489). But on this cover, the possibility of a truth is not even hinted at. Perhaps the editors were so despondent and pessimistic at this stage that they felt themselves to be perpetuating apartheid with their inability to facilitate real change. Therefore, they exposed themselves and their inabilities on this cover, seemingly saying that they cannot hide anything from the viewer, but that they could only stare the situation in the face and hope that the mere attempt would be enough.



The cover makes one think of a white padded cell in an insane asylum, and perhaps this is what the designer had in mind: a reflection of the insanity going on in the country. This sense of alienation is carried over into the final set of covers that have a singularly pessimistic atmosphere.

#### 4.4.6 Set six: Anatomy of the skeleton

The final set of *Stet* covers (see Figure 25) share a thematic focus on the imagery of skulls, death and dissection. The three covers all have a superficial likeness of a grimacing human skull evident in the composition of visual elements. As with sets three and five, this sobriety is exacerbated by the one-colour printing which makes the covers seem more severe. Printing in only black was probably not a conscious design decision: twenty months passed before the publication of number 6(1&2), so funds were hard to come by and perhaps the editors realised that they were in the final stretch of *Stet*. By 1990, the politics and dynamics of the country were changing for the better, and opposing war and apartheid was fast becoming redundant. Persons exiled or jailed under the Sabotage Act were released, the ANC was unbanned, and talks were openly taking place, principally with the ANC, in order to reform the country.

In recognition of the changes in the country, the title of the *little magazine* is adapted to *DIE NUWE STET* ("THE NEW *STET*"). Mention of the imminent 'New South Africa' was on most lips, hence the reference to the "new" *Stet*. With this, the final redesign of



Figure 25: Set six of the *Stet* covers. It comprises number 6(1&2), a double issue, July 1990; number 6(3), November 1990; and the final number 6(4), February 1991 (personal collection).

the masthead was made. Rather than a mast motto, the final two numbers, 6(3) and 6(4), have bulleted lists indicating particular contributions as attention-grabbers under the heading *in hierdie STET* ("in this *STET*").

The cover of number 6(1&2) combines a bird-of-prey with a bus to Tembisa in a skull-like design, while the final cover, 6(4) combines imagery by Tienie du Plessis and Afrikaans alternative author Ryk Hattingh to imply the potential of death. The truck and dissected human head, set against a tranquil bushveld background, is a very morbid image. The preoccupation with heads and human figures and sensory organs may be viewed as indicative of the end of reason, helplessness, and an incapability to understand what was going on. The appropriation of a human face combined with elements of commerce or industrialisation is reminiscent of the work by Austrian Dadaist Raoul Hausmann (1886–1971), specifically his *Tatlin at Home* (1920). These covers are reminiscent of the emergence of Dada that protested the atrocities that were occurring during World War I (Hunter [sa]). In a Dadaist sense, the human face is converted to a machine, without identity, removed from humanistic endeavours. This may have been a reflection on technology and war in the increasingly militarised South African context.

All three covers in this set have the graphics placed to the centre right of the page, drawing the eye relentlessly toward the almost nihilistic imagery.

#### 4.4.6.1 Analysis of the cover of number 6(3)

The pessimistic vein is suitably exhibited by the visual image by Anton Kannemeyer on cover 6(3) (see Figure 26). It is sampled for analysis because of the striking combination of diagrams on this cover. The eye is drawn to the centre of the image, where a naturalistic rendering of a skull, complete with annotation, faces right. The skull is presumably that of an antelope or other long-snouted herbivore, viewed from the top. The teeth of the bottom jaw are visible, as is the brain case. It is probably a found image that has been photostatted to create a distressed look reminiscent of nineteenth-century academic illustrations. The diagonal lines draw the eye upward and downward to the images bound in semi-circles that give the whole an iconic, almost religious, feeling.



Figure 26: Cover of *Stet* number 6(3), November 1990 (Personal collection).

The upper semi-circle contains the head of a figure wearing a gas mask and hooded head covering. The glasses of the gas mask are brilliantly white without even the suggestion of eyes or a human presence. This confirms the reading that all the covers in this set are without identity; all human characteristics are removed from these covers, reinforcing the feeling of alienation that the editors seemingly felt. The masked menace has a speech bubble with the typical sign of lightning, of danger and destruction. The semi-circle is filled with a seemingly letter-set-filled visualisation of a globe seen from above. The radiating longitudinal lines focus the attention of the reader on the vacant figure, while the two cursive filigree-like border points give balance to the semi-circle. The figure seems to be peering down at the skull, perhaps reflecting on the destruction it has just wrought on the now-dead living creature. This may be a reflection of warfare in the World War I, when the widespread use of gas as killing agent was used. The conno-

tation with the World War creates a tension in the South African militarised context; the state of emergency had just been lifted (in February 1990), but the country was still reeling from the effects thereof.

From below, two barking and snarling wolves are trying to break the bounds of the lower semi-circle; they are gazing intently at the skull. This semi-circle is filled in the same halftone lettraset pattern as the one above, though without the radiating globe superimposed on it. Semiotically, wolves are indicative of the malevolent outsider, typically deemed a threat to society. To the lower right of the cover are more diagonal lines as paraphernalia of the skull in the centre. The lines focus on a distorted blotch in the lower right corner of the page. To the left of this a name in distorted typewriter typeface appears: *j.dog*, the *nom de plume* of Anton Kannemeyer. This is probably one of the first works of Anton Kannemeyer to be published, and as his *nom de plume* Joe Dog was not yet eponymous with this now famous graphic artist, his real name is also placed on the cover.<sup>10</sup>

Because of the level of detailing in the image, the masthead and publishing information is suitably austere. The title is set in a simple sans-serif typeface with uniformly bold lettering. Above the title is the newly adapted masthead *die nuwe* ("the new") in a small serif font. The publishing information is set in a combination of these fonts. The month and year is set in the serif with extended kerning to widen the text so that this and the issue information form a somewhat uncomfortable block. It looks uncomfortable because it is set rather low, almost infringing on the image by Kannemeyer.

The list of contributors is simply left-aligned and does not integrate with the design of the cover. In the bottom left corner is the attention-grabbing bulleted list with particular contributions. This also seems merely pasted down, and does little to enhance the design of the cover. Semiotically, this may be a further method of alienating the visual elements on the cover from one another and from the reader.

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10 The content of this number includes one of the first comix by Cape Town-born Kannemeyer (b 1967), soon to become known for his work with the irreverent *Bitterkomix*.



This cover reflects the situation in South Africa, rather than subverting it. It may reflect the realisation of the editors that *Stet* was coming to the end of its life-span. By this time, the editors had subverted all the myths of Afrikaansness that they could think of. Now, they merely reflected the *status quo*. But they do not seem hopeful of imminent change in South Africa. Rather, they seem to predict a morbid and disastrous South Africa in which reason would finally be exposed as a complete lie, regardless of the rationalistic arguments made for and against apartheid and war. In a sense, the editors do not proclaim a utopia, but “soberly [examine] in the terms of history and of cause and effect the antecedents, justifications and functions of the forms that lie at the heart of every society” (Greenberg 1986:7).

#### 4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the covers of *Stet* collectively, and focussed on the analysis of a purposive sample which has uncovered some of the ways in which Tienie du Plessis voiced personal dissent by proclaiming on the cover of each issue of *Stet* the issues that these Afrikaners were grappling with.

The covers of *Stet* display a variety of design and subversive elements, though not all the covers are equally successful in exhibiting the subversive stance that the editors proclaimed on the first cover. This hints at the *little magazine* quality of small-scale production and small-scale distribution. It was, one has to remember, a small publication made possible by the dedication of a small group of like-minded Afrikaners who felt the need to create a mouthpiece for their particular dissent.

According to Kitch (in Johnson 2002:[sp]), “it’s important in studying imagery to ‘see’ not only within the image, but also ‘around’ it, in terms of its cultural, institutional, political, and historical context”. This chapter has aimed to give a contextual reading of the covers of *Stet*, and has indicated that, though the editors were pushing their own agenda, they were also attempting to change an unjust system that attempted the mythification of the Afrikaner into a superior race, justifying apartheid as rational ideology, and promoting war and destruction. Gready (1993:493) encapsulates the overreaching attempt of the editors of *Stet*: “The ‘higher truth’ resides not so much in proclaiming the ‘truth’ as in contesting the lie, in constructing an oppositional ‘power of writing’”.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One introduced the background and aims of this study. *Stet* was chosen as the focus of this study because its editors attempted a redefinition of Afrikaansness rather than denying their Afrikaans identity at a time when the notion of being Afrikaans was condemned both internationally and by many black and English South Africans. This chapter also sketched the theoretical framework of the study as informed by semiotic visual analysis. The methodological framework of the dissertation was delineated as both an exploration of the context and circumstance from which the *little magazine Stet* emerged in South Africa and a semiotic analysis of the covers of *Stet*.

Chapter Two focused on the genre of the *little magazine* and the South African publishing environment, particularly stressing the role that the state and establishment played in inhibiting freedom of thought through censorship and the banning of persons and publications. The chapter also investigated particular modes through which Afrikaans authors sought to subvert the bounds placed on them by publishing alternative material in Afrikaans *little magazines*. It indicated that, initially, Afrikaans *little magazines* were occupied with language and Afrikaans literature, but that they gained a politically subversive voice in the 1980s.

Chapter Three was concerned with subversion that emanated from Afrikaans South Africans. It indicated that, though dissident Afrikaners were marginalised and distrusted by both the state and other freedom movements, they established various subversive avenues through which they could voice their disaffection with the *status quo*. The underlying assumption of this chapter was that all Afrikaans South Africans were not necessarily uncritical of apartheid and its related atrocities. Rather, through politically motivated avenues, they publicly attempted to expose apartheid and the traditional Afrikaner identity as myths constructed by the state. The chapter concluded by narrat-

ing the founding of *Stet* as anti-establishment periodical that aimed to redefine Afrikaansness.

Chapter Four unraveled and exposed the subversive stance that the editors of *Stet* proclaimed on the covers of their periodical. Through a semiotic analysis, the covers were discussed in defined sets, and an in-depth analysis of one cover from each set was made, discussing the various design elements and their subversive meanings. These subversive elements aimed to ridicule apartheid and its related ideologies. The analysis exposed both the light-hearted and serious stance the editors took in attempting to reclaim the written word, which was monopolised and controlled by the apartheid state. The chapter demonstrated that the editors of *Stet* realised that the act of criticising inhuman ideologies and exposing the constructed myth of white superiority, no matter how futile it seemed at times, was paramount to reevaluating their Afrikaner identity.

## 5.2 CONTRIBUTION OF STUDY

The main assumption that informed this study was that it is harmful to regard all white South Africans as racist bigots who perpetuated apartheid and were violent and aggressive. By focussing on a liberal, white Afrikaans tendency that opposed the traditional ideologies of Afrikaansness and apartheid, this study hopes to contribute to the post-democratic discourse on Afrikaansness, indicating that a re-evaluation of Afrikaansness was already taking place before the demise of apartheid, and that there was relatively substantial resistance to apartheid from within Afrikaner ranks. This contributes to a reevaluation of the predominant post-democratic historical analysis of apartheid that discounts tensions “within white South Africa, or within black South Africa” (Waddy 2004:64).

In addition, this study contributed to the semiotic discourse on South African resistance graphics during the apartheid years. The source of these subversive graphics, the *little magazine Stet*, is not now freely available for analysis. Because of the genre, *Stet* and the other *little magazines* mentioned in this study had very limited print runs and, speaking from personal experience in collecting *little magazines*, it seems that these publications are now extremely difficult to locate and acquire. The author hopes that this dissertation may introduce the *little magazine* as subversive genre to a generation of South Afri-

cans that are sometimes ignorant of print-based subversive avenues or any but the most publicised anti-apartheid movements.

Also, this study has contributed an in-depth semiotic and contextual analysis of *Stet* to the growing body of research on South African visual culture during the tumultuous pre-democracy period. Furthermore, by reconstructing the publishing history of *Stet* and positioning its oppositional and subversive stance, this study may contribute to the proposed project of the South African Book History Group which aims to fill gaps in “existing book history scholarship” by detailing “the historical development of the local publishing industry” (Venter 2007:[sp]).

### 5.3 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Since the emphasis of the dissertation falls on the covers of *Stet*, the content of the periodical was not investigated in-depth. The content of *Stet* included graphics as well as text, and doubtless these were also instrumental in proclaiming disaffection. The literary merit of the text in *Stet* was not considered at all, which may be an important factor as the overriding reason for publishing *Stet* was the attempt to publish literary material that was rejected at establishment periodicals and publishing houses.

The length of this dissertation prevented the author from investigating other Afrikaans *little magazines* that may demonstrate similar subversive stances. In fact, the entire output of South African *little magazines* in languages other than Afrikaans is disregarded, as the study focuses on Afrikaner dissidence.

### 5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are three areas, specifically, that are the natural extension of this study that all include the broadening of the stated limitations. Firstly, the content of *Stet* may be studied in terms of both literary quality and the graphics placed therein. By examining the content of the magazine, the concerns identified by the semiotic analysis of the covers may be substantiated and strengthened. In addition, other concerns and modes of subversion may be identified.

Secondly, the study of subversion may be broadened to include other anti-establishment periodicals with literary content published during this time in South Africa in Afrikaans, English, and the indigenous South African languages. This will provide for a more nuanced interpretation of South African dissent, rather than the focus on Afrikaans identity. An arbitrary list of relevant publications would include *Donga* and *Inspan* (1976–1978); *Ophir* (1967–1976); *The Purple Renoster* (1956–1972); *The Classic* (1963–1971); *New Classic* (1975–1978); *New Coin* (1965– ); *Kol* (1968–1969); *Bolt* (1970–1975); *Snarl* (1974–1977) and *Staffrider* (1978–1993).

Thirdly, the subversive stance of the Afrikaans *little magazine* may be compared to the avant-garde periodical (as described by Heller 2003) in an international context. Heller has published a fascinating book on the subject of the avant-garde periodical, identifying a historical framework and primary concerns, and incorporating *Stet* into this canon of international anti-establishment periodicals will make a significant study, especially since Heller focuses on Eurocentric periodicals.

## 5.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In a White Paper published by the South African Department of Defense in 1977, the threat by those opposing the dominant ideologies of the day was spelled out. It stated that “South Africa faced a ‘total onslaught’ on virtually every area of society. Threats could only be countered by a ‘total strategy’ against subversive elements” (Giliomee 2003:588). These subversive elements included Afrikaners who were fighting against the traditional views of what constitutes an Afrikaner and the Afrikaans South African’s position in society. The editors of *Stet* were sufficiently disillusioned with the apartheid state to risk, at the very least, ridicule, and probable ostracisation in an attempt to redefine their Afrikaansness in order to create an Afrikaans identity that was compatible with a democratic dispensation in South Africa. In today’s turbulent environment of Afrikanerdom that protests against cultural marginalisation, it is important to look back at how Afrikaners had to fight for the freedom of self-expression. We should not disregard the advances that have been made, nor hark back to a dispensation under which a myth of Afrikaner superiority was created.

By exploring the visual particularities of a specific mode of graphic subversion, this study has contributed to the discourse on design and social awareness/responsibility. It hopes to indicate once again that the visual image has power, and that an individual who engages in the design of visual material may make a concrete contribution in the dismantling and challenging of the *status quo*.



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