Afrikaner, nevertheless: Stigma, shame & the sociology of cultural trauma

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PART 3: Afrikaner Women at Home
8. Living Inside and Outside the Gate

8.1 INTRODUCTION
In this part, I compare how two groups of Afrikaner women experience and renegotiate home and belonging in the city of Pretoria. The two groups live in very different parts of the city. The first group of upper-class women lives in Golden Sun, an elite gated community on the edge of the city. The other group of lower-middle-class women lives in the northern suburbs. I will explore how race, class and gender influence the construction of home and belonging. In this theoretical introduction, I give a short overview how the urban landscape has transformed in South Africa since 1994, and how the literature on urban development has tried to make sense of this transformation. I argue that neoliberal urban development, crime, and gating have affected upper- and lower-middle-class white Afrikaners very differently. In cities like Pretoria, gated communities have produced a radically different context for race relationships, place attachments, and belonging for upper- and lower-middle-class people. However, in the literature on gating, the relationship between belonging and emotions overemphasizes the negative emotions of fear of “the other” and crime. The role of aesthetics in emotions is stressed by various authors, but rarely applied in the ethnographic studies of gated communities. Nevertheless, it could help explain both new forms of belonging inside the gates, as well as feelings of alienation outside of them.

8.2 URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA
To situate the gated community and Pretoria that form the backdrop of this study, we have to say a few words about the urban landscape in South Africa, and how this transformed after 1994. Historically, South Africa’s landscape has always mirrored the unequal distribution of power between blacks and whites. Apartheid ultimately was a spatial concept—the idea that white and black people had to live geographically separated. Think, for instance, about the erection of bantustans, or homelands, for rural blacks. The forceful
removal of blacks from the neighborhood of Sophia in Johannesburg in the 1960s, and the removal of coloureds from District Six in Cape Town are pointed reminders of the violence of this urban process. Apartheid laws restricted access of blacks to white cities, and helped sustain exclusive white spaces throughout South Africa. Indeed, apartheid left its most visible footprints in South Africa’s geographical landscape of segregation and spatial inequality.

From 1994 onward, the ANC initiated extensive programs of urban development for the poor and pushed to undo the spatial segregation of the past (Kotze & Donaldson, 1998; Saff, 1995, 1996; Schensul, 2008; Seekings, 2000). The success of government desegregation policies is disputed, and the lack of consistent policies and programs criticized (Watson, 2001). The speed of desegregation is relatively slow and segregation indexes remain high, but some progress has been made, depending on the geographical area and the urban spatial structure (A. Christopher, 2005a; A. J. Christopher, 2005b; Crankshaw, 2008; Donaldson & Kotze, 2006; Schensul & Heller, 2011). Nevertheless, urban development after apartheid has been contradictory for other reasons than failed state policies.

Desegregation Versus Securitization and Privatization
Since 1994, the urban landscape has been transformed through state-sponsored desegregation policies, but even more so by the neoliberal forces of securitization and privatization. Public concerns over crime and security after apartheid have been met by sophisticated security systems, which include electrified walls, burglar alarms, vicious guard dogs, private security companies, and automated surveillance cameras to control public and private space (Kempa, 2000). The private security industry in South Africa has experienced an annual growth rate of 18 percent in the period between 1977 and 1999 (Bremner, 2004, p. 466). At the same time, new spatial forms of governance in the form of gated communities emerged, which profoundly reshaped the urban landscape (Hart, 2008). Security estates emerged in South Africa driven by complex forces that involve not only security, but also real estate values, the financing of real estate, a search for community and identity, and the integration of living and well-being, including sport facilities and nature areas. Gated communities are founded on a territorial, material basis that privatizes landscape through various mechanisms of appropriation and exclusion, private (including institutional) ownership, and local legislation. The manifestation of neoliberalism in urban governance resulted in the struggle of the state to finance urban services and infrastructure (Besteman, 2008; P. Harrison & Todes, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003).

In Pretoria, the location of this study, gating has not been researched. This former capital of apartheid South Africa has been traditionally dominated by Afrikaners, but is now part of the metropolitan area of
Gauteng. However, in most major South African cities like Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg, gating has been studied. There have even been comparative studies between South African cities (Ballard, 2002; Beall, Crankshaw, & Parnell, 2002; Besteman, 2008; Jürgens & Gnadt, 2002; Lemanski et al., 2008). These studies show how place attachment and belonging have been radically reconfigured in South Africa. Not just for the inhabitants of these new enclosed communities, but also for the majority of Afrikaners who live outside of it. The phenomenon of gating has also been extensively debated in the United States and more recently in such varied locations as China, Brazil, and Turkey (J. Duncan & Duncan, 2001; Genis, 2007; Glasze, Webster, & Frantz, 2006; Soja, 2000; Wu & Webber, 2004). Researchers have emphasized the legal, economic, architectonical, and lifestyle aspects of this trend. Gated communities are often presented as the pinnacle of neoliberal urban development and the trend of securitization.

Gating, Whiteness, and Emotions
In this study, the focus is on how the experience of living in a gated community affects people’s racial and ethnic identities. In American literature, the experience of living in a gated community is often connected to broader issues such as fear of crime, racism, a new structure of feeling, and the continuity of white economic privilege (Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Caldeira, 2000; Low, 2003). It is in part this confluence of factors that makes the study of belonging under neoliberal urban conditions so challenging. How do these different issues connect? What kind of new emotional landscape do gated communities represent? And how do such urban communities contribute to a fear of crime and fear of the racial other? In part, these questions can also be explored by studying those people who do not live in gated communities, a contrast this study hopes to draw.

Ethnographic research in the United States prefers an explanatory framework that makes use of the psychoanalytic register, like the psychoanalytic accounts of emotions in urban community studies of Sibley and Sennett (Sennett, 2008; Sibley, 1995). In her study of gated communities in America, Setha Low is one of most sensitive urban researchers on the relationships between gating and emotions (Low, 2001, 2003, 2008). In her detailed analysis, she dissects the different concerns residents have about crime and community, the desire for safety, and what she calls “niceness.” The norm of “niceness” is a generic descriptor white American residents use for what is judged as normal behavior and appearance. Low connects the construction of “niceness” to whiteness and contrast to the “fear of others.” Norms on the social environment, she writes, act to naturalize the cultural preferences and codes of white privilege and assuage the anxieties of white middle class. More recently, Low speaks of a new structure of feeling created
by these urban developments (Low, 2008). But the treatment of race and emotions in Low’s study is still slippery, because what makes cultural norms like “niceness” white?

In South Africa, Bremner also writes in a psychoanalytic register. She argues that the impact of crime on the psyche of white South Africans has this effect (Bremner, 2004, p. 461):

Ambiguities are eliminated, new boundaries created, and new social identities and certainties constructed. ... Crime provides a generative symbolism with which to talk about contemporary experiences perceived as alien, threatening, chaotic, or bad—a black majority government, deteriorating social services, dysfunctional traffic lights, a disloyal domestic worker, etc. Through the experience of crime, uncomfortable processes of social change are coded, and defensive mechanisms and projections against them mobilized. Terror becomes the trope through which the transition is lived and made sense of.

Building on the work of postcolonial theorist Archille Mbembe, Bremner argues that the criminal offers a new image through which to establish continuity between the certainties of the past, the uncertainties of the present and the unknown of the future, and that the wall is the figure of the new political order (Bremner, 2004). Suggestive as the psychoanalytic account of Bremner might be, it is at the same time too speculative and too limited to say that the “uncomfortable processes of social change” has only to do with terror and crime.

In a series of studies, mostly in and around Cape Town, Lemanski researched the residential strategies and social experience of crime among whites (Lemanski, 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c). She shows how white residents in gated communities often mix their fears of crime with broader fears regarding the future of their western lifestyles in the new South Africa. Most whites, at least from 2003, no longer felt safe in their residential area. In her research, Lemanski endorses the view that discourses on crime among whites are an acceptable discourse that serves as a code or pretext for talk about racist fears and “the other.” Lemanski concludes that, at least in Cape Town, the social divisions of the past are perpetuated, although she acknowledges there is much more variety than often is expected in South Africa (Lemanski et al., 2008).

In the research of Lemanski and Bremner, following Low, there is the suggestion that gated estates still function as old-fashioned communities with solid social relationships and that residents have to talk in code to keep other races out. Although it is misguided to suggest such exclusionary talk does not happen, I argue that white elite groups do not need such racial codes to assert their power nor do we need psychoanalytical theories to explain the emotional landscape of gated communities. If we are to understand how the new cultural landscapes of neoliberal urbanism in South Africa relate to race,
we have to ask ourselves how do economic elites, with their considerable resources, reshape the landscape to make new “homes”? Gated communities have been, at least initially, an upper-class phenomenon in South Africa, and also elsewhere. It is thus a development closely linked to the politics of space by the affluent. As Harvey notes, since the affluent are generally economically self-sufficient they do not need to command space through continuous appropriation and neither do they need street-level interpersonal relations and neighborhood networks in order to meet their basic needs. Instead, their common interests and concerns generally revolve around a need to maintain the standards and property value of the built environment through a shared commitment to common conceptions of taste, tone, aesthetic appreciation, and symbolic and cultural capital (1985: 262).

8.3 AN AESTHETIC APPROACH: CLASS AND BELONGING

Aestheticization is the preferred management technique of the elite and this goes hand in hand with social exclusion and the management of class. As the rich try to simultaneously enhance, naturalize and conceal class privilege, aestheticization plays an important role in depoliticizing class relations (Harvey, 2004). Duncan and Duncan beautifully illustrate how this operates in practice (2004; J. S. Duncan & Duncan, 2001). In their study of the aesthetic attitudes of residents in a semirural suburb of New York, they show the intimate relationship between landscapes, social identity, and exclusion. They show the important (new) role of aesthetic discourses in supporting class interests. Discourses of romantic ideology, localism, antiurbanism, and antimodernism mediate for residents the active role landscapes play “in the performance of elite social identities and the framing of social life and values within a community” (J. S. Duncan & Duncan, 2001). People’s aesthetic dispositions are related to ideology in that they refer to “the unarticulated, unmediated, and naturalized pleasure one takes in the concrete materiality of things in themselves” (J. S. Duncan & Duncan, 2001). Particularly among the elite, landscapes and aesthetic dispositions are markers of identity. As such, they provoke sincere emotions that inadvertently act to naturalize class privileges and tastes. In line with Harvey, Duncan and Duncan argue that class relations are constituted by power, authority, and production practices that are consequently aestheticized. In other words, this reduces class and power relations to aesthetic and lifestyle choices. Duncan and Duncan see aestheticism and romanticism leading toward the inward-looking pursuit of personal, national, and racial idiosyncrasies.

If this is translated to new private gated communities, what matters for belonging with the elite is not so much social relationships but privacy, access, and flexible associations of friendships and lifestyle (Blokland-Potters, 2003). Moreover, newly imagined communities exist through shared memories of the past (images that often do not include young people or
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Minorities). Gated communities are not defined by the social interactions of its residents but by their emotional involvement. The American philosopher Margaret Kohn illuminates in her work how such communities are formed by individuals that identify with a particular location. Such groups, she writes, are “sustained by perceived similarities in lifestyle and absence of conflict … reinforced by similar patterns of consumption and cultural cues rather than shared activities and practices” (Kohn, 2004). The aesthetic experience of living in a neighborhood becomes the basis of collective identity and belonging, as the irreconcilable social antagonisms that pervade modern life are avoided. The effects of such forms of aesthetization and privatization are multiple: to enhance the aesthetic experience of those groups deemed deserving, the use of space gets restricted to prevent the sight and proximity of others (although not necessary racial others). The presence and speech of strangers becomes defined as an inconvenience; the rights are removed of the undeserving and unwashed. According to this logic, gated communities are not about social relationships but about the aesthetic imagination of community and belonging, and its perverse real-life consequences.⁶

Outside the Gate: The Lower-Middle Class and Belonging

In the literature, the experience of gating is rarely contrasted to urban living of the less-affluent whites—those who live outside of the gates. Here, I do not mean the social connections between those living close to a gated community and those inside of it (Lemanski, 2006a). I am interested whether the experiences of lower-middle-class whites in the city can tell us something new about the attractiveness of gating, particularly beyond the protection of crime. There has been limited research on white lower-middle-class groups, apart from a number of historical studies on poor whites and one brief but fascinating account of racial integration in a white neighborhood after apartheid (Courtney Jung, 2003; Courney Jung & Seekings, 1996; Teppo, 2004, 2008). What this study emphasizes is how the lower middle class experiences the post-apartheid city as increasingly descending into chaos and decaying.

South African academic Steven Robins has warned for the uncritical condemnation of the chaotic and violent character of post-apartheid cities. Cities should not be simply qualified as fundamentally dysfunctional and ungovernable. He cautions for a “politics of the belly” and stresses the importance of the political economy of underdevelopment (Robins, 2002). But such a dichotomy underestimates how important emotions are in shaping our experiences of space and place. Places achieve significance precisely because they are the source of intense emotion. Rather than to pit a political economy approach against a framework that includes emotions, as Robins suggests, the aim should be to align them in a research framework. How does the political economy of place contribute to fear of crime and fear of the
racial other? How are spatial strategies fed by fears of loss of privilege? Even if discourses and feelings are dystopic and overly negative about home and the city, their coproduction should be explored, rather than ignored. The question is how to align them.

8.4 A COMPARATIVE FRAMEWORK AND QUESTIONS

The focus in Part 3, Living, is on women. This chapter does not offer, like Part 2, a full comparison between upper- and lower-middle-class white female Afrikaners, and how they live. It does not present a full scale comparison between two special communities. However, it does try to contrast the experience of living in a gated community with the perceptions and feelings of those living outside of it, in a post-apartheid city. In chapter 9, I first analyze how lower middle class women experience belonging and their home. I discuss how they talk about the city and public space. I explore the ambivalences of this group of Afrikaans women, and contrast their ideas of home with those of work, the neighborhood, the city, and the past.

However, the primary focus is on the study of how elite, white, Afrikaans women understand and experience estate living in a large gated community in Pretoria, South Africa. Based on three months of residential stay and participatory observations, and over 40 interviews with residents, workers and management staff, I try to locate the residential experience in their wider understanding of South Africa and being white and Afrikaans after apartheid. From the many interviews I did, I focus on the women because I found them particularly articulate about their aesthetic concerns and few of them showed racism in the traditional sense. Also, they were a group of liberal women that showed the limited role racism plays or the figure of the black criminal for sustaining the image of the ideal community. In fact, many of them take an active antiracist stance. Concerns about security and crime still play a large role in their lives (and talk), but it is not the dominant logic by which the estate is presented. The two leading questions of these chapters are: How do living, as an institution, and gating specifically, shape the changing discourses of Afrikaner women on identity, race, and ethnicity? How do race, class and gender influence the process of identity formation the living environment, and what is the role of emotions therein?
9. Urban Decay and Disgust

9.1 IDENTITY TALK

Home is a haven for the Afrikaans woman. It is a place where she can relax, where it is peaceful, and their loved ones are, and where they can invite their friends. This portrayal strongly contrasts to the experiences in their work environment, which I discussed briefly in chapter 7 (7.9). The work environment is presented as “stressful,” “frustrating,” and “tense.” The contrast illuminates how home is the natural counterpoint to work. Lana Giliomee says:

At work there are all these tensions from people. And you always have to keep the peace. At home I can be myself. If I want to be mad, then I am mad. If I want to laugh and be happy, then I am. I can’t be like that at work. At work I am like an actor; like a performer: you constantly have to think about what you say and what you do, and what the right thing is to do. … You can’t just act if you are angry. At home, you can be angry. Then I am and it is over. At work that is not possible. You have to think: what will happen if I will react like that? At home I am totally myself, like I want to be. Emotionally, there isn’t that repression.

Home, for Giliomee, is the only place where she can “be herself,” a condition she equates with the ability to express and act out her emotions. For her, social life at work has become acting. As a metaphor, acting captures what it means for lower-middle-class Afrikaners to play the new social role of a nondominant minority. The social norms at work have changed—racism is no longer tolerated, nor is white Afrikaner dominance. Giliomee has become hyper-reflexive about what she says and does in the workplace, but also about how she feels. She has to learn anew how to behave and speak without the support of privilege and racism. Emotion management is an important part of Giliomee’s “act” because how she feels, at the workplace, often no longer
corresponds with how she perceives she has to act. She feels she cannot show her anger at work, because it would have negative repercussions.

However, the women’s main emotion management strategy is not to adjust their feelings, but to make a strict separation between home and work. Home and work are not just experienced as different worlds—Afrikaans women reinforce the separation through a symbolic boundary between home and work. Home and work are depicted as different worlds, with contrasting social norms, that have to remain separate. The women say they do not want to talk about work at home and vice versa. Worries about work are not allowed to spill over to home, and life at home must remain unknown to co-workers. Some women depict themselves as machines that have learned to turn themselves on and off. Such a metaphor not only expresses the desire to contain the emotional stress at work, but also the strategy to ignore—even resist—scrutiny into the origins of the emotional stress.

9.2 RACE TALK
What it means for the women to be themselves at home is intimately connected to how they perceive the new racial hierarchy at work. At work the women feel they have to accept that things have changed since 1994. There, they emphasize that everybody is equal and there are no racial differences. They say they have good relationships with their non-white co-workers, although many admit they don’t communicate socially with their colleagues all that much. Marie Nell says:

If I come in at Telkom I am at work. There, we are all the same. We work for the same company. Their blood is just as red as mine. It does not matter who sits next to me. Whether they are Muslim, Indian, … All have a heart that beats; all have blood that pumps around. That is my motto.

For Nell, there are no racial differences at work. All workers have the same goal in Telkom. She emphasizes the equality of all workers. That this acceptance of equality at work demands adjustment from the women is a price they are willing to pay.

However, equality is endorsed only within the work space. Beyond the physical borders of work, the opposite holds true—racist prejudice rules perceptions of blacks. Rosita De Klerk has good relationships with her black co-workers. Like other women, she describes how she has adjusted over the years, and really got to know them. She now likes to call her co-workers “family.” But when she describes unfamiliar blacks, she says:

When you are outside, you do not work together with them, you do not know them. You still feel that outside they are barbaric. If you read the newspapers, if you listen to the news, then you feel as if you can still hate them, even though you are not allowed to do so. You feel you want to protest against them. They will not care to smash you in your car. They will not care if they steal your purse from under your arm. They will not care to
steal from you. For me it feels like that is in their nature. It is part of their humanity. But like I said, it is totally different to work together with them, as to be together with them outside.

De Klerk draws a strong division between her opinions on the black co-workers she is now familiar with and the black Africans outside of work. They are, to her, still threatening, as she links them to crime and hate. She suggests that blacks have different beliefs and cultural values. Their supposed violent attitude is even rooted in their biology.

The contrast between the racial perspective at work and at home causes a tension in these women’s racial talk, and the women struggle to defend a strict separation between these opposing lifestyles. Sarie Hugo says:

At home I have no contact with other cultures. They do not visit my house. I only have to work with them. It is alright to come into contact with other cultures outside of the house. This does not matter to me. At work, your culture cannot have an influence on you. I believe in equal rights, so what they do does not bother me. I don’t like it when anybody is unjustly treated by someone else. I will stand up and argue with that person. But this does not affect me personally. The different cultures do not affect my house. The moment you leave work you forget everything and everybody, so this does not affect me. I do not talk to them; I do not hang out with them; I do not have anything to do with them. I do not have a maid at home. I will not allow this to affect my life. I am happy with my life as it is.

The clear line Hugo draws again and again between home and work only reveals her worries about interracial contact. At work, she accommodates other cultures and promotes equal rights. But the more she argues that contact and other cultures do not “affect” her, the more her racial anxiety shows. Cultural contact is presented as contagious; hence, she quarantines it to her workspace. The women struggle to navigate racial interactions. They contrast the emotional labor at work with the freedom they experience at home.

In part, the emotional strain at work is worsened by a language barrier. The Afrikaans women say they feel cut off from the social talk of their black co-workers because they don’t understand what is being said. Few Afrikaans women have a good command of English or any African language. In their free time, the women prefer to speak Afrikaans. But language is not the only boundary.

The strong gender dimension is revealed in Hugo’s final comments, which make clear that her husband does not allow similar racial tolerance at home. Hugo added:

My husband also does not believe in this. I differ a lot from him, but I also believe that in every culture, the housewife stands together with her husband.
At work, she adheres to the new non-racial norms, but at home her husband is in charge.

The image of home as a haven sits uneasy with the media’s clichés of white South Africans spooked by crime and the black criminal figure. The women did experience a rise in crime since 1994, but change at the neighborhood level has been limited. Lower-middle-class neighborhoods have not become a racial battleground after the fall of apartheid. Rather, interracial interaction has been limited in neighborhoods in comparison to work. Most women say their neighborhoods are relatively stable and peaceful places. The demography, they say, has hardly changed. Most blacks have moved to new developments, they assert, and not into their neighborhoods, which are the older areas of Pretoria. Hugo continued:

This is a normal suburb. I enjoy living here. This is very centrally located. But I still think it is not safe. They broke into our house twice, one time when I was at home. I don’t think this is a safe neighborhood. But this isn’t the most dangerous neighborhood of Pretoria either. We have lived here for nine years. I feel at home. This is mainly a white area; there are very few black people.

As Hugo makes clear, most women feel at home in their neighborhood despite crime. They say that their neighborhood is still fine while simultaneously complaining that crime has increased. Some blacks have moved in, they admit, but they hardly ever see them or have any problem with them.

Most homes have been burglarized at least once in the last few years or family members have been victimized by crime. The women are always aware of the security threat. One woman says she often finds cigarette butts in her garden in the morning—evidence, she says, from criminals who have tried to do a burglary and fell asleep on her lawn. Another woman says she regularly wakes up when people shine a flashlight into her house. Extensive alarm systems are often unaffordable for the lower middle class. They improvise with dogs, barbed wire, glass on walls, and keep baseball bats, pepper spray, and sometimes guns ready. However, the house is believed to be comparatively safer than other spaces.

For most women, being outside of the home—driving or walking—is perceived as unsafe, and fear of crime influences their living patterns. They stay at home during the evening and avoid certain areas in the city. While outside their homes, they are continuously on the lookout. Bernadet Blignaut moved three years ago to Pretoria, from a small village in the Free State. She says:

This is not safe. Not safe at all. I am not used to this lack of safety. You will never be used to it. Never. I never carry my jewelry. If you stop at a traffic light, they will steal your wallet, your phone. No, it is unsafe. I look around
all the time. I know so many people who had things happen to them. I stay at home in the evening. It isn’t safe.

Blignaut describes a constant fear that grips these women when they are outside of their homes. For them, being stress-free in a public space is an impossibility.

Talk about public safety is strongly racialized. Lower-middle-class women still rely in part on public transportation and frequent the downtown business district, because this is where they work—places in which the African majority has started to dominate. These spaces are depicted as dangerous places, and much more dangerous than either the home or work. The women feel they can be assaulted at any time, whether they travel by car or not.

Rosita De Klerk, who lives in Witbank, a middle-size city near Pretoria, says:

I am OK at work and I am OK at home. I am not totally comfortable in the village anymore. It’s getting too crowded. And this has become very black. This is really, really black. And robberies and stuff like that have happened. For instance, they cut off the complete hand of a woman here in the southern part of the village, just to get her ring. Then they ran away with her hand. So yes, many of the things that are happening are scary. But you can’t do anything about it because it is the same everywhere. ... I do feel safe in some places. If I am honest, I go to bible school and there I feel safe. At the bible school, the majority is black; there are only a handful of white people. But at the bible school it is special.

De Klerk’s negative perception of public space is explained by race and crime, which come together in her horror story. Such stories emphasize the brutality and cruelty of crime, but should not be read necessarily as an accurate representation of South African crime, as there are simply too few statistical numbers on the brutality of violence during crimes to say anything useful about that. Apart from the questionable truthfulness of crime stories, such narratives express a sense of constant threat. Note the escalating tone when she acknowledges the increased participation of the black majority in public life. As another Afrikaner woman said: “You feel safe nowhere.” But De Klerk also shows that race is not the only fear factor: she attends a bible school that is predominantly black, and there she isn’t afraid at all.

What resonates in the women’s descriptions of private space versus public space is the theme of order versus chaos. They communicate a sense that the whole city has slid into anarchy. They complain about the deterioration of services and decry the impossibility of getting things “fixed and done” like water and electricity services. They also complain about street litter, roads in disrepair, and no adherence to traffic rules. The symbol of road anarchy, for them, is the taxi driver. He is described as ruthless, dangerous, and beyond control. Complaints about services are often wrapped in the language of “standards.” Most services are said to be below “the standards”
of the past. This might all very well be true, but racialization happens when the women contribute meaning to this course of events.

The stories of chaos and decay are strongly racialized. What starts with a lament about the state of urban services usually ends with accusations against blacks. One woman asserts that “they” shit everywhere and that “they” never use the bathroom. Another woman complains “they” simply feed their children on the street, showing their boobs in public. Again another says that “they” never throw trash in the trash cans. Marie Nell says:

_Aeh … you know, our municipal services … The streets are full of papers. They do not go to the bathroom. When I walk to my parking garage, they will stand against a tree. And they just do what they want to do. Here, right at the corner. It stinks. I park around the corner of my work, where I pay for a spot. But the surroundings have gotten so bad. There are feces all over. You can’t walk through without feeling you have to throw up. And this has become unsafe and I was attacked. As a woman alone, I cannot go to my car anymore. I have to kick the trash from the path. And this is dirty: our streets, our parks. The bushes have grown man-high. Our trash cans, where we pay for through municipal taxes, they didn’t come to collect them for a whole month. Every weekend we dropped our own trash can. This stuff did not happen 20 or 30 years ago._

Nell stresses dirtiness over danger when it comes to public space. Her lament about municipal services is immediately racialized, with “they” standing in for blacks. Women like Nell imply that black people do not care about things like public morals and public spaces. For lower-class women, race explains the public decay. A similar line of reasoning connects loss and race in the story of Antjie Du Plesis. She says:

_Look, there are things that give me real heartache. These are things that pierce my heart. Look at the train stations for instance. The train stations used to be the pride of the railroad network. Trains used to run on time; the old Trans-Karoo line that used to ride, you know, people used to go on holiday with that line. This was _lekker_. The blacks used to have their part of the train, whites used to have their own parts too. The train stations were beautiful. We used to say to each other that the police at the stations were a bunch of ‘station flower pots.’ But they served a purpose. They made sure nobody was able to damage the station. But if you look at any station today, you know. A few days ago I took my brother-in-law to the train station in Krugersdorp. The train did not arrive because there was no power on the net to ride the train from Johannesburg to Krugersdorp. They sent a bus to pick people up. The station is a ruin. They used to have a fountain where they had fishes. This is still there, but—this really hurts your soul—you think: ‘When I was still a child, I had a little piece of string and a hook and I would catch the fishes with a piece of bread.’ But everything that is left is a wall, and this wall was toppled over. It lies on the ground. It is overgrown with bushes that they planted there. About the building I can’t say anything,
because it looks like a pig’s house. They never paint it anymore. And look at the trains people have to ride to go from one station to another to go to work. Look how people are thrown off the train. In those days, it was a real train. You came in, you sat down, and you could read the newspaper. That is how it was. And this is where I say: it looks like it does not have any value for blacks.

Du Plesis recalls a time when such public transportation companies instilled a sense of pride in its passengers. Of course, as she explains, this was a time when trains were mainly for white people. In post-apartheid South Africa, the ANC government has struggled to fund the semiprivatized railway system and retain decent service, if only because of the expanded customer base. However, Du Plesis interprets the demise of train stations through the prism of race and law and order. She argues that blacks do not care about public transportation. The loss associated with a dysfunctional public transportation system thus becomes a new source of racism.

Ultimately, the image of the public spheres of chaos, crime, and dirt becomes an infectious threat for the women—a threat or disease that will affect white people too. Marie Nell added:

The sad thing is, the white people are changing also. Crime is also affecting them. Yea, they also do crime now. ... They also start not to care anymore. And all those immigrants that come in, the illegal immigrants. They have no respect for my privacy or property. They just live on my doorstep. And the white people are starting to do that too. You know, that bugs you. I help no one anymore. The whites are in decline. The respect they used to have for themselves. ... But I say, there are many, many black people who ... there are many Indians who are good people. Our country ... I don’t say the black people are bad. I don’t say that. I say particularly the people who come from across the border, those that come to steal our jobs. ... If things don’t change, there will not be a future here.

Echoing themes that once were the justification for apartheid—the idea that bad habits were contagious—Nell underlines the fears she has about the encroaching chaos she experiences, and the fear that she can no longer stop what is happening. In a surprising post-apartheid twist, and adhering to the new social norm, she argues that black people are not to blame. Instead, she accuses the illegal immigrants of these things, a group that is politically a safer scapegoat in post-apartheid South Africa than black people.

9.3 CULTURE TALK

As the city has become a place of decay and disgust in the eyes of the women, the apartheid past is depicted as a positive contrast. Then, life was still safe. Then, the roads were still taken care of. Then, everything looked better. The present perception of decay and feeling of loss is so dominant that the women cannot help but emphasize the positive images of the past. Apartheid
to them is not a collective crime but a historic period when there was beauty, order and safety. Bernadet Blignaut recalls:

What was good then was that South Africa looked better. It was better taken care of. And these days, the streets are dirty, the parks have become ugly. This is no longer safe. If you are in Europe, you can pass people’s homes in the street and you will see their house, and you can see the furniture inside the house. In South Africa you won’t see the house. This is behind a high wall and bars in front of the window. That isn’t happiness. That isn’t safety.

Blignaut’s argument about apartheid has an aesthetic focus, but also a particular language. She argues that South Africa “was better taken care of” in the past. It is the same language of care the women use to complain about the attitudes of blacks today: they do not “care” anymore about public space and safety. Public space during apartheid was perceived as safe, because it looked orderly; public space after apartheid is perceived as dangerous because it looks ugly and chaotic.

But the apartheid period is not only remembered by its order and well-maintained public space. It was also a time when whites had it relatively easy. Most Afrikaans women are aware how privileged they were during apartheid and that the system was particularly beneficial to whites. In comparison to the men, they are much more candid in their assessment. Rosita De Klerk added:

You know, for me it was *lekker*, or pleasant. White people could get in everywhere. You could just ask for work and you would get the job. There really was not a problem with getting a job. Many people just got a job because the people liked them. I don’t think there where many questions asked then about qualifications and such, if I really think about it. And now I have to be honest: I think the blacks in those days had it really bad. I think whites only took care of each other. And I think—and this is my honest opinion—we didn’t do for them what we had to do. I don’t think we made them achieve our levels. Yes, this was a great time for us, whites. I think the money flowed easily. And people gave parties. And people had *baljaar*, they were having a ball. And they bought fancy cars and houses. In those years it was cheap to do. I think the government then had a lot to do with how things worked out. I think the government did not follow the right course, and that is why it turned out bad for everybody. And now the blacks are finally at the helm. They thought: now it is our chance to take revenge, to push the whites out and to get the blacks in. And today it is the blacks who have the money. The tables have definitely turned.

De Klerk candidly celebrates the benefits of apartheid. She sums up the benefits for whites, while simultaneously acknowledging the injustices done to blacks. There is a class element to her analysis too. She has not profited from apartheid in the same way as she describes some other whites have. Like many women, De Klerk suggests that the government made mistakes during the transition. Ronel Smit says:
Let me be honest. When I grew up I didn’t feel apartheid was right because I … didn’t agree with it. And then the first year I worked, I definitely changed my opinion about it. I am not saying apartheid was right. Definitely, it wasn’t right, it was wrong in every way. But I think we should have done this whole integration differently. Um… it was like making a 12-year-old state president. They don’t have the skills to do it at all. And I think that is what caused most of the chaos. They got opportunities but they still don’t use opportunities. They are not willing to take responsibility. It is 20 years later and what has changed? Nothing. The poor people are even poorer now than during apartheid. The few on top, they live like royalty. But the lower class, they are struggling tremendously.

Smit argues that while apartheid was unquestionable wrong, racial integration was handled equally badly. She relies on long standing racial prejudices of blacks as undeveloped and irresponsible, like children, to disqualify them. The class element also returns with her lament that it is the poor blacks who suffer.

Compared to Afrikaans men, the Afrikaans women acknowledge the wrongs of apartheid. But they are equally reluctant to feel guilt about apartheid, and they rely on various arguments to dispose of any blame. Marie Nell added:

No, no, no. I don’t feel guilty. Simply because if I look at how the country was in those days, and if I look at how the country looks now; if I look at the trouble we had then and how the people solved problems then and how things happen now, financially and economically, in the country. The country is messy in comparison with how it looked in the past. There is no order anymore. … Worry is the wrong word … I can’t be blamed for how other people thought. I don’t know what the circumstances were 50 years ago that caused apartheid, because I was not alive then. Everything I hear today I have to have read in books. I don’t know whether this is true or not. I can’t say this isn’t true. I didn’t live in those times. I wasn’t there to tell you now what they did was wrong. What I can tell you today is that I wouldn’t mind going back to those days, unless they also get civilized. I wouldn’t mind to go back and live in that situation. It was very safe. You could sleep with your door open. I didn’t need to have anti-hijack pepper spray in my car if I drive home at night. That is what I do now.

Nell focuses on the aesthetic order of the past as a positive contrast to the “messy” present. Her perception of the present poor state of the country functions as the main excuse to deny any guilt. She also averts blame by arguing that she does not know the past’s circumstances and that she cannot be held accountable for other people’s actions. Her reasoning is inconsistent when it comes to the denial of responsibility for apartheid: does she not know about the past, like she says, or does she thinks, because she want to go back, that the past was better?
One specific argument the women rely on to avert blame for apartheid shows the difference between public acknowledgement of past wrongs and private memory. The women might acknowledge that apartheid was wrong, while still maintaining that their lifestyle was fine. Such idealized personal memories of the apartheid era mitigate the guilt for the crimes of apartheid. Lana Giliomee recalls:

I grew up on a farm. I was one of the only whites. My dad worked at the farm but he was not the owner. When I grew up … for me there was no difference, we just … worked together. They were my friends. We played together, always. We are still equal. Even though it was tough, look, apartheid was really, really tough, the suppression and stuff. But it was never like it is today. My dad’s relationship with the black Xhosa workers was so good. He was like a headman for them. They came to him with their problems. So my upbringing has taught me: you are not different from one another. We have grown up like that. So that is how we educate our children: equal. We are all human. There are differences that make it difficult in life. And we basically feel now that … I feel suppressed because I don’t get the future that I always gave. … When I just started working, the first black person also started. I took him by the arm. We worked together. We lived together. But today it feels like—in our time—you cannot do this anymore.

Women like Giliomee portray the farm they grew up on as the exception to the apartheid rules. Although she acknowledges that apartheid was “tough” for blacks, the farm is a place where racial relationships were good. Giliomee connects this idealized past to her current equal racial relationships. But today she feels that her efforts to treat people equal are not even appreciated anymore.

Finally, none of the women say they are ashamed of being an Afrikaner. They do not wrestle with this identity label. However, they aren’t able to shake it of its burdened past either. Rather, they choose to have it both ways: they recognize the wrongs of the past but still suggest that the system could have worked for everybody. Says Sarie Hugo:

I am not ashamed to say I am an Afrikaner. I am not ashamed about the years of apartheid, although other people might not agree with me. I think it was a good thing. I do think they should get equal rights and it should have been done in another way. I think our world is big enough for all of us to have a place in it. Our most beautiful parts of Southern Africa belong to the blacks. Like Zimbabwe, that is a very beautiful country. I wonder why they cannot stay where they have to stay and we stay where we are. I think this works in foreign countries; they just do not say it. They just don’t use the word apartheid. So I am not ashamed for who or what I am; not ashamed for what the forefathers have done; and also not for what we may do in the future. I think Afrikaans is a beautiful language. I think in Afrikaans you can express your feelings more beautifully than in any other language. I know:
they say what they did was horrible. I don’t think so, but I must say I don’t
know everything they did. I think it was not necessary to … kill blacks for
no reason, because that is what happened. But I don’t think it was wrong to
keep them in their place and to keep us in our place. I think this made our
community safer. I think productivity wise this was better. I think whites can
do the work much better than blacks.

As Hugo shows, it is not that the women do not admit that apartheid was
wrong or do not endorse equal rights. Their current struggle with racial
integration and their devaluation in the racial hierarchy makes them long for a
time when they were the dominant minority, and could determine the “place”
of other races.

9.4 MEN AT HOME AND WORK

What do the men say about the boundary between home and work? In
contrast to the women, some men do socialize with blacks outside of work.
For instance, Schalkwyk regularly goes out to dinner and bars with his black
colleagues. Nevertheless, he says that he does not have any huis vriende (house
friends) that are other races—“No one even made it past my front door,” he
says. The men make a rigid separation between home and work—maybe
even more rigid than the women. Afrikaans men feel that at work they have
the duty to work together; they feel they have the freedom to choose at
home. Johan Faurie says:

At work, the pressure and stress has become bigger and bigger. That spills
over to your home. Because you arrive at home and you are still angry. You
are still stressed and you are so full of things. This has a negative impact on
you as a human being. ... My home is always my place of relaxation. I have
the feeling that if you go to your home, this calms you down again. Because
at home I have my wife and my child, and my dogs; this is my house and
everything is quiet. There is stress too, yes, this is natural, every house has
stress, but this is stress that I can deal with. This is stress you can do
something about. At work you cannot always do something about it. What
would you do? You have to work. That is just how it is. You know that
when you come home, you can close the door. There you can get rest and
peace.

Work and home are connected for Faurie, because he is the vessel of the
(racial) conflicts at work. But the difference between home and work is the
sense of control he feels at both places, over the people and events that cause
stress. In the workplace, he does not feel he has power to influence events.
And he feels he needs to be employed. However, he claims authority at
home, and speaks in terms of ownership about his wife, child, and dog. He
experiences agency at home, symbolized by the ability to create a physical
boundary between the in- and outside.
Like the women, stress at work for the men is due to race. Racial relationships at work are experienced as stressful, and emotionally draining. Consequently, the home is presented as a zone that must be free of racialized stress, which means a place where a man does not worry about what he does or says. Naude says:

At home there is nobody who frustrates and irritates me. I am between people of my culture and I can freely say what I am thinking. At work I always have to think about what I say. Will I say something that he might see as racist? Then I have a problem. ... There is a good saying: “You can throw crumbs to the birds, and the dove, the sparrow and the chaffinch will all eat together.” We all work together, but in the evening every person goes to his own home. Do you see what I mean? (...) If I am going home, I am with my wife and children. He doesn’t come over to relax at my house. He doesn’t sleep over. People of my culture come to me and people of his culture go to him. At work we are together, I mingle with him, I talk with him. I am not a racist, not at all. I hope you understand. But when I step outside, it is my people and my culture that matters to me.

Naude stresses that he is not racist and attempts to prove it by saying how at work he mingle and talks with blacks. But obviously there is displacement of racism from the work floor to the home. Adjusting at work to the new situation is so stressful for the men that they declare the home forbidden territory for non-Afrikaners. Whether their wives agree with this is often unclear. All the men need is a justification, and here the echo of Afrikaners nationalism is evident: what matters to the men are the Afrikaner people, and the Afrikaner culture.

9.5 CONCLUSION

For lower-middle-class Afrikaans women, home is still a place of respite, away from the tensions at work and the complicated racial terrain they navigate on a daily basis. The women’s depiction of home as haven cannot be detached from their experience of racial relationships at work. The workplace, as we saw in chapters 6 and 7, has been racially integrated. Afrikaners have lost their dominance at work. The women no longer adhere to the ideology of white supremacy or believe in racism, but they struggle to adjust to the new racial landscape. They feel pressure to be sensitive and act accordingly, and this causes stress. They have to manage their emotions constantly, as a consequence of accepting the new social norms. However, at work, they do accept equality between the races. They make a strong symbolic separation between home and work. They compartmentalize their lives. At work, they accept cultural diversity and the need for adjustment. At home, they claim the space for their own culture in order to be stress-free. Their husbands sometimes demand non-whites to stay out of the house, which explains the women’s narrative tension in creating an artificial boundary between home
and work. Home is a place where women want to be free from the pressure to change. It is a place of relief and continuity—where they can be themselves.

The women define and defend their home and sense of self in South African society in the face of the growing threat posed by their physical and social proximity to mainly black poverty. Especially during their commute, the women feel exposed to a city they have trouble reading. Although rising crime has affected their neighborhoods too, the effect of fear of crime on perceptions of public space and public safety are most pronounced. They experience the city’s chaos as encroaching upon them, which fills them with disgust—almost a physical repulsion. That is one reason why they draw strict symbolic boundaries between the different spaces they traverse. The women see and feel the city as descending into chaos, and fear they go along with it. Chaos takes a multitude of forms: crime, poverty, dirt, and filth; perception of disorder and decay that blend into fear of crime and the black masses. As a consequence, their acceptance of equal rights and cultural diversity at work has not translated into racial tolerance outside of it. Beyond work, fear and aversion of blacks still looms large. Afrikaner women seem to have only access to racial explanations for urban disorder. Their cultural toolkit does not include antineoliberal narratives, about investment in public space, but does include narratives that relate the city’s disorder to the end of racial segregation. Racial desegregation and the deterioration of the city, for them, have gone hand in hand.

The women’s memories of apartheid are a mirror image of their current encounters with the city. They remember a past in which streets were safe, beautiful, and orderly. Their loss of feelings of safety and beauty is real, and they long for that time. To call this nostalgia would miss the point—the women draw a contrast between a specific set of issues in the past and the present, like security and aesthetic order. The women know that apartheid was wrong and benefitted them, although they rarely acknowledge guilt. They recognize the system was unfair, even though their private memories are sometimes idealized. They admit Afrikaners received benefits, but they want to remain proud of who they are. In sum, on specific issues they care deeply about, like order, safety, and well-maintained public facilities, apartheid just compares favorably in their eyes. The apartheid past, as a system, is not viewed through a hazy nostalgic prism, but seen through the specific, class-colored lenses of lower-middle-class white Afrikaners.
10. Guilt Behind the Gate

10.1 THREE VIEWS OF GOLDEN SUN ESTATE

Golden Sun is one of the oldest and most prestigious security estates in Pretoria. With more than 1,000 households and 6,000 inhabitants in 2010, it has become a small city by itself. Originally, the estate was built in 1990 at the eastern fringes of Pretoria as a lifestyle community around a golf course. Since then, however, it has expanded to more than triple its size. Over the last 10 years, East Pretoria has experienced an explosion of urban development; the area has attracted more gated communities and commercial development. Today, Golden Sun is no longer an isolated security estate but part of a larger conglomerate of prestigious and less prestigious estates supported by shopping malls, fitness centers, schools, and (mega-) churches. It has been voted as the safest community in Pretoria, which is evident by the steady rise in real estate prices with no drop during the 2008-2009 economic crisis. This status is partly held up by an influx of international people, whose employers often demand gated housing for insurance reasons. The estate is no longer an isolated island but rather the prestigious center of a new urban edge city.

Gated communities are organized around the “logic” of privatization, securitization, and anesthetization; a “logic” that has its own discourse. Before I analyze the women, a short overview of these three discourses.

A PRIVATE COMMUNITY

Golden Sun is “governed” by the Home Owners Association (HOA), a section 21 company that functions as an intermediary between neighbors and the municipality. A legal firm provides great powers to an elected body. The HOA is led by board of trustees, five people who need to have property on the estate and who are voted in every two years. The HOA of the estate has increasingly taken over the tasks normally performed by the municipality and even the police. It operates its own security force, provides various urban services like road development and urban landscaping, and features different
amenities like a golf course, tennis courts, a club house, and an enclosed natural area. The estate is in continuous battle about service delivery with the municipality, a rural municipality of just 56,000 inhabitants in which the estate is administratively located. The HOA is pushing to be integrated within Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, formerly known as Pretoria, which would allow them to set their own taxes and provide services. In essence, Golden Sun would become its own private city.

The defining feature of living in an estate like Golden Sun is that it is a private community. The HOA runs its operation as a private enterprise with a corporate logic. Within this logic, racial incidents are depicted as a PR-problem and residents will tell you that they run their own government. A woman says, “We bought a piece of exclusivity and security, and now we run and govern it.” But the major difference between a gated community and a nongated suburb is that a house in an estate is bought as a “package deal.” By buying into an estate, the homeowners obtain a “different way of living.” This is evident in the words of the general manager of HOA Golden Sun. He says:

When people buy into an estate, they are given a sales pitch. They are sold a dream. It is something that we often look at or I certainly look at. What is it that attracts them to a place like Golden Sun? They want safety. This place is very much safer than outside the boundary walls of Golden Sun. The aesthetics … they want to be in an environment or an estate that has a good look and feel to it. It must look the part. They want the green areas. They want the kids to be able to run around and have a place to play. And then the estate harmony—the estate must work well. Things that should happen must happen. It must happen with the minimum of hassle. It must just be done in such a way that there is harmony on the estate. And that harmony could be peace and quiet, noise, that type of thing. People want to be able to sit at home and relax. Those three things together, I think, give people the majority of reasons to live in an estate.

As the general manager describes, Golden Sun unites trends of security, aesthetics, and a renewed focus on community harmony. Of these three concerns, the dominant institutional logic that regulates everyday life in Golden Sun is that of security. Thus, not only do most residents say they have originally bought into the estate and estate living because of security reasons, the HOA also routinely legitimizes and justifies the regulation of social life in and outside the estate on the basis of concerns for security and the prevention of crime.

**A Secure Community**

Because of the size of the estate, and the affluence of its inhabitants, Golden Sun has a relative large budget for security in comparison to other, smaller estates. The extensive apparatus is not only busy 24 hours protecting the estate from outsiders but, equally, it is active “in terms of looking, checking,
monitoring, and policing what is happening inside the estate,” as the general manager put it. The strict control of the inside of the estate is legitimized by security management citing research that would show that many crimes in estates are committed with help from the inside—that is, the people working inside the estate. The most important part of estate security is controlling the flow of traffic in and out of the estate grounds. At the gate, there is a strict separation between residents, and then nonresidents, visitors, workers and employees. In 2009, Golden Sun implemented a biometric fingerprinting system linked to a database of all inhabitants, workers, and company employees working on the estate. In 2010, visitors were also included in the database. The HOA is very proud of their security system. They describe it as “well-known” and “respected.” In 2009, the estate had 25 burglary incidents; all were solved and 54 people in total were arrested. As the vice president of the HOA put it, “Crime does not exist—that is the beauty of this place.”

Although in principle everyone is subjected to security checks, nonresidents and particularly workers and employees are screened through a more extensive procedure, including an identity documentation check. There are also separate rules for employees living on the estate. Domestic workers are discouraged to live together with their families, or even invite them for visits. They must make an appointment if they want to receive visitors, while they are not allowed to provide access to the estate by themselves; their employers have to grant access to their visitors. Domestic workers, gardeners, and people working in the golf club have to wear a uniform while walking on the estate and wear a photo identification badge on their suit. The security regime has become stricter over time. When the houses of the different phases were being constructed, construction workers still enjoyed a rest on the golf course. Today, workers are no longer allowed to leave the building site. Since 2008, the estate has arranged special transport for domestics, so they no longer walk on the estate.

Security is achieved at a high price when it comes to the mostly black workers that support the luxurious, secure and ordered existence of Golden Sun residents. Most domestic workers experience living in Golden Sun as extremely restricted. As a domestic says:

In the community of Golden Sun, everything is strict. It is not easy like the townships, which is your place. No one is going to control you there. But in Golden Sun, they can say to you, “You mustn’t do this, you mustn’t do that. ... You mustn’t drive the golf car if you don’t have a license.” That is what I don’t like. You can’t bring a lot of people to come to visit you without contacting other people. You are allowed no more than three or four visitors at a time. You can’t come here and ask, “Can I go to …” They say no. Only one or two is OK. Or you have to come with a car.

Life in Golden Sun for domestics is extremely restricted. They are controlled in their movement and social life, much more than outside the estate. Very
few domestics own a car, which would allow them to bring in more than one or two guests at the same time.

The chairman of the HOA argues that Golden Sun respects the rights of people “like any other company.” Screening measures for “undesirables” are legitimized because it is all “for the greater good” and it would make the community a “safer place for everybody.” However, this “everybody” refers only to the inhabitants and owners of a home in the estate. Inside Golden Sun, all movements by people apart from residents are seen as a possible risk to security. The general manager says:

You must understand: the more people walking around, the higher the risk profile becomes. ... And that is an ongoing challenge because it is a big estate. We try, where possible, to reduce the number of people walking around, because it becomes a risk issue. Especially like domestics, friends of domestics, et cetera. We just put procedures in place now that they cannot walk on the estate. They got to be fetched by the homeowner and taken back by the homeowner, because they don’t live on the estate. Once they are in the gate they can be anywhere. At the end of the day we are not prepared to compromise security for something that might be a relatively small item, which it is when you look at it in absolute isolation.

In the eyes of the general manager, all activities of nonresidents are viewed in terms of “risk profiles” and “security concerns.” People who walk around in this discourse become a “risk issue.” By this logic, all social relationships are viewed through the lens of risk and security, and the possible repercussions for nonhabitants are either downplayed or denied.

**AN AESTHETIC COMMUNITY**

If the security apparatus is the backbone of estate living, its public face is its aesthetic appearance. As with security, strict regulations should assure the estate exudes aesthetic beauty, community order, and control over the private estate spaces—rules that are regulated by the aesthetic committee. The committee’s work exists in the maintenance of the green areas and parks in Golden Sun and assuring its aesthetic appearance. The committee is led by the omgewing trustee, or environment trustee of the HOA. The trustee says that the aesthetic appearance of the community symbolizes the care people take in their surroundings. She says:

You see, in an estate it is very much about whether we care. We care about Golden Sun right up ‘til the gates. We don’t worry too much about what is going on outside. But we fix our own roads, all those years, even though this isn’t our job. Because in the rules it says that every owner has to look after the roads. And this is where I say we have the psychological network in place to keep the roads clean, because it is for the whole of Golden Sun. People are part of their environment. ... To make sure the environment looks—how should I call it—friendly, we do all these physical things to the
houses, streets and the surroundings, because there is a psychological surrounding too, namely the feeling you get when you come inside. The people inside Golden Sun create the social surrounding themselves in which they interact. And from the beginning they have made an effort to say that people are important. ... This makes Golden Sun a very nice estate for everybody.

Estate living, for the trustee, is about “whether you care.” It is important for her that residents care about Golden Sun “right up ‘til the gates.” The concern for your surroundings and the community is turned inwards. She acknowledges residents don’t worry too much about what is “going on outside.” It is here where the trustee also links aesthetics to community order and security. She is a firm believer of the idea that physical surroundings influence behavior. For her, the aesthetic appearance is almost a stand-in for community harmony. Moreover, the estate rules make people control each other. To a point where, she says, the rules encourage people to get “annoyed” with their neighbor so they take action. In the end, she assures, it is all about that you care about Golden Sun.

10.2 IDENTITY TALK

The women living in Golden Sun are very positive about the community, not only because of security but also from a social, aesthetic, and moral point of view. Socially, the estate is seen as a community with a great “family feeling.” Golden Sun is depicted as a “klein boer se gemeenskap,” or “small farmers’ village,” where everybody lives together and “in harmony.” Lucinda Williams is one of the Afrikaans women who describe Golden Sun as a community where “everybody knows everybody” and describes the community feeling as just “incredible.” She says:

Here, from the beginning, it was a great community. From the beginning I said: there is no other place I want to stay. This is genuinely a great place to stay. I remember that in that time my neighbor came over and invited me to join the bible study group. And the next week I did join the group and met other women. And so I learned to get to know the community. So a person got to know very quickly everybody in the vicinity.

Lucinda Williams is one of the people who moved to Golden Sun when it was still being developed, a group that specifically mentions the small but close-knit community in the estate. Such a description is partly rooted in the estate’s small setup and consequent extensions, but also relates to the large number of Afrikaners living in the estate. Her positive assessment of community life is very common among Afrikaans women; they all feel Golden Sun is much like the old, small Afrikaans community. The women say they mostly socialize with Afrikaans people, who they know through the different clubs, the schools, or the church, most of whom are also only in Afrikaans.
Aesthetically, the women describe the community as having a “countryside feel”; they say the estate feels like you live “outside of the city.” The estate has a very “nice and warm” atmosphere and is “a little like paradise.” Although they describe it as cozy, they praise the sense of space inside the estate. They feel a lot of “freedom of movement.” Golden Sun has a lot of open space that gives an “open feel” to the estate, because there are no walls or fences. The estate is appreciated for the open plots and that people don’t have fences around their house. The golf course gives a sense of open space and you can walk around it in the evening. Most importantly, they feel the estate exudes a sense of order and beauty. The women say they love the organized, clean, and orderly way the estate functions, and how beautiful everything looks.

There is also a moral undertone to the community narrative of the women. They describe a community where “everybody knows everybody” and “nobody locks the door”; a place where “kids can play in the streets.” In Golden Sun, the women say, people still have “respect for each other” and “care about each other”; a place of “dignity” and “respect.” They say that neighbors “show up in the middle of the night” if your child is sick and people “greet each other” or, as one woman said, “you can borrow some sugar or walk over and drink a glass of wine.” In other words, as one woman said, “an ideal place to live.”

The romantic image of the community finds its mirror image in negative depictions of the world outside Golden Sun. The world outside the estate is described as “chaotic,” “dangerous” and “wild.” Indeed, much of the positive social, aesthetic, and moral community discourse can be read as a positive mirror image of the view many women have of post-apartheid South Africa; its community versus anomie; beauty versus ugliness; order versus chaos; and safety versus danger. Ingrid Le Roux, the environment trustee, says:

If I come in at the gate I open my window because it feels good. I can drive with my windows open because the Golden Sun environment feels safer for me than outside the gate. When I come in, the people of Golden Sun will open the gate, and you don’t have to close your car anymore. But if you drive out of the gate, you close your car and you close all your windows. Like it is a war outside, that is how you drive out. But inside you feel safe.

As Le Roux makes evident, the outside the estate is more and more seen as a “war zone” in comparison with the “people environment” of inside the estate.

While the identity of the community is negatively related to the outside world, it is positively related to their youth during apartheid. The estate is compared to growing up in the countryside where you could simply walk over to a neighbor. Most women and men describe their feelings in relation to their experiences growing up during apartheid. They say they want to “give their children the same experience” as they had. Although such things are
often said in direct reference to the safety inside the gate, it does allow for a positive allusion to the apartheid past. It establishes continuity with the past where most experience a rupture in other areas in life. Indeed, to such an extent that one man could say that the community of Golden Sun is like “the old Afrikaner culture.” Talk of “a small farmer village” thus has a distinct cultural nostalgic air and suggests the descriptions of Golden Sun by the Afrikaner women are cultural specific.

The positive references to apartheid’s past and the residents’ focus on the quality of life foregoes talk of ownership and lifestyle as the dominant vocabulary of community life. This becomes evident if a black woman expresses what attracts her to living in Golden Sun. She is equally attached to Golden Sun and appreciative of the “community feeling.” But she voices her community vision in a distinctly different language. Gigi Nkruma says:

I like the lifestyle. I would not want to live anywhere else. I feel comfortable. I am happy around the area. And I feel like a part owner of it. When I am sitting at the club and looking at the view, I love it. Feels to me like I am part of everything ... I for instance feel that the club is for the people who live in the club. That is the kind of feeling I have. When I am driving inside I feel pride ... like I am now at home ... I think it is because I love the place. Here you feel like you own part of the golf course. You can go there anytime. ... I love that it’s quiet, safe, beautiful, and lovely. I love the gardens.

Nkruma talks of “ownership” and “lifestyle” in relationship to the community. Note how the idea of “ owning the place” for her contributes to her feeling of pride and being at home and comfortable. She also likes the community feel of the estate and its aesthetics. But she does not refer back to an idealistic past, which for her is nonexistent. Instead, she frames her feelings about home and belonging in a language of lifestyle and ownership.

And yet as much as the community is depicted in these idealistic terms, there are also concerns over the fact that there is something surreal about living in an estate. The women will speak of Golden Sun as an “island” or a “holiday resort” and that they live like “an ostrich with its head in the sand.” They have the feeling that the estate is not like the “real world” and it’s just “too idealistic.” This uncanny feeling most of all has to do with the gap the women experience between the inside and the outside world; a gap they have to bridge on a daily basis. The feeling of security inside the estate and the feelings of insecurity outside of it are a constant source of tension. The women wrestle with what should be seen as normal: the perceived violence outside the estate or the artificial peacefulness inside?

The contrast between the outside and inside world is first of all marked by the difference between cleanliness and dirt. Outside the estate, the city for these women is experienced as “dirty,” “uncared for,” and “chaotic.” Inside, things are perceived as “beautiful,” “well-taken care of,” and “clean.” This is
contributes to the fact that Golden Sun has rules, and rules that are actually enforced. But the tension is even more produced by the heavy security measures: the fences around the estate and the continuous patrols that assure a strict separation between inside and outside the community. They produce a different habitué for people; a reality difference that is experienced as two different worlds: One world in which they have to be constantly aware and on the lookout—a world where they feel “unsafe,” “tense,” “worried,” and “stressed.” Inside, there is another world in which they feel “safe,” “free,” “relaxed,” and “unencumbered”—a world in which they can “breathe life.” Many women emphasize the feeling of freedom and carelessness they have when the drive into the estate. Outside the estate, they say, they live in a permanent “psychosomatic stress” condition. If they get into their car and drive outside, they feel constantly scared, haunted, and nervous. They feel their “life is threatened.” Most women are aware that this situation is not normal and struggle to make sense of it. Hannie Smith says:

Golden Sun is Lala Land. It is a Zulu expression which means to sleep. Staying in Golden Sun feels unreal; it feels unreal because it is not really how it is in South Africa. That we don’t have a fence, that we don’t close the door, and that the children still ride their bikes in the streets. Nobody steals his bike. Nobody jabs him with a knife because of his cell phone. The rest of South Africa is like Johannesburg. Golden Sun is like how reality should be. The rest of South Africa is unnatural but Golden Sun is not like it is outside. We have a bubble, we stay in a bubble. We think it is very safe inside here.

Smith obviously sees Golden Sun as an abnormal place and that is why, like many women, she describes the feeling of living in Golden Sun like living in a “holiday resort.” They feel this abnormal situation is a loss, for her and for the country. At the same time, Smith does claim the safety of the estate as the new normal. And yet the necessity of security is used as a legitimization for living in her bubble. Golden Sun is said to be the “real” normal, where the crime outside has reached “abnormal” levels. Various women said that only after moving into the estate did they realize how safe life inside could be, and how unsafe the world outside is. Getting used to safety makes the outside world subjectively more unsafe.

10.3 RACE TALK

Many women also expressed positive sentiments about race relations in the estate, and the possibility for gated communities to reinstall hope for a diverse society. Karin Jacobus says:

This is for me the closest thing a person can get to an ideal place to live. This is beautiful and peaceful. This is safe. This gives one a feeling of contentment. For me, here, it feels as if all kinds of different people are together. Not just black but also Indians from Asia. Here, all the people who
represent South Africa are together. And because there is respect for each other, this works well.

Jacobus obviously derives a positive sense of moral community from the estate. Not only is the estate beautiful and peaceful to her, she also trumpets the diversity of people the estate harbors. For her, the estate represents the closest thing to an ideal South African community. Most women say that there is nothing wrong with the blacks living on the estate. The expression “there is nothing wrong with them” functions as a stamp of approval, although many note that many blacks on the estate keep to themselves. Jacobus continued:

Race relations are great. They are completely normal. I don’t think there is a problem there. The type of people that live around here, they all have a certain standard. To live in the estate, you need to be able to maintain a certain standard. So I think it does not matter what class you are or what color you are. So black … for me, this is normal. It does not bug me. It is actually amazing to see how much money some blacks have. They have a lot of money. They are, I think, the richest in the estate. I think these are people who have the most status. For me, it is like the whites have gone through this whole development cycle. First, they wanted to be rich, they wanted to earn a lot and prove they have money, and now the circle is half completed. Now, it is just: “I want to live and live nicely.” But I think blacks are still under pressure to first say: “You know I want money.” I just want to point out they don’t feel they have the choice to say: “I want to stay here because it is nice.” It is still about status.

Jacobus is not a racist. She says that her daughter even has a black boyfriend and has no problems with blacks living in Golden Sun. She tries to speak positively of blacks who live inside the estate. They have “a certain standard” and in general are perceived as “very nice.” Other women call them “cultivated” or “educated.” To Jacobus, it is encouraging to see how far some blacks have come and how much money they are able to earn. Nevertheless, Jacobus naturalizes for whites “to live nicely” in Golden Sun, as convenient and enjoyable. Instead, for blacks it is portrayed as a status investment.

Most women moved to the estate for security reasons. They felt there was a rapid increase in crime after 2000. Many experienced incidents firsthand, had family or friends experience a burglary or assault, and there even was a case of car-jacking. They stories they tell of crime and assaults are numerous and disturbing. Antjie Kruger says:

We moved here for security. They burgled my best friend’s house three weeks ago and she does not live in a security complex. But they were tight up, in bed, asleep at 3 in the morning. We stopped our car at a traffic light and then somebody smashed the window while the children were in the car. That wasn’t good. My son Sander’s first words were “man hits.” He was only 12 months old when he said “man” and then he said “man hits window
broken.” Ach ... I could tell you many atrocious stories. And these are violent people. It is the violence that accompanies the crimes, which is really bad.

Kruger's firsthand experience with crime is disturbing. It is absurd to dismiss such stories as “crime talk,” or suggest they are just that, talk, or fabrications. Nevertheless, such talk can increase the fear of crime and there is little evidence that living in the estate decreases such fears. The opposite could equally be true. For most women who work outside the estate, the transition from work to home, the few hours they spend each day outside of the gates at a shopping center, have become a source of worry and anxiety. But what are the consequences of this fear or crime? And how does it influence life inside the estate?

This becomes evident when residents talk about the workers who are employed on the estate. Talk about the (black) construction workers, the gardeners, the house maids, and the many other servants is always accompanied by concerns about crime and security. When Hannelie Toonder talks about the working conditions of the gardener, she says:

There is a good check-up and I am really quick to call security. So, any person has to keep their eyes open but they are checked really good so I am really not scared. Of course there will be times that you see a taxi driving and then I call security and then they immediately react. ... Security is always a point of concern. I think if a person does not call them, they don’t know what bothers us. So you have to call for even small things, because often small things can become big things.

Toonder's first worry is safety whenever she talks about the workers in the estate, and security concerns take precedence over everything else. Toonder even expresses the idea that if you do not stay vigilant, the security will weaken. Living in the estate only increases concerns for security: the possible unreliability of workers poses a constant threat to their care and crime-free world.

Fear of crime and fear of blacks have become so intimately linked for the women at the estate that they have almost become synonymous. And yet, for the security estate to operate as a privileged fantasy world, white residents still have to rely on the black workers. This produces a constant tension for the women; as residents, they feel a need to prove they are not racists. Cornelia Matthews says:

If I drive into the gate, this is a feeling of upliftment. You come in; it is like you are at the front door of your house. It is the same feeling. It is not that you feel bad on the other side of the door. But I have to say, yes, I love South Africa. I am friends with every newspaperman from whom I buy the paper. What I want to say is, I know there are people who don’t even open their window to talk to someone, but I do. I talk to them, and for me this is a feeling of ... this is a thing I have to do. They say a person has six senses
in South Africa, you have one more. A person develops a feeling of what is safe and what is unsafe. ... In Golden Sun, my bag can lie anywhere. This does not matter. But you don’t do this in South Africa. You don’t do that. You don’t carry around this big jewelry when you walk in the middle of town. This is just how it is.

Golden Sun makes Matthews obviously feel good. As she puts it, it has become synonymous with home. But she emphasizes that this does not mean that she does not feel good outside of the estate or that she would be too scared of crime to have interracial interactions. She emphasizes that she talks to black workers as if to show she is not scared of them because of crime. Indeed, she works hard to disentangle the fear of crime from race. But as her lament about South Africa makes clear, such posturing seems hardly to lessen the anxiety routinely experienced outside the gate. And if the promise of good race relations in post-apartheid has narrowed to being friendly to a black servant, little progress has been made.

10.4 CULTURE TALK
The women have created a comfortable life in the security estate but the burden of the past and their troubled Afrikaner identity continue to haunt them. Not in the last place because they experience their future on the continent as unsure. The safe world they live in, and their socio-economic prosperity, hardly calms their anxieties about the future. But these angsts are not predominantly about crime or race. Rather, a heightened awareness of the artificial isolation of the realities of post-apartheid South Africa, fed by guilt and uneasiness about their privilege, creates instability in their meaning-making process. Do they live in the ideal post-apartheid world or have they locked themselves up voluntarily? The women are not sure.

APARtheid AND BEING AFRIKAANS
There is a wide gap between women’s perceptions of apartheid as a recognized crime against humanity, and their personal memories of family life in those days. The women readily admit that apartheid was a “wrong system” and that it was “not right.” They recall how the police preserved the evening curfew and regularly used violence against black “offenders,” including their own maids. Many recount the inequality of race relations in the past and recall situations where they felt the racial divide: the different rules for black servants in the house and the incidental violations of those rules. Antjie Kruger says:

I was a young child. So what was very funny for me was that this went totally against your being human that people were treated totally different. I grew up in a house where my dad said: “They and everybody ... everybody is the same.” And then you arrive at a garage and then there are restrooms just for black people, and there are restrooms just for whites. Or you arrive at a
restaurant and you are not at all allowed to eat together ... to eat with a black person at the same table in the restaurant. This was very wrong to me. What was bad is that the church supported this and in sermons (apartheid) was legitimized. ... They said you would fight for your country and we were fired up. I compare this to Hitler. You were really in their hands.

Kruger recalls the inconsistencies between her father’s words and the reality of South Africa during apartheid. In this way, the apartheid past for women like Kruger is not as inaccessible as it is for the men of chapter 6. They admit it was wrong.

But this does not mean the women hold themselves accountable for the crimes of the past. Apartheid, the women say, was not their responsibility. Like Kruger, they give excuses. They say they always knew it was wrong. Or they explain what happened in other ways. Kruger argues that all people were obedient followers who were misled. They say they were “only young” during apartheid. That is a striking argument as many women were over 20 years of age during the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990. They further claim to carry no responsibility because they “did not know” and “did not vote” and are not responsible for “what their parents or grandparents did.” Some say they never had the “time to think” and “never liked politics.”

Moreover, their representation of family life during apartheid often stands in stark contrast from a system they depict as wrong. Their recollections of apartheid are defined by the good situation in their parents’ home. The old plaas, or farm, is idealized for its harmonious racial relations and the general benevolence of their parents toward blacks. Whether their families were conservative, liberal, or somewhere in between, the women argue that their parents were ordentlik, or decent people and not racists; that they treated their black servants “good” and “with respect” and that they often “bended backwards” to assist them. Hannie Smith says:

We were very liberal. So, my father worked together with blacks and they came over to our house to relax and drink coffee out of the same cup, which was strange at the time. Most blacks had their own cup. I grew up learning to respect them and that they were part of our life. My father was in the National Party a little and at school I represented the Democratic Party. So no...we did not...We treated the house servant with respect and she was not a rag to mop the floor. We have never been anti-black but I have to say, I don’t like those who murder and that kind of thing.

Smith stresses that her parents were liberals but at the same time her father was an active member of the National Party politics. The inclusion of the word “little” downplays her father’s political activities and his complicity in the system. The past is acknowledged in the same breath as it is excused. The private memory of home is placed outside the public history of apartheid. More problematically, Smith uses her idealized past self to justify anti-black prejudices today.
This is a common pattern among the women—they root their criticism of the post-apartheid situation in their idealized notions of the past. This has a double function: the positive descriptions of the past make the women, and Afrikaners more broadly, appear less racist, while continuous prejudices today are justified by the past. Antjie Kruger continued:

There was not a problem with security. We grew up in streets where we would ride around with our bikes. Even as small girls, we rode alone to the cafés. I will never allow this for my son, who is still little ... from this perspective we as kids grew up in a free society—this is how I experienced it.

Even though Kruger recognizes the crimes of apartheid, she still dares to label the apartheid period in which she grew up as a “free society.” Whether the disillusionment about the present is projected back into the past (“we could still play in the streets”), or whether the past was indeed better for these women is hard to say. It is the ambivalence toward the past and the present that stands out. A woman was quoted saying: “After 1994, many things became worse but some things better.”

The ambivalent attitude of the women toward apartheid is contrasted by their firm assertion of an Afrikaner identity. Often, the women use the cultural language of Afrikaner nationalism to instill a sense of cultural pride in the next generation. They say they still feel proud as Afrikaans and that Afrikaners are a “strong nation” and a “social nation.” Alida Vosloo says:

The fact that I am an Afrikaner, I was never ashamed about. I teach my children not to be ashamed or to ask forgiveness for this. I am very proud we are Afrikaans and that I speak Afrikaans. I love my language and I love books in Afrikaans. ... I don’t think you should be disproportionally proud but a human being should not be ashamed of where he is coming from. My father always said, “If you don’t know where you are coming from you also don’t know where you are going to.” You have to know where you are coming from. You have to be comfortable with it. ... You should not be culturally confused and you should not try to be anything you are not. If you are used to being Afrikaans, and have love for Afrikaner things and you are proud to be Afrikaans, you should not be ashamed about it. Because then later you are nothing and you don’t know where you fit in.

The echoes of Afrikaner Nationalism and its essentialists’ definitions of identity are evident in Vosloo’s talk. She argues that her children should stay “true” to themselves, assertions that betray her fears that a more critical stance toward her ethnic background leads to cultural disorientation. The authority of the father is invoked to assert the norm. The language of Afrikaner nationalism pervades her ideas about self-regard, language, and belonging in South Africa. It is a language that prevents the women to be more introspective about the past and their ethnic identity: either you are an Afrikaner or you are nothing.
BEING PRIVILEGED

The experience of living in a gated community, its safety and its amenities, gives the women a feeling of privilege; they are aware they have opportunities and resources, unlike the majority of people in South Africa. But they are also troubled by it—can such a secluded lifestyle be reconciled with a commitment to the post-apartheid South Africa dispensation? Here, the perception of outsiders also plays a role. Marilee Du Plesis says:

I am one of the chosen ones, who choose to live outside of crime. But I do not what to be seen as such and I hope this is not the case. That I am now sitting on an island “where the moon shines and everything is colored pink,” while outside, if you leave the gates, then you will endure ... I try to fight that impression by continuing to invite people to this place, that they can come and relax, and see that this is not really an isolated island. This is just a neighborhood, yes, it basically is ... If I think about my work and people there who first thought, “Wow! Golden Sun” ... and now that they have been here, I hope they see it as a place where they like to come and stay. They will see we have great lawns here. There is a place for the children to play. It is like a holiday resort in many ways. This is not just a nice place to stay; that is not what bugs me. I just don’t want people to think I stay here to escape the crime, because that was not my reason. That was just a bonus I got when I moved here. So I don’t want to be seen as someone, you know, who is not committed to solving the problems of the country because I stay here. And I think the other way people can do that is to live your life in a certain way and how you deal with other people, and in that way point to your commitment. I don’t think it is necessary for me to stay in a township to show that I care for those people.

The privilege of separation from the rest of the city makes Du Plesis uneasy. The neatly organized world of Golden Sun makes her feel guilty toward colleagues, friends, and family. She feels others might perceive her not only as privileged but as indifferent to the rest of the country. She works hard to present Golden Sun as a “normal” neighborhood and their way of life as not too far removed from the everyday concerns about crime of the average South African. Part of this work also entails embracing the fact that South Africa has changed.

Indeed, as much as the women complain about crime, they are adamant they have embraced the new South Africa, and have no trouble with the changes in the country. Ingrid Le Roux says:

Maybe I am a person who can easily adapt or something like that. I think that is why all the changes in South Africa do not bother me. I would say ... the moment something would happen to my children—securitywise—then I might think differently. I accept Afrikaans has become a private language, because there are 11 languages in this country. Not all of them can be the main language. So I think Afrikaans is limited to your house, your family,
and the social occasions you have with other Afrikaners. I just don’t feel that I have to speak Afrikaans ... I know of older people, if they go to a store they want to speak Afrikaans. I just said to someone the other day: then you have to speak Xhosa with the Xhosa too or Sotho with the Sotho people. And I can’t. So English is the only language you can speak with everybody. And you know my Afrikanerness was never for me ... This is more about being South African. The fact that I am a South African is for me much more important.

As Le Roux shows, the women argue they have adjusted and accepted the loss when it comes to the Afrikaans language. Furthermore, they argue that their Afrikaner identity can coexist with their national identity. If there is an issue, as Le Roux demonstrates, it is security.

**Belonging and the Future**

Initially, the gated community provides a safe haven for the women when it comes to belonging. The women feel that neither their ethnic identity nor their sense of belonging is fundamentally threatened at the moment. Nevertheless, this does not mean they do not consider emigration. Being part of a community that has the means and connections to emigrate makes it always a possibility. Belonging and emigration are not closely connected for the women, since they are different topics. Belonging is related to their sense of rootedness in the country. As Alida Vosloo says:

> I am here, my family and my extended family is here. All generations are here. We are very Afrikaans, both my husband and I are Afrikaans, and on both sides all grandparents are Afrikaans. So I feel very at home here. This is my country, my language, my people. No, I don’t feel I am not at home, like a stranger in my own country. ... No, really I will never feel alienated in my country.

Belonging in this way is not at stake for the women. Although Vosloo does not articulate it as such, the strict organization and regulation of social life within the gates assures that they are not exposed to a social and racial reality that has radically changed, and often disapproves of their Afrikaner identities, language, and cultural ideas. They can still say they belong. But the upper-class women often have the education, professions, and economic resources that make emigration at least feasible. Alida Vosloo and her husband are very well-to-do, as a doctor, she works in a private clinic. She says:

> I think all of us who all stay in this country, have to think about it at a certain point, whether you have to go or not. There are so many of my colleagues who went. I think it is a bad profession to be in, the medical profession. Because there are so many people who leave. ... There is not an evening you spend with friends where you don’t talk about it. If you have a good time with friends, it always comes up. Even if you talk about why you would stay and why it is so good here, the subject always comes up, the
subject of crime, and whether you should go or whether you should stay. And friends who are already overseas, you talk about how they are doing and how it is. They tell you, “Come visit us, please come,” because they want their friends over there too. This topic is always discussed. ... But my husband and I decided to stay. We were open to the possibility. We went through all the steps it would take, we really considered it, whether we had to emigrate. But we finally decided we should stay. No, it isn’t like the situation in the medical profession forces you to go, but you don’t make progress and you are really unhappy about the direction things are going.

To Vosloo, the possibility of emigration is a continuous concern if not a temptation. It is crime and the uncertainty of the future that makes emigration a possibility, but it is the potential to actually make it happen that makes it a continuous topic of conversation. Their sense of belonging has little to do with it. Families like Vosloo’s, who are well-educated and well-to-do, and who have ex-colleagues overseas, are constantly confronted with the possibility and the choice. Hence, “staying” in South Africa becomes a choice—an active commitment to the country. It is no longer a given. And because it a choice, it demands the management of any anxieties about the future. Vosloo continues:

You should not focus too much on the negative side ... we are going to make the best of it. If the children one day want to go, they should. But we won’t go. But I am really worried about the future and about the government. ... I think this is a new era of, you know, the new government has to take responsibility for how the country is doing. This isn’t just apartheid’s fault any more. This is a responsibility of everyone for the empowerment and improvement of people. So I think this makes things easier. It isn’t this incredible guilty feeling of how could we do this, how could we close our eyes. This is now a shared responsibility to do something. This makes it a lot better and easier.

Vosloo’s worries about the direction of the country are obvious, but it is almost as if she suggests she no longer feels guilty and that the new “shared responsibility” relieves the burden. But, her worries are hardly relieved.

Others also try to emphasize positive things, like the economic opportunities, but the creeping anxiety about the future constantly emerges in their talk. Kruger continued:

In many ways, a person is positive. There are a great many possibilities ... even with the black economic empowerment there are still tremendous possibilities. And what is bad is the brain drain. South Africa loses so many people. If I think about the people who studied with me, our circle of friends, 75 percent have left the country. But this opens up possibilities for the rest of the people. ... In general I feel negative. But you stubbornly focus on what you can manage. You stay at one place and limit your risks. You stay at a place where you have a certain level of security. You drive out as little as possible. You create for yourself a little island and you live on it. And
you try as much as possible to convince your parents to also live on the island. My parents now live in Germiston, and the whole place is surrounded by townships. So this is a threat. You school your children at home to stay positive. And you try to keep as much money as possible in foreign countries and your safe ... and yet your family is here, your land is here, your roots are here. I don’t see myself as a European even though we share our white skin with them. I was born here. My lineage is born here. My mother has Dutch roots. We’ve been here for more than 100 years. I see South Africa as my country and I don’t want to stay at another place. You would versaak, or forsake, your language. Then I’d rather live feeling like an ostrich. You feel scared and there are many doors that are being closed. I know that in England they changed the law and this makes you a little scared because just now the “pawpaw slaan die fan,” or the “shit will hit the fan” and then what? ... You never know how safe your little island really is. Because if they start to talk about property rights, this is a basic right, if they talk about dispossession of the farms and such, now, what would stop them to dispose of our houses? This is about basic property rights. This makes you scared, and this makes you worried. And Mandela is old; he doesn’t have that much influence on the other guys.

In her talk, Kruger works tirelessly to manage her anxiety about the future. She stresses the economic opportunities, the need to stay positive, the safety on their “island,” and the many precautions she and her husband have made. She emphasizes that she belongs in South Africa. And yet the fear emerges that one day it will all be over and nothing will save them.

10.5 CONCLUSION

Golden Sun is at the forefront of new urban developments in post-apartheid South Africa that are driven by the entangled logic of privatization, securitization, and aestheticization—neoliberal developments that stand in tension to South Africa’s newly found constitutional values of democracy and social justice. Golden Sun was built as a lifestyle community with extra services, but has turned into an exclusive private security estate. The institutional logic of the estate transforms social life in and outside the estate. Today, fear of crime is of primary motivation and concern for the women living there. Because the drive for security is self-perpetuating, its logic calls for ever-stricter and tighter control, which tends to trump other concerns. The security discourse overrides issues of democracy, citizenship, and the public provision of urban services, in part because it effectively reformulates them. As the security logic reaches deeper inside the lives and thinking of the estate’s inhabitants, the consequences for the estate’s employees and the surrounding area disappear out of sight. Issues of freedom of movement and the deep reach of private security corporations in public life are ignored. However, as securitization transforms social life in and outside of the estate, it does not dominate the women’s talk.
Ironically, the women depict the Golden Sun community not just as a place free of fear, but in terms of a moral community. They take pride in their estate because they see it as an “ideal” community. The estate represents for the women a new sense of moral order. A spotless, beautiful estate, ordered by highly uniformed, aesthetic standards, symbolizing to them stability and moral decency. The aesthetic appearance of the estate gives them positive, hopeful feelings that the dream of a multicultural South Africa is possible. The aesthetic discourse allows for the effective mixing of concerns about community and security and ideals of aesthetic order and belonging. However, it obscures issues of policing, freedom of movement, and public access. The pleasing aesthetic at once obscures the penetration of the security apparatus in social life and mutes residents’ worries about order and chaos outside the estate. The discourse of security and aesthetics actively reinforce each other, and together replace older racist discourses. Pride in aesthetic beauty of the estate provides a positive and morally neutral antidote to the fear-driven security discourse. Ultimately, what makes the aesthetic discourse more effective and influential is that it is driven by care for the moral community and its environment, while also naturalizing privatization claims and exclusion of outsiders.

The women of Golden Sun are invested in a place and identity in South African society in the face of the growing threat to their way of life and achievements posed by their physical and social proximity to crime and poverty. The orderly image of their community is fragile; they know they live in a bubble. In the women’s worldview, the chaos in post-apartheid South Africa takes many forms for which the estate is a natural counterpoint: order versus chaos, crime versus freedom, and anonymity versus “sociability.” Whereas the community’s positive self-image is negatively contrasted with that of post-apartheid South Africa, it is positively connected to their experiences during apartheid. Golden Sun is a place that protects them from the forces of social change, the threat of decay, disorder, poverty, and crime. Newcomers are welcomed—or at least tolerated—as long as they join the fight against crime and chaos.