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To cite this article: Marisa Keuris (2019) *Magrita Prinslo (1896), Magdalena Retief (1938) and Mies Julie (2012): From Historical Afrikaner Mothers of the Nation to a Modern Afrikanermeisie (Girl)*, Journal of Literary Studies, 35:3, 65-79, DOI: [10.1080/02564718.2019.1657283](https://doi.org/10.1080/02564718.2019.1657283)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02564718.2019.1657283>



Published online: 15 Oct 2019.



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Magrita Prinslo (1896), Magdalena Retief (1938) and Mies Julie (2012): From Historical Afrikaner Mothers of the Nation to a Modern Afrikanermeisie (Girl)

Marisa Keuris

Introduction

The focus in this article is a postcolonial reading of Yaël Farber's 2012 adaptation (*Mies Julie*) of Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1888) through the lens of the *Mother of the Nation* concept (*Volksmoederkonsep*) as situated within Afrikaner nationalist ideology. Strindberg's *Miss Julie* has been adapted numerous times (apparently more than twenty times) and often through re-imaginings of the original play's issues in regards of gender, power and social class. More recent adaptations include Patrick Marber's reworking of the play, entitled *After Miss Julie* in 2009 and a 2012 Chinese opera version directed by Ravel Luo.

Opsomming

Die fokus in hierdie artikel is 'n postkoloniale beskouing van Yaël Farber se aanpassing (*Mies Julie*) in 2012 van Strindberg se *Miss Julie* (1888) deur die lens van die *Volksmoederkonsep* in die konteks van Afrikaner-nasionalistiese ideologie. Strindberg se *Miss Julie* is verskeie kere (skynbaar meer as twintig keer) aangepas, en dikwels deur heruitbeelding van die oorspronklike drama se kwessies met betrekking tot geslag, mag en sosiale klas. Meer onlangse verwerkings sluit in Patrick Marber se hersiening van die toneelstuk, getiteld *After Miss Julie* in 2009, en 'n Chinese operaweergawe geregisseer deur Ravel Luo in 2012.

Hutchings (2013: 69-70) summarises Farber's adaptation as follows:

(t)he 2012 production written and directed by Yaël Farber and entitled *Mies Julie* takes place in post-apartheid South Africa. Accordingly, it quite boldly re-imagines Strindberg's plot, complicating its central characters' relationships via interracial conflicts and issues of ownership of the land, ownership of the nation and ownership of their individual bodies, not only in the sexual sense of that term but also in the context of indentured race-based servitude as well. Framed in ritual that makes use of traditional South African music, Farber's *Mies Julie* foregrounds the play's inherently intense eroticism, staging it with frankness that is without precedent in the play's entire stage history.

Lazarus (2011: 40) statement that "'postcolonial' writing is centrally and vitally concerned with the representation of class: in broad terms, as a key determinant (or even *the* key determinant) of social relations, practices and forms of identity; more narrowly, as a primary source, and site, of social division and violence", is thus of particular relevance for this play. These aspects will be pursued in the article below by means of a focused discussion of the *Mother of the Nation* concept as found in two early Afrikaans plays, by means of an introduction to the discussion of Farber's *Mies Julie*.

Although one finds depictions of Afrikaner women in many Afrikaans plays, I will discuss only two specific plays, namely S.J. du Toit's *Magrita Prinslo* (1896) and Uys Krige's *Magdalena Retief* (1938). These two plays are interesting because both of them are based on historical figures and both plays are situated in historical periods of great importance to the Afrikaner (the Great Trek of 1838 and the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek in 1938, which led to a big upsurge of Afrikaner Nationalism). *Magrita Prinslo* is the first play printed in Afrikaans and Uys Krige's *Magdalena Retief* (1938) was performed at the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument as part of the Great Trek centenary celebrations. In comparing the historical depictions of Afrikaner women like Magrita and Magdalena with the contemporary portrayal of an Afrikaner *meisie*/girl in *Mies Julie*, one realizes how dramatic the representation of the Afrikaner woman has changed in recent South African plays.

Various studies (inter alia Brink 1990/2008; Cloete 1994; Kruger 1991; McClintock 1991; Vincent 1999) refer to the Afrikaner *Mother of the Nation* as an idealised figure that is especially associated with the heyday of Afrikaner Nationalism. Although most of these studies focused on the Afrikaner *Mother of the Nation* concept in conjunction with Afrikaner nationalism and highlighted the seminal role played by the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek of 1938, studies by Cloete (1994), McClintock (1991) and Vincent (1999) also relates this concept with the Afrikaner Suffragists movement of the 1920's and 1930's. These discussions also look at the relationship between the white *mothers of the nation* and the emerging

black *mothers of the nation* (i.e. the emergence of Black Nationalism) in South Africa. Most of these sources also mention the fact that the *Mother of the Nation* concept is one that underwent changes and accumulated various connotations within sequential historical periods. Gaitskell and Unterhalter (1983: 67), for example, differentiate three phases:

Thus the notion of Afrikaner motherhood, its relation to the state and its contribution to national struggles, has gone through major shifts over time, as Afrikaner power in South Africa has suffered serious setbacks, then gradually reasserted itself, then faced new crises of legitimation. In the first phase, the nation's defeat in the Boer War was most feelingly focused on and remembered in the fact of the suffering of Afrikaner mothers. In the second phase, the national call for mobilisation of political support for separate Afrikaner identity as well as the mobilisation of Afrikaner wealth had its counterpart in domestic cultural mobilisation which was seen as pre-eminently the work of women as mothers. In the third phase ... the power of motherhood has been invoked to assist in the survival of white domination.

In this article I limit myself to the notion of the Afrikaner *Mother of the Nation* as held during the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek – the period when this concept was conceived by means of references to the Afrikaner woman's experiences as pioneer woman, as well as her experiences during the Anglo-Boer war from 1899 to 1902. Although the Afrikaner woman is honoured as a *Mother of the Nation* in various writings of this period, her role is clearly limited to the domestic sphere – the Afrikaner man stays the head of the family and leader of the “volk”/ nation. The woman's role as *spiritual* and *moral* leader of the *volk* is continuously highlighted: she is to a large degree responsible for the advancement of the nation and the racial purity of the volk.

Brink (2008) refers in her article “*Die Volksmoeder: 'n Beeld van 'n Vrou [The mother of the nation: Image of a woman]*” to an early study of dr. Willem Postma (alias dr. Okulis) of 1918, *Die Boervrouw, Moeder van haar Volk [The Boer woman, Mother of her Nation]*, in which the *Boervrouw* is defined as an idealised woman. According to Brink (2008: 8) this idealised representation was “an important part of the propaganda arsenal of Afrikaner nationalism” (own translation). Brink discusses Eric Stocken-ström's *Die Vrou in die Geskiedenis van die Hollands Afrikaanse Volk [The Woman in the History of the Dutch Afrikaans Volk]*, (1921) where a condensed history is given of Dutch-Afrikaans women from 1568 till 1918 and mentions that “according to him Voortrekker women were very aware of their vocation as Mothers of the Nation; to be known as the mothers of the future Afrikaner volk” (own translation, 8).

One finds in these early publications lists of virtues of the *volksmoeder* – inter alia modesty, self-reliance, selflessness, friendliness, generosity, peace-loving, diligent, etc. But it is especially these women's *courage* (they are “female heroes”) and the fact that they must *preserve the volk's racial purity*

which are emphasised by these writers. One can summarise four aspects from these early writings:

- (1) The importance of *race* and the coupling of the white “body” with the spiritual (the “soul”) which must be kept pure;
- (2) The woman who must “protect” her husband – by means of her body – against the dangers of inbreeding and degeneration (from other black nations);
- (3) The equalisation of “wild animals” with the “barbaric black tribes” found during the Great Trek;
- (4) The woman, seen as a helper of God, is in fact stronger than the man, because she is the man’s spiritual protector.

In this article I will give short discussions of the two female figures portrayed in the two early plays, namely: in the earliest published Afrikaans play, *Magrita Prinslo* by S.J. du Toit (1896); and in a play written for the centenary celebration of the Great Trek, *Magdalena Retief* by Uys Krige (1938), before I do a more comprehensive reading of Yaël Farber’s recent portrayal of an Afrikanermeisie (girl) in *Mies Julie* (2012) to see how this figure relates to and differs from the earlier depictions of Afrikaner women.

1 **Magrita Prinslo, of Liifde getrou tot in di dood – S.J. du Toit (1896)**

S.J. du Toit’s short play (only 12 pages long) is of historical importance, because it is acknowledged by most South African theatre historians to be the first published play in Afrikaans. The play was later extended and reworked by S.P.E. Boshoff (1917) to be more effective as a stage play when performed. This second version of the play was often performed at nationalist festivals, for example the Day of the Covenant, (the festival that was renamed as the Day of Reconciliation).

On a first level this play is simply an ordinary love story portraying Magrita’s loyal and enduring love for Pieter Botha, even after she had been wrongly told by his love rival, Koos Potgieter, that he is dead. The greater historical context in which these events are situated, namely the Great Trek, can, however, be seen as the main focus of the play. Within the limited scope of this drama one still finds that the main incidents associated with the Great Trek are mentioned, namely the infamous incident at Slagtersnek in 1816, Commandant Hendrik Potgieter’s trek to Natal during 1838 and as dramatic, but also historical climax the killing of the Voortrekker leader Piet Retief and sixty-seven of his men by the Zulu king, Dingaan in 1838. Not only is Magrita’s loyal love for Pieter shown, she is also revered for her courage and seen as a female hero of the Afrikaner’s Great Trek. The character, Magrita Prinslo, is moulded on the historical person, Magrieta Prinsloo – a person

described by Marlene van Niekerk (in Kriger & Kriger 1996: 141) as one of the “female heroes of the Voortrekker clash with the Zulus at ... Blaauwkrantz”. Magrieta Prinsloo was seen as a “female hero of the volk/volksheldin”, because she had, in spite of numerous assegai stabbings, miraculously survived the Blaauwkrantz battle. Her status as “female hero” is affirmed by the fact that one of the nine oxwagons used during the Great Trek centenary to travel to Pretoria was named after her – an honour that was only bestowed on a few Afrikaner women. Brink (2008) describes this historical procession from various parts of the country to Pretoria as follows:

During the 1938 Symbolic Oxwagon Trek the Mother of the Nation took on a three dimensional appearance From across the country women adorned in authentic Voortrekker dresses and bonnets, accompanied by bearded men in waistcoats and leather trousers took part in the Symbolic Trek traveling from town to town. Wagons like the *Johanna van der Merwe*, the *Magrieta Prinsloo* and the *Woman and the Mother* who represented the female heroes of the Trek, foregrounded women in these celebrations (own translation).

It is interesting to note how the various races and their interactions are portrayed in this play. Although a short play we do find a relatively large cast of characters (1917: 20) with two indigenous characters included in the character list, namely: “Danster, Hotnotsjong fan Klaas Prinsloo and Swartland. Kaffer dolos-goier, jong van Komm. Potgieter”. Although both characters are servants, they play surprisingly important roles in the drama. Swartland is described as an African “dolos-gôier”, a bone-thrower or soothsayer, who predicts Retief’s disastrous end, while Danster is the original *trickster* figure. For a discussion of these two characters and how their lives are intimately connected with those of the Trekkers, see Keuris (2010: 116-117).

Kapp (1975: 80) lists a number of plays performed at the Day of the Covenant festivals and mentions specifically the popularity of S.J. du Toit’s drama at these festivals, as well as the fact that this play was the first play to use the Great Trek as its topic. Jan Cilliers was commissioned to write a sequel to *Magrita Prinslo* for the inauguration of the Women’s Monument in Bloemfontein (16 December 1913). The main character in this play (*Heldinne van die oorlog/Female heroes of the war*, 1924) is Hanna Ras – the granddaughter of Magrieta Prinsloo.

2 Magdalena Retief – Uys Krige (1938)

Most sources mention N.P. van Wyk Louw’s *Die Dieper Reg/The Deeper Right* (first published in 1939) as the most well-known dramatic piece inspired by the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria in 1938. Kapp

(1975: 81), however, states that Uys Krige's *Magdalena Retief* was one of the plays that appealed to most festivalgoers.

Krige's play is based on the life of Magdalena Retief (1782-1855) – the wife of Piet Retief (one of the most popular Voortrekker leaders). Piet Retief is depicted in many of the early Afrikaans plays (where the Retief – Dingaans history is foregrounded) and although Magdalena is sometimes mentioned in these plays (inter alia Van Bruggen's *Bakens: Gedramatiseerde mylpale uit die Groot Trek*, 1939, where four out of the thirteen one-act plays in this anthology are about Piet Retief – from his trek through Natal to his death at the hand of Dingaans' impis), this is the only play dedicated to her life.

The Retief-Dingaans history also features in S.J. du Toit's *Magrita Prinslo*. His wife, Magdalena, however does not feature as a character in this play and one also does not find any references to her in the play. According to Binge (1969: 36) the publication of Gustav Preller's biography on Piet Retief in 1906 drew a lot of attention – and inspired quite a number of plays (inter alia by Langenhoven and Celliers). The interest in Piet Retief (seen as a *volksheld*) was always high and he is one of the most popular historical figures to be portrayed in early Afrikaans drama. His wife, Magdalena, was often mentioned, but always remained a marginalised figure in these plays.

Krige's choice of Magdalena Retief as main protagonist for a play to be written for a competition launched to celebrate the Great Trek centenary in 1938, was thus rather surprising. The play won the prize in the Afrikaans section and was performed on 14 and 17 December 1938. Krige's wife, Lydia Lindeque (a well-known actress of the time) directed the play and assisted greatly in making the long text (70 pages) more suitable for the stage. The play was published in 1945 and reprinted in 1976 with only a few editorial changes.

For Krige it was really the person herself (Magdalena Retief) and not so much the fact that she was the wife of a well-known Voortrekker leader which inspired him to write this play. Magdalena wrote a letter to family in the Cape when she was near the end of her life and titled the letter: "Of my 15 children only 5 left" ("Van mijn 15 kinders nog 5"). In a simple and direct manner Magdalena lists the various deaths of her two husbands and 10 children. Although Krige was at this time also influenced by the strong nationalist sentiments created by the Great Trek centenary and wrote this play specifically for the 1938 festival, it seems as if it was rather the life and personality of this exceptional woman which inspired him to write about her – and not so much her relationship to Piet Retief (see Kannemeyer 1988: 266).

A contemporary reader of the play will find the historical context of the play (the Great Trek event), as well as the fact that Magdalena was the wife of a famous Voortrekker leader interesting. It is, however, rather the portrayal of her Magdalena in 8 scenes – from a young girl (16) to a woman of 70 years of age – which stays in one's memory. Against the epic background of the Great Trek and the Anglo-Boer War it is really the intimate life of this wife

and mother which is foregrounded in the play. The depictions of her struggles and sufferings paint a picture of an exceptional woman. It is thus not surprising that this play was a favourite at many so-called *volksfeeste* (Kapp, 81).

The further history of Uys Krige's *Magdalena Retief* within Afrikaanse literary history is quite interesting. Kannemeyer's comprehensive biography on Krige, *Die goue seun: die lewe en werk van Uys Krige* (2002: 365-368), gives a detailed discussion of how Krige's political position changed and how it cost him the Hertzog prize for Drama for the period 1938-1940. Krige's explicit turn around in regards of Afrikaner Nationalism and his harsh criticism of the apartheid ideology during this period made him very unpopular in conservative Afrikaner circles. Charles Malan (in Kannemeyer's *Die veelsydige Krige* 1988: 58) discusses this period in Krige's life with reference to *Magdalena Retief*. He mentions Krige's admiration for the type of Afrikaner hero which Piet Retief personified, and that he also saw Magdalena as the prototype of the strong Afrikaner woman: courageous when the men are cowards (i.e. fitting the Afrikaners' image of the *Mother of the Nation* figure).

In the play the portrayal of the various races is characteristic of many Afrikaans plays of this period and the use of racist pejoratives (especially the k-word) not only occurs often, but seems to be generally accepted by everyone – these racist forms of address still appear in the 1976-edition of the play. Retief himself (in the play) distinguishes between “good” black people (farm workers) and “bad” black people (attackers or “barbarians”) (32). It is clear from these representations that the whites see themselves as superior to the indigenous black people and that the inferior position of these people (servant/slave) during the Great Trek or later on the farms were simply seen as being a normal state of affair. Magdalena herself had a Batavian female slave for most of her life as part of her household.

3 *Mies Julie – Yaël Farber (2012)*

Farber's reworking of Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1888) as *Mies Julie* (2012) situates the famous Norwegian play in a contemporary South African world. The two main characters, John and Julie, are now on a farm (Veenen) in the Karoo. Julie Meyer, an Afrikanergirl, is the daughter of the white farmer, while John, a Xhosa farmworker, grew up on the farm. His mother, Christine, is a domestic worker and the one who looked after Julie when her mother killed herself. The dramatic events take place on the evening of Freedom Day (27 April) while Julie's father is away. Against the background of angry farm workers John and Julie take part in an evening of intense verbal and sexual violence. Although strongly attracted to each other the two characters seem

unable to overcome their race and class differences and the play ends with Julie's violent killing of herself.

The play is written in English with a few Afrikaans and Xhosa sentences inserted to denote the two characters' different origins. It is especially Julie's background as an Afrikaner girl ("Afrikanermeisie"), John also calls her a "Voortrekker girl" (41), which is foregrounded in this play. Her provocative conduct towards John can probably be ascribed in part by her excessive drinking that evening, but is clearly also rooted in her unhappy youth, as well as her strong feelings for John. The interaction between these two characters is characterised from the beginning of this play by a very specific verbal game being played by both of them – one that is both racially and sexually provocative. The two characters continuously address each other as "mies" and "Kaffir" – especially on pages 26-28 – to provoke and hurt each other.

Another point to highlight in this dialogue is the particular historical references each of them makes during these verbal sparring sessions. Both characters refer back to the past when arguing about the land issue: John to his ancestors and Julie to the "graves" of her forefathers. The "soil" has a history for both of them: John's ancestors with colonialism and Julie's with the Afrikaner "Voortrekkers", with British imperialism and wars with the indigenous black tribes of Southern Africa. The land is associated with blood ("red dust") and graves. For Julie these associations have become hard to bear and she speaks as follows about her ancestors:

Julie: What are we staying for? A pair of boots to polish and an ancestor beneath the floor? My father's already got his grave marked out next to my ma. And his parents. And theirs. All the way back to the Voortrekkers. There's a spot reserved for me too – but they can give that red dust to someone else. What are we staying for? Graves and soil?

(36)

Although seemingly dismissive of her Voortrekker ancestry, her attitude changes after they had sexual intercourse and the verbal sparring between them continues:

Julie: A kaffir! Who will do anything to get his hand in the jar.
John: And I liked getting my hand in the jar. Making you bleed. (*Shoving his hand between her legs.*) This is my blood covenant, Voortrekker Girl. Running down your thigh.

(41)

The reference to "blood covenant" and "Voortrekker girl" in the same utterance is, as seen in the discussion of the two Afrikaans plays above, very meaningful and evokes the whole history of the Great Trek, the Day of the Covenant and the Battle at Blood river.

Their verbal confrontation becomes more heated when John sneeringly tells her that she is now probably impregnated with his child:

John: I didn't touch you. I fucked you! You're full of my seed. A harvest I planted for the future last night.

He sits at the table with his feet up.

Tell me, mies Julie. What if you're carrying my child?

(41)

When John confronts her with the possibility that she can now be impregnated by him, he links the body and soil/soul association made by the play's title ("Then this land will return to the rightful owners This is restitution. Of body and soil", 41-42). For Julie this is unacceptable: "You think my body your restitution? My womb your land grab?" (56).

The interplay in the subtitle ("restitution of body and soil") with the phrase "body and soul", is not only an exchanging of "soul" for "soil" in order to link the Bantu Land Act and the Immorality Act. By superimposing "soil" on "soul" the two words also become interlinked. By taking away the soil (the land), your soul is also attacked and needs to be mended. "Blood" links these two words, as well as its connotation with violence (a bloody history for both blacks and Afrikaners; the "red" soil; the covenant at Blood River; the blood on Julie's thighs after intercourse and her bloody death when she disembowels herself with a farm implement (the sickle). For a more comprehensive discussion of the subtitle and its reference to two of the most contentious apartheid laws please see Keuris (2016: 44-55).

In her final words she sides with her ancestors:

Julie: ... I'm a Boer, John. We don't go down without a fight.

(55)

And

Julie: ... here is my blood vow

(56)

In her dying moments she hallucinates about the Anglo- Boer War, the scorched earth policy followed by the British and how Afrikaner children died in the Boer concentration camps:

Julie: Everyone is crying. They are going farm to farm. Burning our field. Our homes. Scorching the earth ...

John: These memories are not yours, Julie.

(56)

and

Julie: In the Camps, I watch my children fade and fly away...

John: These memories...

Julie: Are buried out there beneath the willows.

Bury me with them. In the red earth.

(57)

John tries desperately to convince her that these are not her “memories”, but Julie’s dying wish to be buried with her Afrikaner ancestors in the family graveyard on the farm, is a final gesture whereby she affirms her alliance with her own people (“volk”).

Although “freedom” has arrived in South Africa in 1994, unresolved tensions persist below the surface, like an ancestor trying to break through a kitchen floor (18, 57) or the “memories” Julie recalls while dying (56-57). Blumberg (2015: 227-228) mentions in her discussion of the play that the seemingly marginalised figure of Ukhoko (a new character introduced by Farber who does not speak, but who’s presence is foregrounded by music and song) seem to represent and communicate with the ancestors:

The soundscape for *Mies Julie* includes Ukhokho’s ancient instruments and throat singing as well as a low hum of single notes and sounds and the plaintive notes of saxophone and electronic music created by the Pencer brothers of Montreal. These together provide an atmospheric anticipation of impending doom. The character, Ukhokho, remains on the periphery of the stage throughout the play and appears in crucial scenes Her presence foregrounds the significance of the ancestors, who play a vital part in traditional Xhosa culture. It reminds spectators that the kitchen has been built over an ancestral burial ground, leaving the spirits of dead unable to rest in peace.

Hutchings (2013: 73) also attaches importance to this figure, who although she never speaks, is “stately and ceremonious in her movement” and “sanctifies the acting-space in much the same way that an ancient priest or priestess – African *or* Athenian – might have done as a ritual at the birth of tragedy itself”. Her presence for him “takes it (play -MK) well away from Strindbergian ‘naturalism’” (72).

The play can thus be seen as an example of what Balme (1999: 353) calls “theatrical syncretism” in post-colonial dramatic practices, i.e. a syncretism that is “an always-already mixed aesthetic that upsets dominant (colonial) aesthetic categories premised on notions of purity through the integration of indigenous and colonial codes”.

Conclusion

The depiction of two historical Afrikaner women, Magrita Prinslo and Magdalena Retief, was placed against the background of the Afrikaner *Mother of the Nation* ideology which is linked to the era of Afrikaner Nationalism.

In complete contrast to the portrayals of these two women we find in Yaël Farber's contemporary adaptation of Strindberg's play an Afrikaner girl who is clearly far removed from how Afrikaner women/girls were portrayed in early Afrikaans plays.

The depiction of racial conflict in the two earlier plays focus especially on the following: (1) the often bloody conflict between the races, since black people were seen as the enemy who is "barbaric" and against whom the whites fought to defend their land and property; (2) the notion that white people represented civilization and that black people are part of an inferior race (a race of slaves or workers); and (3) the notion that the Afrikaner Mother of the Nation is a spiritual and moral leader within the Afrikaner community.

S.J. du Toit's *Magrita Prinslo* (1896) – although written long before Afrikaner Nationalism had become an established ideology – already had the seeds of this ideology imbedded in its portrayal of historical events important to later Afrikaner Nationalists (inter alia the Great Trek, the Retief-Dingaans history) and in its portrayal of the protagonist, Magrita, as a courageous Afrikaner girl (the precursor of the Afrikaner's *Mother of the Nation* ideal woman). The popularity of this play at various Afrikaner Nationalist festivals is an affirmation of this viewpoint. Magrita's relationship with the two indigenous characters (Danster and Swartland) is clearly placed within the social context prevailing at that time, namely that of mistress and servant.

Uys Krige's *Magdalena Retief* (1938) was produced when Afrikaner Nationalism was in its heyday and was experiencing an upsurge of Afrikaner Nationalist sentiment after the Great Trek centenary and the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria and the Women's Monument in Bloemfontein. The historical figure of Magdalena Retief was revered by Afrikaner Nationalists as the incarnation of the true *Mother of the Nation* figure: long-suffering, courageous and patroness of the Afrikaner Nation's future. Although Krige's play portrayed Magdalena not as an idealised figure, but focused on her as an exceptional human being – she was still appropriated by Afrikaner Nationalists as such an idealised figure and the popularity of this play at various Afrikaner Nationalists festivals was based on the perception that she incarnated the *Mother of the Nation* figure. Uys Krige's own disillusionment with Afrikaner Nationalism and vocal criticism of the apartheid ideology later in his life, is thus an ironic footnote to the history of this play. Magdalena's relationship and interaction with black people seemed to simply fall within two categories, (1) she associated them either with war

(enemies not to be trusted), or (2) saw them as inferior (servants in the house or workers on the farm).

In Yaël Farber's *Mies Julie* (2012) the play is situated in a post-apartheid era and after the demise of Afrikaner Nationalism. Julie's Afrikaner ancestry is, however, still stated directly a few times in the play. Her relationship with John (the black farm worker), is clearly far removed from how such relationships were portrayed in early Afrikaans plays. Although the racial issue is still present, it has changed substantially. The farm worker now has a voice – he is no more the silent, subservient worker of the past, but is a person who articulates angrily and aggrievedly the injustices suffered by him and his race at the hands of white people. The use of the k-word is now used by both John and Julie – and ironically it is the manner in which they use this word in the present which demonstrates greater equality between the races.

Julie, as an Afrikaner girl, also breaks – by having a sexual relationship with John – one of the big taboos earlier associated with the idealised Afrikaner woman/girl, namely to be a patroness of racial purity. That she was aware of this taboo is clear when she tells John of her father's threats in this regard when she was still a young girl:

Niemand sal aan my raak nie (No one will touch me). My pa will shoot the black man in the head that puts his hands on me. Then he'll shoot me. Told me that once when I was little. That was my bedtime story.

(15)

Although it is clear from these words and other comments made regarding her father that he still upholds the apartheid ideology and continues to associate himself with the Afrikaner Nationalist's belief systems – also in regards of the “racial purity” of the *Mother of the Nation* concept, it is also clear that Julie, in spite of her feelings for John and her differences with her father, cannot break free from the past.

By killing herself in the end she also makes “reparation” (ironically not in the way that John had hoped): she repairs the old dispensation, since no child will be born from this relationship and Mies Julie will be buried with her Afrikaner ancestors. John may have possessed Julie's body for a short period, but true reconciliation still seems to be far off between the two races and the land issue continues to be unresolved between them.

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