

# Imagi(ni)ng ‘alternativity’: *Loslyf*, mainstream Afrikaans pornography and post-apartheid Afrikaner identity

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## ABSTRACT

At the time of its launch in June 1995, *Loslyf* was the first and only Afrikaans pornographic magazine in South Africa. Editor Ryk Hattingh was the primary creative force behind the magazine for the first year of its publication. During this time, *Loslyf* contributed towards the broader project of democratic expression in an expanding South African visual economy, as a simultaneously well considered and underrated (at the time of its publication) cultural product. As a powerful contributor to an Afrikaans imaginary (and a representation of a new Afrikaner imaging) emerging at a time of political renewal, *Loslyf* provides a glimpse into the desires, tensions and tastes of and for an imagined community potentially still shaped by a past ruled by censorship. The magazine can be seen as an example of an attempt at reinvesting the prescriptive and seemingly generic genre of pornography with cultural specificity and political content, with a view to making this genre more interesting and relevant, alongside an attempt to imbue stifling visualisations of Afrikaner/Afrikaans identity with the same characteristics. Whilst *Loslyf* succeeded in fracturing the “simulacrum” of pornographic representation, it also demonstrated that an image of this kind of “alternativity” is difficult to sustain.

**Keywords:** Pornography, censorship, South Africa, media history, visual studies, negotiation of post-apartheid identity.

## Introduction

The South African media sphere of Afrikaans mainstream sexual and pornographic material was virgin territory, until *Loslyf* pierced this innocence in June 1995 (Figure 1). In the mid-1990s, a period in South Africa characterised by political transition and the unofficial termination of stifling state censorship laws, the launch of *Loslyf*



FIGURE N<sup>o</sup> 1

Cover of the inaugural publication of *Loslyf*, June 1995.

by JT Publications appeared an overdue symbolic celebration of an ability to express and imagine through this type of publication – the first and, at the time, only Afrikaans pornography magazine. Political scientist, Thomas Blaser (2012:9), asserts that ‘particularly in times of vast transitions, such as the movement away

from apartheid to democracy, our social imaginary is transformed as a new moral order emerges'. It is at such moments of change that, as anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff (2005:35) suggest, an emphasis falls on a 'mode of citizenship which aspires to be global even as it registers a vague sense of national belonging.' *Loslyf*, as mass media cultural product, appears to be an example of a creative project that reflects global modes of pornographic representation and imagination, but does so in a culturally specific, Afrikaans vernacular that speaks of, and speaks to, new formulations for the expression of such a 'national belonging'.

Ryk Hattingh (2013a), the avant-garde Afrikaans writer and publisher and first editor of *Loslyf*, between June 1995 and May 1996, describes the period in which *Loslyf* emerged:

Those were strange times indeed. The old order was in its death throes and the new one was being born with great enthusiasm and idealism. There was a lot to catch up on because the country had been isolated from the rest of the world for so long. There was a kind of euphoria in the country; promises of unity and a myth of a rainbow nation filled people with excessive idealism.

It seems that in these 'strange times' the idealism associated with the notion of inclusivity and the 'promises of unity' were tied to a simultaneous troubling of cultural definition and identification. *Loslyf*, as sex magazine, illustrates the aggravation of such divisions insofar as pornography tends to be characterised by its transgression of social and cultural standards (Kipnis 2006:124). The publication of *Loslyf* indicates an implicit understanding that this kind of sexual representation would be perceived as alternative, precisely because it was "pornographic", and thus, at least in the popular consciousness, "transgressive" and "other" to all that came before. Hattingh (2012) describes the laissez-faire attitude of the time:

The Nigerians took over the Johannesburg cocaine market from the Israelis and suddenly democracy in all its beauty and terror descended on South African society. At this stage a new regime seemed inevitable and the *ancient regime* was over. It seemed that everybody wanted to gain as much ground as possible before the new government would come into complete power with new rules and regulations. It was almost as though everyone could suddenly breathe for the first time.

In a post-censorship media context, it would seem that a pornographic mode of sexual expression in Afrikaans was a necessary rite of passage towards a legitimised inclusion in a democratic visual economy.





FIGURE N<sup>o</sup> 2

First editor's letter in *Loslyf*, June 1995.

To an embryonic post-apartheid, post-nationalist, and even postmodern, Afrikaner cultural identity and Afrikaner cultural projects, possibilities for the acknowledgement of fragmented and multiple identities were enabled, characterised by fractures of

1. Celebrated Afrikaner author and politician from the 1920s and 1930s, CJ Langenhoven (in Sonderling 1994:101), is known to have said that, 'there is, from an early age, implanted in every young [Afrikaans] boy and girl, a feeling of shame'. This comment is taken from a 1930 debate in the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Burger* in the weekly column *Aan stille waters* (By quiet waters) by Langenhoven. This debate was between him and Dr FCL Bosman regarding the acceptability of the publication of a book *Skakels van die ketting* (Links of the chain) by P de V Pienaar, which tells the story of an Afrikaner farm boy who leaves life on the farm to study in Johannesburg, where he enters a relationship with a prostitute with whom he later has a child. Dr Bosman reviewed the book in *Die Huisgenoot*, deeming it as beneficial for society and courageous on the part of the author, praising the naturalism with which the story is told. In opposition to this view, Langenhoven attacked both the review and Dr Bosman, but not the book, as he had not read it (Sonderling 1994:100). The ensuing polemic between Langenhoven and Bosman is thought to be the earliest recorded debate on pornography in Afrikaner society (Sonderling 1994:98). The roots of the conservative state-endorsed representation of an Afrikaner view of the sexual and its approved articulation amongst Afrikaners is summarised in this debate, in which Langenhoven further states that any discussion or reference to sex is 'an un-Afrikaans, anti-Afrikaans, modern teaching they [Afrikaans speakers] have never heard of' (in Sonderling 1994:100).

2. In pornographic photography the images of sex, the superficial reality as portrayed by its representations, appears to be all that can be possessed and accessed; Žižek (1977:177) locates the façade of pornography in its pretence 'to "show everything"'. Pornographic photography consequently becomes only what it superficially portrays to the viewer, while simultaneously signifying all it proposes to reflect. Annette Kuhn (1995:275) comments on the superficiality of pornography, 'Pornographic images participate in photography's more general project of privileging the visible, of equating visibility with truth. But porn inflects this concern with its own ruling

the self and traces of the other, a sense of humour, parody and an inclusion of irony and satire. The emphasis falls on more empowered individuals who are mature enough to make their own decisions away from patronising guidance. Hattingh (*Loslyf* June 1995:5) says in his first editor's letter (Figure 2):

*Loslyf* is a magazine for Afrikaans-speaking adults who feel themselves part of randy humanity, people who want to see their sexual desires in print and not only mumble about them in bars and around the braai. *Loslyf* is not a magazine for moralists, guardians of morality, or radical spoilsports – there is enough reading material for them and we don't begrudge them that.

The lived experience of Afrikaners under apartheid rule was, however, arguably more diverse and fractured than I seem to acknowledge or that appears when looking at the popular culture and print media of the day (Nash 2000:349), but this is the exact point of contention. In attempting to control the sphere of representation, the government effectively created a skewed visual archive, which inevitably leads to a flattened remembrance of identity politics under apartheid. *Loslyf*, as cultural artefact, plays on this "flattened remembrance", resulting in views of the magazine as "transgressive" and "alternative" to normative conceptions and representations of Afrikaner cultural identity.

At the time of its launch, *Loslyf* was intended, from the editor's side at least, to be original in the way in which pornographic content was juxtaposed with writing in Afrikaans, a language formerly associated with morality and piousness.<sup>1</sup> Apart from this, the content of the magazine diverges from what is accepted as "traditional" in mainstream pornographic publications.<sup>2</sup> *Loslyf* is therefore ostensibly finely balanced on the edge between mainstream conformist pornography (Figure 3) and "alternative" and avant-garde content and presentation (Figure 4) (Hattingh 2013b). As a magazine in which the specific content is required to arouse (Figure 5), the blurs between purely pornographic material and avant-garde contributions by prominent Afrikaans literary figures such as Marita van der Vyver (Figure 6),<sup>3</sup> extends *Loslyf*'s reputation as "alternative" and "transgressive". The diverse contributors to *Loslyf*, a combination seen for the first time in a popular/populist Afrikaans publication, signified elements of cultural subversion, political subtexts (Figure 7), and arguably a diversified representation of sexuality. This collaboration between artist-writers<sup>4</sup> and a commercial publisher of pornography enabled *Loslyf* to undermine notions of cultural identity, sexuality, class, and taste by virtue of defying the implicit hierarchies in each of these.



obsessions – sexuality and sexual difference'. What the pornographic photograph portrays is therefore fantasy and the obsessions of sexuality, concealed behind a veneer of connotations of visibility and truth, claiming both the surface and its beyond as "true". Photographic nudity and the excessive display of sexual deeds, on the one hand, mask the pornographic imaginary's lack while, on the other hand, concurrently attesting to the existence of what it seemingly portrays – the promise of a reality beyond what the gaze can observe on the surface.

3. Ryk Hattingh's (*Loslyf* June 1995:26, 27, 29, 46) interview with Marita van der Vyver regarding issues related to writing about sex in Afrikaans, is an example of how *Loslyf* gave voice to prominent Afrikaans literary figures, potentially casting them in a new light, while, by implication, seemingly attempting to do the same for the Afrikaans language.

4. One such an artist-writer is Eva Landman, author of the investigative article *Tussen hamer en aambeeld: Polisiehond vreet polisiehond na politieke gatomswaai* (Between hammer and anvil: Police dog devours police dog after political circumvention) (Figure 8), personally chosen by Hattingh to contribute to *Loslyf*, and increase the level of literary dialogue in the magazine.



FIGURE N° 3



Gina: Bekoorlike blom. *Loslyf*, June 1995:42.



FIGURE N° 4

Geniet Afrikaanse mans politiek meer as seks?. *Loslyf*, June 1995:19.





FIGURE **Nº 5**



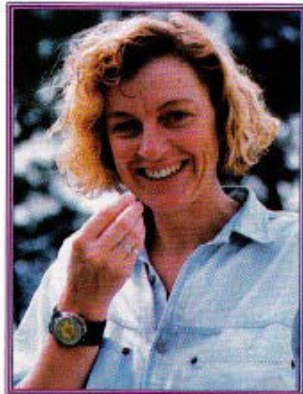
Katalien: Ballistiese nimf. *Loslyf*, June 1995:62, 63.





onderhoud met

# marita van der vyver



## “Polities-korrekt maak my tiete lam”

backwards.

**Met ander woorde die Christen-moraliteit, of kom ons sê die nasionaal-christelike moraliteit wat seks as iets vuil of verkeerd bestempel het, is nou vervang met 'n...**

...Politically correct moraliteit. Dié PC-ding maak my tiete lam. Dit is vir my baie ontstellend. Dit is vir my een van die ergste dinge van hier wat nou op die oomblik aan die gang is. Wêreldwyd, en ek is bevrees in Suid-Afrika ook. Nou vervang jy een stel van onderdrukking met 'n ander ewe onderdrukkende stel voorskrifte.

**Weer eens is dit 'n klein groepie mense wat bepaal wat gesien mag word. Nou is daar 'n nuwe groepie sedebewakers...**

En ons het nog altwee kante hier. Aan die een kant is daar nog steeds die Christelike morele ding. Hulle invloed is baie minder... Ek hoor Frits Gaum het pas weer in die nuwe Kerkbode hewig beswaar gemaak teen die Rolling Stones se optrede en gesê dis satanisme...

**Was jy daar?**

Ja, ek was daar. Ek het niks satanisme gesien nie. Jy weet, nou het jy dit aan die een kant. Dit herinner my aan die seventies. En aan die ander kant het jy die polities-korrekte drukgroep wat baie erg kan wees vir 'n vrou wat skryf. So is ek byvoorbeeld destyds met *Griet skryf 'n sprokie* deur 'n groep feministe

aangeval wat gesê het die boek is nie feministies genóég nie, omdat die vrou tog op die ou end versoen word met 'n man; en aan die ander kant is ek uitgekryt omdat ek hierdie manhaatboek skryf. Dat dit nou in die feministiese bla bla bla crap trant geskryf is.

**As straight vrou, as vrou wat van mans hou, wat nie wegstrem van penetrasie deur 'n man nie, word daar seker van jou verwag om piel af te sweer, jou rug op die man te keer en jou by die letties skaar.**

Iemand het aan die begin van die eeu gesê: "A feminist is someone who has within her the capacity to fight her way back to independence." Dan is ek en baie vroue wat ek ken feministe. Ek haat hierdie hele ding van Afrikaanse vroue wat sê "ek is nie 'n feminis nie, MAAR..." Ongelukkig is daar al hierdie groepe, magsgroepe binne die feminisme. Dit is wat die ding confuse. So het jy byvoorbeeld die radical, very PC, teen-alle-vorme-van-pornografie-groep, en by hulle kan ek my nie skaar nie.

**Wat is jou gevoel oor erotika/pornografie? Is daar byvoorbeeld tans 'n tydskrif op die rak wat volgens jou nie bestaanreg het nie?**

Dit is nie vir my om te sê wat bestaansreg moet hê of nie. Die oomblik as ek daai judgement maak, dan maak ek 'n morele judgement wat ander mense se regte aantast. Volwassenes kan vir hulle self

**M**ARITA VAN DER VYVER, die skrywer van die veelbekroonde treffer *Griet skryf 'n sprokie* en meer onlangs *Die dinge van 'n kind* (albei by Tafelberg), het in vele opsigte op eie houtjie daartoe bygedra dat 'n mens deesdae openlik oor seks en seksverwante sake kan praat - in Afrikaans. RYK HATTINGH, met sy bandopnemer en kamera in die hand, het met haar gesels.

**Wat is jou houding oor sensuur?**

Dit is vir my fascinerend daai ding van die hele feministiese debat oor sensuur. Dat hulle nou byvoorbeeld in Kanada die punt bereik het waar hulle besluit het sensuur is OK omdat vroue aangetas word, omdat vroue se waardigheid aangetas word deur tydskrifte... Nou word sensuur toegepas op 'n sterker manier as waarop dit toegepas is 'n paar jaar gelede. Vir my is dit moving

bladsy 26

FIGURE N<sup>o</sup> 6



Polities korrek maak my tiete lam. *Loslyf*, June 1995:26.





FIGURE N° 7

Me Tarzan ... You fired. Loslyf, June 1995:77.

# TUSSEN HAMER EN AAMBEELD



## POLISIEHOND VREET POLISIEHOND NÁ POLITIEKE GATOMSWAAI

**T**ot 200 polisiemanne bedank maandeliks uit die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisie diens, en onlangs het 'n rekordgetal van 360 in een maand bedank. Die ontevredenheid in die Mag lê diep. Aan die een kant is daar die onsimpatieke en vyandige gemeenskappe, en aan die ander kant die spekvat politici vol beloftes van 'n beter lewe wat hul voete sleep. Die gewone polisieman bevind hom tussen hamer en aambeeld, berig EVA LANDMAN.

bladsy 50

FOTO'S DEUR T. J. LEMON

FIGURE N<sup>o</sup> 8



Tussen hamer en aambeeld. *Loslyf*, June 1995:50.



*Loslyf*'s 'Inheemse blom van die maand' (Indigenous flower of the month) spread *Dina: by die monument* (Figures 9, 10, 11) from June 1995, is the one that Hattingh (2013b) is proudest of; he says that through *Dina* he symbolically achieved what he aimed to do with the magazine in general during the time of his editorship. The spread establishes *Dina* as a symbol of an attempt at a symbolic relocation of Afrikaans culture and language. Sexuality becomes a metaphor for and a voice of the representation of an Afrikaner cultural identity in its entirety. Alongside this, the Voortrekker Monument is employed as a symbol of Afrikaner culture, apartheid, and former repressions. Of course, *Dina* becomes equated with a flower,<sup>5</sup> waiting to be plucked – an image continued in the landscape in which she is photographed. Art and photography specialist John Pepper (2005:53) notes that when the 'l', the illustrated flower, is plucked from the logo, 'blom' becomes "bom" (bomb). In combination with *Dina*'s ambiguous name, referring to dynamite, and the dynamite stick in the logo of Hattingh's editorial and its title *Losbars!* (explode/burst loose) (Figure 2) (Pepper 2005:53-54), this may indicate a break with, or bursting loose from, restrictive Afrikaner culture and identity. Furthermore, *Dina*'s representation becomes pluralised – she is not merely an innocent and helpless little flower.

5. The potential for subversion that the flower image and its context afford *Dina*, simultaneously problematise this specific spread, as it does the entire magazine, as this equation perpetually reduces *Dina* to a space of feminine fragility. Resonating with the evident sexism that pervades a project in pornography (implying a gendered focus that I deliberately de-emphasise as it falls outside my primary emphasis in studying *Loslyf* as pornographic product), the *Dina* spread may be said to undermine its own seditious capacity, and already anticipate *Loslyf*'s inability to maintain "the interesting".

6. The Voortrekker Monument is employed as a symbol of Afrikaner culture, apartheid and former repressions – in this instance by implication primarily sexual repression. *Dina*, as the 'blom', becomes a metaphor of Afrikaner women and her sex becomes the symbol of her significance. Monuments are described as a 'means of fixing history' (Rowlands & Tilley 2006:500); in their literal monumentality they attempt to provide stability to public memory and permanence to the collective imagining of an associated cultural identity. With the *Dina* spread, *Loslyf* succeeds in renegotiating the significance and place of the Voortrekker Monument, as conventionally "divine" symbol, in the construction/imagining of a monolithic Afrikaner identity.

With the *Dina* spread, *Loslyf* attempts a re-appropriation of the Voortrekker Monument as conventionally "divine" symbol of the "permanence" of Afrikaner nationalism.<sup>6</sup> The magazine assails the symbolic significance of the monument, while the written text declares itself on the side of Afrikaner traditionalists; the text proclaims that *Dina* 'doesn't beat about the bush when she speaks of her love for Afrikaans and Afrikaans culture' (*Loslyf* June 1995:125). As a result, there is a destabilisation of the "permanence" and "stability" of Afrikaner culture, as it was supposed to be symbolised by the Monument, at a time when the meaning of Afrikaner cultural identity was already being called into question. The constitutional right and freedom *Dina* has in a post-apartheid context to expose herself in this way becomes conflated with a freedom previously viewed in a very different light. This former freedom, and the history of which it is a metaphor, is undermined while *Loslyf* purportedly excuses itself by the way that *Dina* cheekily proclaims that 'if you mess with/touch my symbols, you mess with/touch me' (*Loslyf* June 1995:125).

Laura Kipnis (2006:119-120) says that in order to 'commit sacrilege, you have to have studied the religion'. As a manner of 'studying the religion', *Loslyf* deliberately sets up an imaginary Voortrekker ancestry for *Dina* in order to desecrate it and transgress expectations tied to her ancestry and her presence at this "sacred place". The irony, and subsequent deflation of this expectation, lies in *Dina*'s profession of her pride in this heritage and admiration for her supposed great-

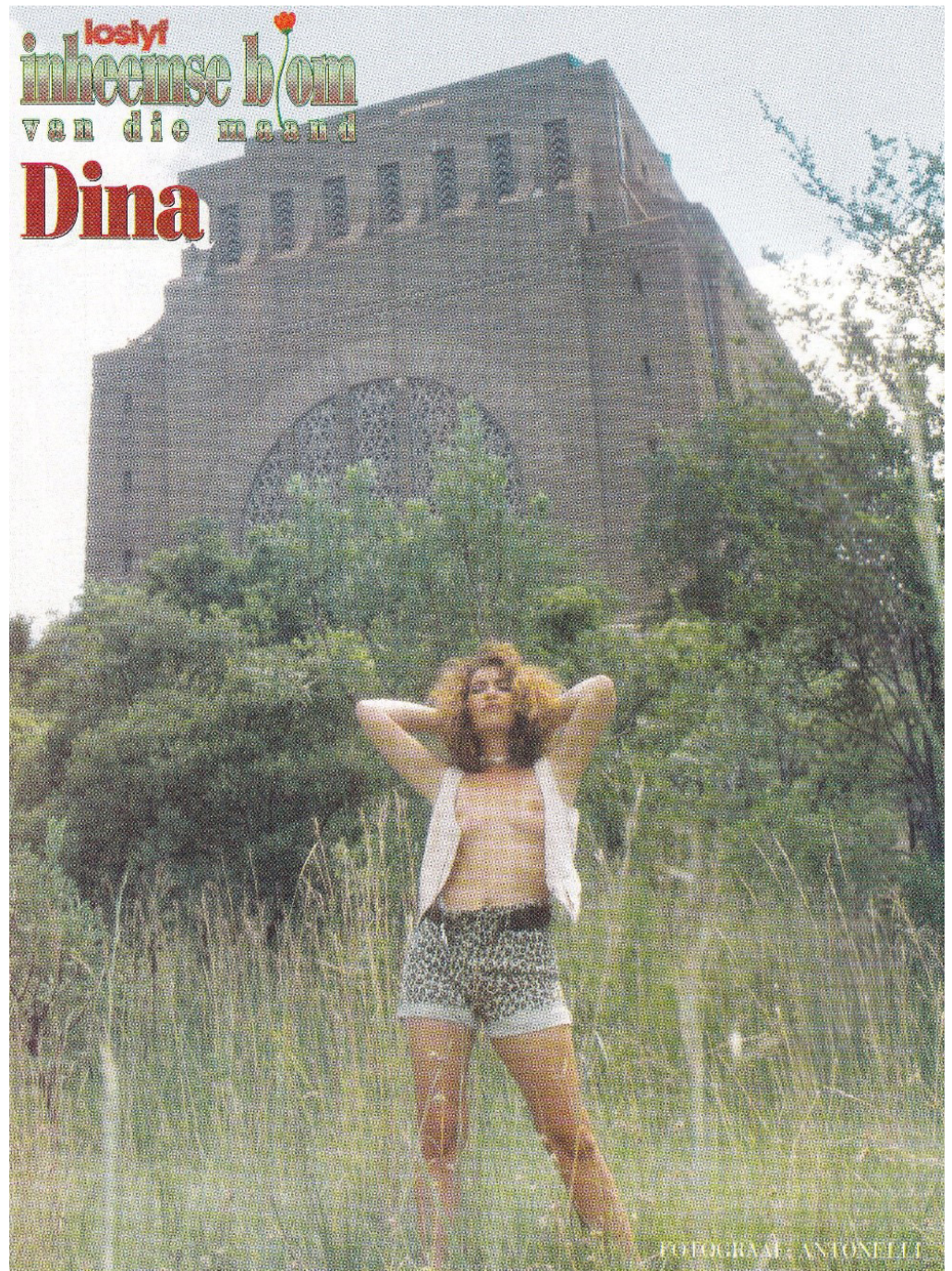


FIGURE **N° 9**



Inheemse blom van die maand: Dina by die monument. *Loslyf*, June 1995:124.





**D**ina, LOSLYF se heel eerste inheemse blom, is 'n Boeremeisie in murg en been. "My groot-groot grootjie, Hendrik Potgieter, is van kleins af my held. Hy was die soort man wat mense aangespoor het om kaalvoet oor die Drakensberge te trek sodat ons Boere vry en in vrede hier in die ou Transvaal kan woon. As ons maar net vandag 'n leier van sy kaliber kon hê," sug sy.

Die 24-jarige verpleegster van Pretoria draai nie doekies om as sy oor haar liefde vir Afrikaans en die Afrikaanse kultuur praat nie. "Al die mense wat nou so graag die Afrikanervolk wil straf deur hulle monumente om te stamp en te ontheilig, speel met vuur. Hulle moet weet: as jy aan my simbole vat, vat jy aan my."

FIGURE **N° 10**



Inheemse blom van die maand: Dina by die monument. *Loslyf*, June 1995:125.





FIGURE **Nº 11**



Inheemse blom van die maand: Dina by die monument. *Loslyf*, June 1995:128.

great-grandfather, well-known Voortrekker, Hendrik Potgieter, and her passion for the monuments of the 'Afrikaner nation'.<sup>7</sup> The *Dina* spread alludes to a possibility of a post-apartheid Afrikaner visual identity which moves away from monolithic and narrow modes of identification, popularly associated with a conflated view of "the Afrikaner". Dina becomes a symbol of postmodern Afrikanerdom in which a variety of seemingly competing qualities harmoniously co-exist in an effort to redefine Afrikaner cultural identity, while debunking previous representational (albeit stereotypical) modes of it.

7. Annie Coombes (2003:40) shows that this professed pride in her Afrikaner heritage, and apparent admiration Dina has for Potgieter, calls up 'the very discourses through which Afrikaner nationalism constituted itself as the guardian of the white race (civilisation) – the indelible bonds of blood and family ... To a South African reader schooled during apartheid this text is also clearly written as a pastiche of the standard children's textbook version of the [Great] Trek'.

8. It may be argued that the image of the *volksmoeder* was already outmoded by the mid-1990s, and that the identities of Afrikaner women at the time are more fractured and contended than this discussion allows, but this is exactly the point that *Loslyf* builds on. In attempting to control representations, the apartheid government and its laws of censorship created a skewed archive, resulting in a flattened remembrance of identity politics under this regime, and as associated with "the Afrikaner". It is this conflated identity that *Loslyf* plays on and aims to subvert – at once entrenching an unwillingness to allow for multiple and fractured representations, while destabilising this notion by its very use. This is a tricky endeavour, since, when not interpreted as intended by Hattingh, the spread once again anticipates the magazine, and the genre's, inability to sustain "the interesting" as more significant than "the generic" for long.

9. This type of dress, and Dina baring herself in the long grass and "natural" surroundings of the Voortrekker Monument, perpetuates ideas of colonialism in terms of land and women. Dina, with her splayed legs and exposed body, like the "open" African interior, is waiting to be claimed and ready to be taken by a supposed male conqueror (see note 7).

Even though Dina is included in *Loslyf* as a '*los lyf*', the stylistic composition of the shoot and the way the accompanying text 'is in communication' (Barthes 1977:16) with the photographs, aligns her more with "alternative" content in *Loslyf* than with the stereotypical pornographic shoots otherwise included in the magazine. Hattingh explains that the presence of Dina as the '*inheemse blom*' (indigenous flower) sexualises the Voortrekker Monument as symbol of the 'Calvinist puritanism of Afrikaner nationalists' (Coombes 2003:40). By the styling of particular codes of significance, and the curated 'communication' between image and text, the photographs convey a sense of visual subversion (Hattingh 2013b); Dina destabilises notions of femininity (and masculinity), as associated with an Afrikaner paradigm, by elements of visual misappropriation and cultural irreverence. Of normative representations of Afrikaner women in an apartheid context, Elsie Cloete (1992:51) notes: 'The male constructed images of the Afrikaner woman ... emphasised her role as servant to the *volk*, as nurturer, keeper of moral standards, educator and promoter of the language.' The role of Dina, as male-constructed image of an apparently proud Afrikaner woman, however, is in no sense parallel to the roles Cloete explicates. Dina is not represented as the archetypical Afrikaner mother and procreator of the nation, but is shown exposing herself to the gaze of the viewer in front of the Monument, taking sex and sexual excitement away from a conservative conception of sexuality that Michel Foucault (1976:3) refers to as the 'function of reproduction ... [and] the parents' bedroom', into the open air and concentrating on it as sex-for-sex's sake. The '*volksmoeder*' figure, that is so diligently focused on in the mythology of the Voortrekker Monument,<sup>8</sup> is further nullified by Dina's khaki outfit, associated with safari attire, the idea of a "wilderness" to be tamed, and very explicit notions of (Afrikaner) masculinity related to such dress and connotations.<sup>9</sup> Annie Coombes (2003:43) says the following of Dina:

[She] disrupts the versions of both femininity and masculinity ... played out in the monument, providing a kind of composite figure in which ... gendered ... identifications are deliberately confused.

While Dina's shoot interrelates with the other more normative pornographic content in *Loslyf* and the terms of gender relations involved in the perusal of pornography, the representations of her also direct attention towards broader ideas of cultural re-evaluation and re-appropriation. The iconoclastic effect of *Dina by die monument* and its attempt to imbue an 'object of power with a semantic twist' (Peffer 2005:59), reverberates throughout *Loslyf* by means of similar constructions of subversion by way of the connotations of the visual composition itself and its accompanying text.

The *Dina* spread is one of only three photosets conceptualised and executed entirely by *Loslyf*'s editorial staff, and most prominently Hattingh. The other photosets were bought from international syndicates, emphasising pornography's generic quality. Hattingh attempted to imbue these spreads with cultural specificity by the use of accompanying text and back-stories of the '*loslywe*', and the juxtaposition of these sets with other content. Political subtexts form a leitmotif in *Loslyf*; the way these subtexts communicate with tensions of the time of publication is evident in the *Katalien: Ballistiese nimf* (Katalien: Ballistic nymph) spread (Figures 5, 12). Katalien is supposedly a ballistics expert from East Germany – echoing the allusion to communism and aligning her back-story with the connotations that South Africans, and specifically the Afrikaner community, associated with this ideology. Katalien proclaims that she accepted East Germany's political propaganda without question and that she placed the country's interests above her own: 'placed my country's interests above my own. But when the wall started to crumble, so did my inhibitions and my chastity' (*Loslyf* June 1995:sp).

The text accompanying the Katalien spread creates a metaphor for apartheid rule; Katalien says she learned that 'there is no political party in the world that can sexually satisfy citizens' (*Loslyf* June 1995:sp). In this declaration, the control of the apartheid dispensation is equated in the text with those repressive political systems elsewhere with which it saw itself in conflict. The result is that *Loslyf* questions the credibility of Afrikaner nationalist rule and attempts to undermine its self-confidence, while celebrating the crumbling of South Africa's metaphorical 'wall' of isolation at a time when the demise of Afrikaner political power and its ties to the prominence of Afrikaner cultural identity was widely received with uncertainty and anxiety.

Concerning the way in which the *Katalien* spread succumbs to generic codes of pornography, Katalien, represented as a ballistic Eastern bloc nymphomaniac (Figures 5, 12), is portrayed as a kind of woman that Robert Jensen and Gail Dines (1998:90-91) refer to as a stereotype that 'resisted sex at first but [was] quickly ...



10. The *vagina dentata*, the toothed vagina, is associated with castration fear. The vagina of the sexually voracious women, or the powerful woman, becomes a metaphorical instrument for stripping man of his phallic power, as metonymically linked to his power in general. The fear of castration is 'more specifically, that of the castrating female. This terror can in fact act so powerfully as to render the subject impotent ... So deeply rooted is it, that direct expression of it must necessarily be rare' (Lucie-Smith 1991:227). This is especially true in the case of a pornographic magazine through which men prefer to be reminded of their virility and not their impotence. A capitulation of the rapacious or independent woman must ensue to ensure the male reader's confidence in his masculinity.

11. See note 6.

12. In 1988, the Publications Board and the Security Police intervened in one of Hattingh's projects and banned his drama *Sing jy van bomme* (Do you sing of bombs), bemoaning both a scene in which the male protagonist appears naked, as well as the play's critical treatment of nationalist projects such as the Border War. Hattingh (2012) recalls that 'a nude man was like a red cloth in front of an already raging bull at the time' – even in the more "low-brow" medium of pornographic magazines depicting an erection was completely out of the question, as stipulated by legislation. *Sing jy van bomme* is based on South Africa's Border War and the process of demilitarisation. The ethos of the play resonated strongly with the aims and concerns of the End Conscription Campaign. According to Hattingh, Security Police approached him after the play's first run, offering him employment in their service as a spy. They seemingly interpreted the play as a literal endorsement of the violence and tactics of the Border War, in Hattingh's (2013a) view completely missing the ironic tone of the text.

13. *Bitterkomix* has a reputation for 'tackling many of the taboos of Christian nationalism and ridiculing Afrikaner stereotypes' (Davies 2009:107). Conrad Botes (in Vestergaard 2001:34-35) describes the goal of the magazine to

overcome by lust and developed [a] voracious sexual [appetite]'. Katalien's professed sexual liberation is equated with Germany's political liberation, but the new-found sexual appetite she is represented as having is portrayed as unthreatening. The proposed "masculinity" of her vocation as well as her libido is countered within the representation by the "femininity" of her make-up, poses, white clothing, and soft smile. Valerie Steele (1997:171) says that 'clothing itself is generally associated with power, and nakedness with its lack'. Whereas Katalien is still semi-clothed in Figure 12, where the accompanying text describes her as an expert in her field, Figure 5 shows her as exposing her nakedness, surrendering the clothing as she supposedly did the power associated with her clothes. The *vagina dentata*<sup>10</sup> has been warded off and the stereotype of 'male dominance and female submission that is central in contemporary commercial pornography' (Jensen 2004:246) is affirmed.

One of the main feature articles in the first issue of *Loslyf* was an investigation into the state of affairs in the South African Police Service (SAPS) by Eva Landman (pseudonym for Jan Taljaard) (*Loslyf* June 1995:50-59, Figure 8).<sup>11</sup> The title, '*Tussen hamer en aambeeld*' (Between hammer and sickle), recalls the figure of speech, "between a rock and a hard place" – a prelude to the content of the article and the magazine's irreverent opinion of the SAPS's post-apartheid position. Secondly, the title aligns signifiers of communist ideology with the state institution formerly tasked with the mission of eradicating the perceived "Rooi Gevaar" – only to be at the service of a dispensation associated with the "red menace" after South Africa's political transition (*Loslyf* June 1995:50); '*toe kom die verkiesing April verlede jaar. Almal sien die terts van vroeër gaan die nuwe regering word*' (then the election came in April last year. Everyone sees the former terrorists will become the new government) (*Loslyf* June 1995:51). Superficially, the content of the article seems to place *Loslyf* on the side of the frustrated policemen who lament the political changes and all the transformation it brought about in the service. Hattingh's own history with the security apparatus of the old regime,<sup>12</sup> however, creates the expectation that this article might be subversive and a continuation of the oppositional work he supports. This expectation is confirmed by the sarcastic '*God was aan die Afrikaners se kant, sien*' (God was on the Afrikaners' side, see) (*Loslyf* June 1995:51) and is developed throughout the article.

A discussion of *Loslyf*'s style as undermining of Afrikaner tradition and history would be incomplete without mention of the works of the *Bitterkomix* artists.<sup>13</sup> *Loslyf* November and December 1995 published visual parodies of traditional Afrikaner folk songs along with their lyrics. In *Daar kom die Alabama* (Figure 13) by Conrad Botes, or his pseudonym Konradski, a cartoon hybridising a variety of

'undermine the patriarchal authority represented by the father, priest, and principal. Under apartheid, such figures customarily left no space for independent thinking and questioning – people simply had to obey'. *Bitterkomix* characteristically includes images and content of an iconoclastic, satirical and pornographic nature – echoing these sentiments as central to *Loslyf* too. There is a disjuncture between the work associated with *Bitterkomix*, as avant-garde publication, and *Loslyf* as mainstream consumer product – an opposition aggravated with time. As *Loslyf* illustrates, the combination of such genres of content can only exist alongside each other for a limited period before "the interesting" is eventually overpowered by "the generic". This was intuited by Hattingh (2012) and was one of the main reasons he agreed to be involved with the magazine, but only for the publication of 12 issues.

# Katalien

## ballistiese nimf

**D**is moeilik om te glo die 24-jarige Katalien was op haar dag 'n ballistiese ekspert en lid van die Oos-Duitse veiligheids-polisie, maar met die val van die Berlynse Muur het dié onnatuurlike toedrag van sake vinnig verander.



FOTOGRAAF: DIRKIE OPPERMAN



FIGURE N° 12



Katalien: Ballistiese nimf. *Loslyf*, June 1995:60.



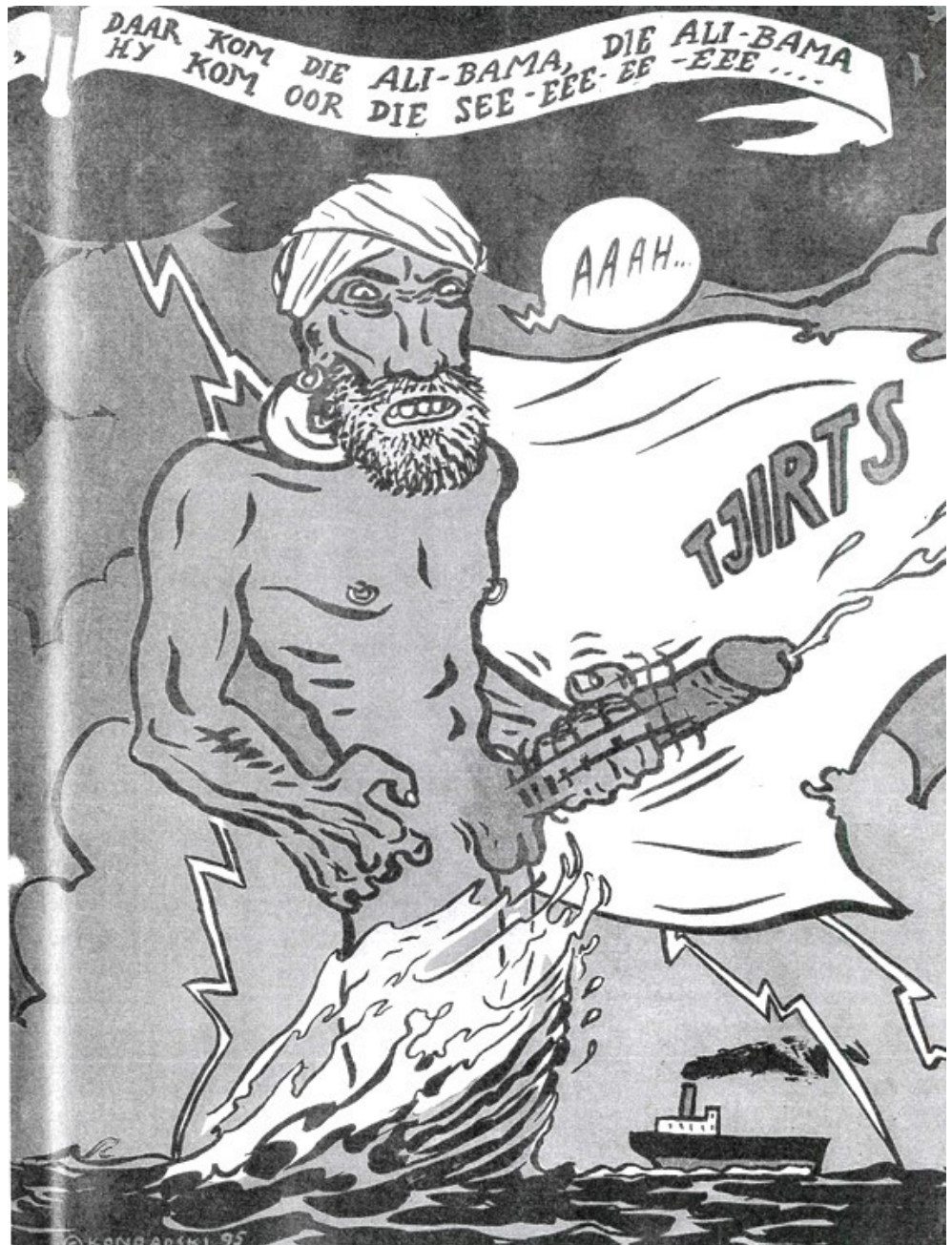


FIGURE **Nº 13**



Daar kom die Alibama. *Loslyf*, November 1995:93.

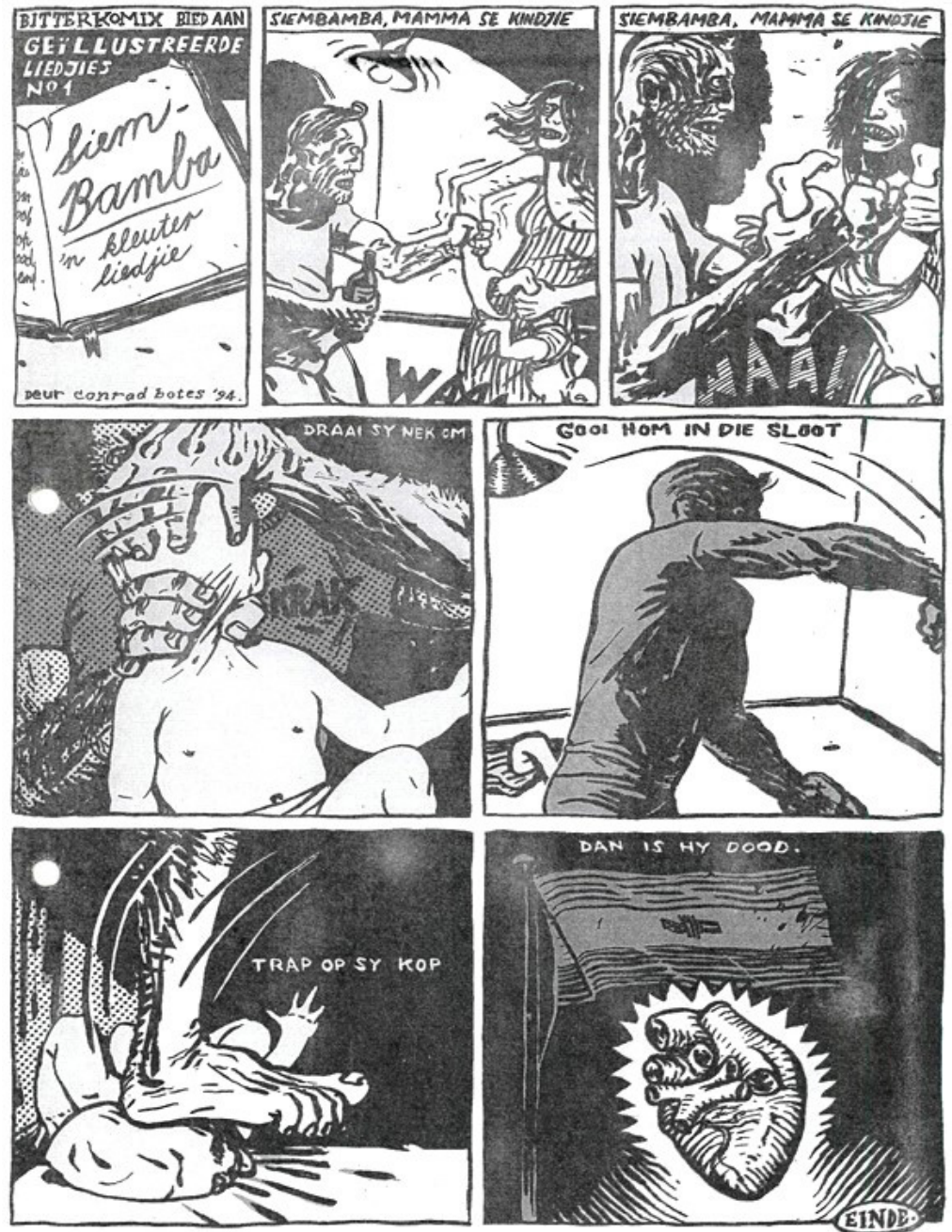


FIGURE N<sup>o</sup> 14

Siembamba: 'n kleuterliedjie. *Loslyf*, Desember 1995:sp.



influences and codes in true postmodern parody, Alibama is a gigantic and masturbating sea-god, rising from the sea and ejaculating over the ocean with an onomatopoeic ‘aah’ and ‘tjirts’ (*Loslyf* November 1995:93). *Daar kom die Alibama* is a traditional *Kaapse Klopse* (Cape minstrel) song originating in the coloured community of Cape Town, but appropriated for white Afrikaner culture by Afrikaans *Boeremusiek* (a very specific form of folk music broadly associated with Afrikaner identity) bands – alluding to the hybrid nature of traditional Afrikaner culture that the *Bitterkomix* artists hint at with the image. The work’s iconoclastic nature resides largely in the intertextuality of cultural sources and their juxtaposition in this image. The result is an affirmation and ridicule of the in exclusivity of a purportedly “pure” Afrikaner identity. *Siembamba* by Botes (Figure 14), is a seven-frame strip illustrating each line of the violent lyrics of this traditional nursery song by staunch Afrikaner figure CJ Langenhoven (*Loslyf* December 1995:sp). In the last frame, the words ‘*dan is hy dood*’ (then he is dead) is accompanied by a human heart and the old South African flag in the background. Both these cartoons, which have ambiguous and aggressive undertones, are metaphors for cultural and political systems in which Afrikaners ostensibly placed unwavering belief and faith. These systems are symbolically questioned in both examples, but are unequivocally proclaimed dead by the *Siembamba* strip’s final frame, insofar as the old South African flag is metonymically linked to Afrikaner history and tradition.

The works of the *Bitterkomix* artists contribute to a formal departure from the medium of photographic pornography. This diversion is emphasised by the undertones of contempt for hegemonic masculinity displayed in their works – an element that the reader may recognise as a leitmotif in *Loslyf* under Hattingh’s editorship. The impetus behind their work in *Loslyf*, as pornographic publication, was to undermine the Afrikaner man: belittle him, take advantage of his fears and anxieties, and challenge what men found “sexy” in the world of pornography (Kannemeyer 2012). Nina Martin (2006:193) investigates the relation between pornography and humour and finds that the two elements do not work well together, since ‘porn conventions emphasise not only the size of the penis, but its requisite, and often perpetual hardness’. The works of Anton Kannemeyer and Conrad Botes in *Loslyf* speak of Afrikaner masculinity in a mocking and humoristic tone, highlighting that, as Martin (2006:193) puts it, ‘any insertion of laughter and levity in regards to the penis smacks of derision, and implies inadequacy’. The work in Figure 4 by Joe Dog (Anton Kannemeyer) portrays a man in the background, reading a newspaper entitled *Die Patriot* (The Patriot). From the title of the newspaper and the man’s attire – safari-type clothes echoing those worn by Dina in Figures 9 to 11 – it can be ascertained that he is an Afrikaans man. In the foreground is

a woman on a bed, masturbating with a rolling pin<sup>14</sup> next to her. The man is seen, significantly, through the woman's legs, a position he would have been in if he was practising oral sex on her, but distanced from her, and by implication from an assertion of his masculinity, by his lack of interest. The text asks '*geniet Afrikaanse mans politiek meer as seks?*' (do Afrikaans men enjoy politics more than sex?) and the woman orgasmically answers '*JA JA JA*' (YES YES YES) in moaning pleasure. A portrait of 'Pappa' (Daddy) hangs on the wall above the woman, providing an ever-present gaze and Father-God-like presence. In this example, the penis is not ridiculed per se, nor is the man's adequacy, but his initial interest in sex, his interest in metaphorically proclaiming his manhood, is brought into question. It is not necessary to mock his ineffective penis, since he shows no interest in it to begin with. The metaphorical significance of this example casts Afrikaner men as inadequate, not because of the ineffectiveness of their manhood, but because of its non-existence. Whereas Martin (2006:194) says that 'the notion of surprise and the unexpected in porn produces a loss of the superiority and control invested in the penis', the surprise in this instance is evoked by the man's lack of interest in sex and a consequent understanding of the penis, as seat of phallic power, as absent.

Liese van der Watt (2005:119) explains that the mid-1990s was a time in which the 'perception [was] that white males, especially, [were] under threat in a rapidly changing dispensation'. The anxiety resulting from this seeming threat meant that 'popular culture and mass media started capitalizing on changing conceptions of whiteness' (Van der Watt 2005:122), while artists, cultural commentators and "alternative" Afrikaner figures played on this anxiety and questioned the position of the white Afrikaner man with 'humour and mockery' (Van der Watt 2005:124). The *Bitterkomix* works in *Loslyf* undermine conventional male gender ideals and their relation to the power of Afrikaner male identity, as the incontestability of this identity is embedded in Afrikaner culture (Figure 15). Such belittling is something an Afrikaner man would arguably not want to encounter visually in a magazine he buys to get a sense of confirmation of his manhood, as provided by the implied sufficient sex drive and functioning penis. By means of such ridicule *Bitterkomix* critique both standardised pornographic elements and Afrikaner masculinity as experienced in the 1990s. Kobus du Pisani (2001:171) explains that in the post-apartheid environment in which 'the Afrikaners have lost their political power ... WAMs (White Afrikaans Males) have felt threatened by affirmative action and gender equality campaigns'. As a way of illustrating a perceived post-apartheid threat to Afrikaner male identity and its former association with supremacy, Joe Dog creates a cartoon advertisement for '*U dienswillige dienaar*' (Your obedient servant) blow-

14. The presence of the rolling pin signifies both the woman's abandonment of domestic activities in favour of masturbation and a phallic symbol, a replacement penis in her acts of self-pleasure because of the man's lack of interest in sex. While it binds her to the home, the rolling pin also becomes a weapon of castration, implied by its ready replacement of the penis.



# MENERE!

WIL U DAMES LAAT KERM VAN WELLUS? KONRADSKI LABORATORIUMS BIED NOU AAN: **NUWE STEEK 17** *Spruitmiddel*



HIERDIE UNIEKE CHEMIESE PRODUK UIT SINGAPOER SAL SORG DAT DAMES MET **JOU** WIL **NAAI**. SELFS AL IS JY "ONAANTREKLIK" VIR VROUE SAL JY MET **STEKIT** DIE HAAR ONDER DIE HENNE WEES.

EK EERSTE  
NAI  
HUUH HUUH  
NEE, EK EERSTE.  
EK OK.

NOOIT WEER HOEF U TE SMEEK VIR 'N "GENADE-NAAI" NIE.

STOP DIT, WIERNER!  
KOM AAN, MY BABY.

EEN VAN ONS TEVREDE KLANTE, POEPIES PIENAAR VAN PRETORIA, SE:

MY INNIGE DANK AAN STEEK 17. VROER HET EK NET GESKOMMEL, MAAR SEDERT EK JULLE UITERS PUK PRODUK PROBEER HET HET EK SO BAIE GESAAG DAT MY TRIL NOU SKOON STUKREND IS.

POEPIES SE PIEL

JA, JY KAN OOK 'N "LEKKER OU" WEBS. HOU OEF KARRING EN GEBRUIK STEEK 17.



© KONRADSKI 95

FIGURE **N° 15**

Steek 17. Loslyf, July 1995:122.

**U DIENSWILLIGE DIENAAR**

Enige van die bg. opblaasbare poppe se u dienswillige dienaar wees teen slegs R.666.66 (puncture kit, btw en posgeld ingesluit)

**VERWESENLIK U STOUTSTE SEKSFANTASIE!**

HIER SIEN ONS 'N GELUKKIGE MNR. JAN STEYN VAN 14de LAAN NO.39, UPINGTON, IN DIE STUITIGE HONDJIE-POSISIE.

**WATSO, JOU HOER. JOU SLET!**

... EN ONTHOU, HOE STYNER U BLAAS, HOE TIGHTER IS HAAR POES!

**DIE MODERNE SAKEMAN**

KAN BINNE MINUTE AFBLAAS WORD EN PAS GEBRIEFLIK BINNE 'N AKTIE.

MOET DUS BY NOOIT SONDER 'N DIENSWILLIGE DIENAAR REIS.

**Bestel nou om te-leurstelling later te voorkom.**

**Slegs 3 dienaars per klant!**

FIGURE N° 16

U dienswillige dienaar. *Loslyf*, September 1995:95.



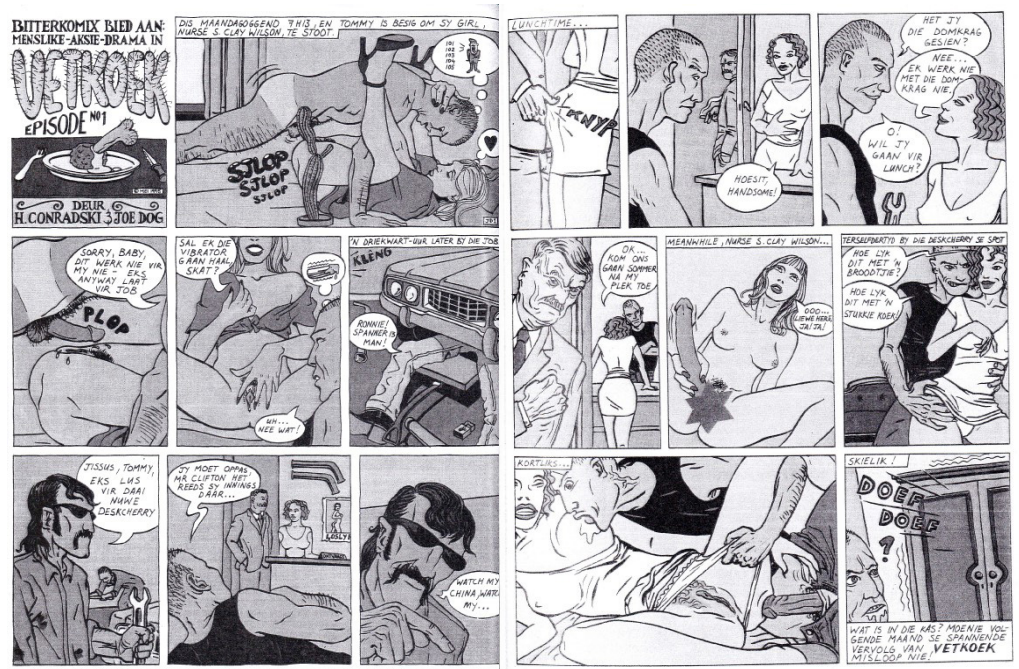


FIGURE N<sup>o</sup> 17



Vetkoek. *Loslyf*, June 1995:112, 113.

up dolls (Figure 16). The advertisement offers a way of countering this loss of official power and alleviating the anxiety resulting from this uncertain position by providing men with an ‘obedient servant’ over whom they can impose their own male identity as superior. The doll can ‘be deflated in minutes and fits conveniently into a briefcase’ to travel with its owner, affirming his masculinity wherever he goes. The text proclaims that ‘the more firmly you blow her up, the tighter her pussy will be’, placing even the anatomy of this replacement woman within the man’s reach of power. Sexual control over women is conflated with a broader sense of control and a superior cultural position. While the content of the advertisement employs stark delineations of power relations regarding gender identity and roles, it simultaneously distances itself from such conventional predispositions by employing an ironic and sarcastic tone of voice and implicates the reader (and the creators of *Bitterkomix*, and the editor of *Loslyf*) by virtue of the joke they share.

The ‘threat’ towards white Afrikaans men and their resulting anxiety are viewed through a racialised lens, as is illustrated by Joe Dog’s work in Figure 18. As Afrikaner men are replaced by affirmative action in the workplace, Mister Kotze is

replaced by his gardener in bed. The derision implied by the image is firstly directed toward Mister Kotze's masculinity, once again represented by his penis and his (in)ability to satisfy his wife sexually. Phineas is portrayed as the stereotypically well-endowed black man. Such typecast representations are prominent in pornographic discourse and Jensen and Dines (1998:85) refer to them as the mention of the "big black cock" ... signifying some sort of extraordinary sexual size and prowess'. Mister Kotze, as metaphor for Afrikaner men, becomes redundant in the political sphere, the workplace and now in bed, a portrayal highlighting the ambiguous position of Afrikaner masculinity at the time – both hypervisible and expendable. Phineas is portrayed as more proficient than Mister Kotze, a commentary on the broader socio-political context of the time, but once again reduced to being represented by sexual connotations. The image derives further significance from the political context in which it is published – South Africa is under a new constitution and anti-miscegenation laws have recently been abolished, but their underlying anxieties and ideologies seemingly still prevail. Abby Ferber (2004:45) notes that the prohibition of 'interracial sexuality is part of the process of boundary maintenance essential to the construction of both race and gender identity'; the fragility of Afrikaner identity at the time is further aggravated by the perceived "danger" of interracial sex. At a time when the survival of Afrikaner identity was already a matter of dispute (Vestergaard 2001), sex between Mister Kotze's wife and Phineas – not to mention what Phineas's virility symbolises – is not only a threat to Mister Kotze's sexual aptitude, but also to the "purity" and "survival" of the Afrikaner "nation".

Apart from a contestation of traditional conceptions of Afrikaner identity, the works of the *Bitterkomix* artists contribute to a formal departure from the medium of photographic pornography. Whereas pornography functions within a simulacrum, the *Bitterkomix* strips rupture this enclosure to highlight, by their illustrative and overtly authored nature, the visual construction of pornography and its lack of "realness", even, or most especially, when photographic. The illustrative *Bitterkomix* works undermine the formulaic and fragmentary scopic regime employed in the pornographic language, sans auteur. It appears as though *Loslyf* contests a notion of universality that pervades the pornographic genre and instead creates fractures through visual composition of content, inserting elements of "the real" and breaking with pornography as a 'self-enclosed world of imagination' (Paglia 1994:65).

*Vetkoek*, a double-page serial strip, is the best known and most prominent of the *Bitterkomix* contributions to *Loslyf* (Figure 17). The strip shows scenes of a graphic sexual nature and a strange storyline, which grows more abstract and "surreal"



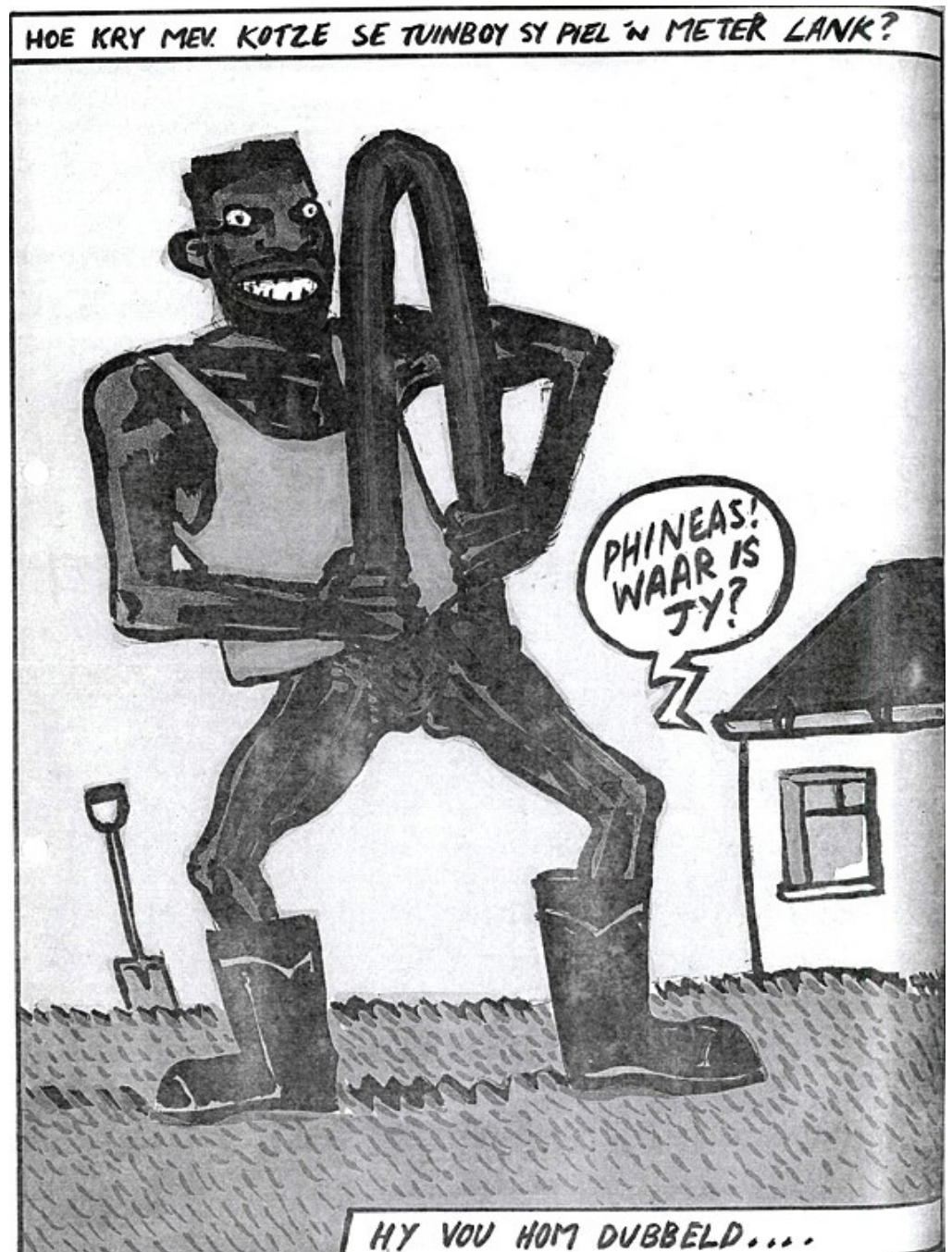


FIGURE **N° 18**



Hoe kry Mev. Kotze se tuinboy sy piel 'n meter lank? *Loslyf*, May 1996:sp.

during the course of the eight parts it appeared in the magazine (Kannemeyer 1997:58). At times it would seem that the almost forced written text is redundant and exists only to support the illustrative pornographic depictions, albeit in a negligible manner. The nature of strip art, which does not represent a physical reality but an overtly imagined one, calls into question the “real” of the entire context in which it is published. If the simulacrum of pornographic representation is broken and exposed to the viewer/reader, the gaze turns in on her/himself (Žižek 1997:178), sexual desire is reversed and the viewer/reader arguably feels rebuked when the “reality” of pornographic insularity and her/his ensuing desires is uncovered.

## Concluding remarks

The publication of *Loslyf* was of symbolic value on a number of different levels, not least because Ryk Hattingh held the explicit conviction that the symbolic history of Afrikaner cultural identity needed correcting and he approached the project of *Loslyf* by, metonymically, attempting to “correct” Afrikaner sexual identity – indicated by the magazine’s language of publication as cultural signifier. It is arguable that the significance of *Loslyf* resides in its ability to retrospectively speak to, and reinvigorate the social imagination of, a group reductively designated as “Afrikaner”. In understanding elements of fiction and mythology involved in such a provocation of social imagination, *Loslyf* provides at once a myth of a narrowed representation of Afrikanerdom against which the magazine and its vision is seen as “alternative”, and a creative act toward expanding Afrikaner cultural identity. Of the relation between Afrikanerdom and so-called “alternativity”, Hattingh (2013b) says: ‘I have always struggled with the term “alternative”, even though I was also labelled as such. I could never help but wonder, “alternative to what?” Surely the Afrikaner holds within himself an entire spectrum of human emotions and political sentiments?’

The magazine became a symbol – at a time when “alternative” perhaps already became irrelevant – not only of the collaborators’, but also of the readers’ represented rejection of former methods of control over such publications, while providing a platform for the expression/imagining of their sexual fantasies and experiences.

*Loslyf* certainly made contributions to the pornographic genre, whilst simultaneously breaking from this language too; thus, even as a postmodern creative cultural project, the magazine exhibits elements of the generic. Even though *Loslyf* seems to be an exemplary exercise in finding the equilibrium between moments of being funny and clever, political and politically incorrect, kitsch and avant-garde, it can



be concluded that such a 'magic suspension' (Žižek 1997:178) is not a sustainable endeavour, and the "generic" eventually overpowers "the interesting". Efforts to maintain "the interesting" in *Loslyf*, and postpone its waning as far as possible, involved employing elements of irony, satire, self-awareness, criticality and humour. These elements extend beyond the reach of its Afrikaans and/or Afrikaner target audience and develop connections with a greater South African population, for whom even the most insular example of visualised cultural complexity is arguably of benefit. I would argue that *Loslyf* contributed to the broader project of democracy, specifically visual democracy, in South Africa in the mid-1990s, illustrating the power of images in this regard. The relevance of a contemporary study of *Loslyf* is highlighted by attempts to once again suppress and control the dissemination of images deemed "shocking" to moral or cultural sensibilities. Even, or especially, after giving such a narrowly sampled and inevitably simplified account of its significance, a worrying suspicion pervades *Loslyf*, as it does the study of the magazine: 'No one can say if sex has been liberated or not, or whether the rate of sexual pleasure has increased. In sexuality, as in art, the idea of progress is absurd' (Baudrillard 1987:35).

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