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Exported from Wikisource on July 5, 2024

Smit, *Cogent Arts & Humanities* (2015),  
2: 1064246

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2015.1064246>



CULTURE, MEDIA & FILM | RESEARCH  
ARTICLE

# Enter the imperceptible: Reading Die Antwoord

Sonja Smit<sup>[1][1]</sup>

**Abstract:** Die Antwoord (The Answer), a Zef-rap outfit from South Africa, have been criticised for their appropriation of cultural signifiers in their lyrics and the images which come to fore in their music videos. This paper investigates how the band uses culture as a "found object" and albeit problematically, subverts static conceptions regarding South African life. I read Die Antwoord's performance as an embrace of simulation (via Jean Baudrillard) which destabilises myths regarding authenticity. Die Antwoord's lack of authenticity is investigated in relation to hip hop as well as the creation of a Zef counter-culture. Drawing specifically from "Fatty

Boom Boom", the analysis centres on how the band satirises exoticised myths surrounding South African life.

**Subjects: Art & Visual Culture; Arts; Cultural Studies; Humanities; Media & Film Studies; Music; Performance Theory; Practice and Practitioners; Theatre & Performance Studies; Visual Arts**

**Keywords: Die Antwoord; myth; simulation; authenticity; appropriation; "Fatty Boom Boom"**

## **1. Introduction**

When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a plethora of myths of origin and of signs of reality—a plethora of truth, of secondary objectivity, and authenticity. (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 12)

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Sonja Smit recently completed her doctorate and is currently engaged in a postdoctorate programme at Rhodes University. She is both an academic researcher and a choreographer/live artist. Her research interests are focused within the field of the arts (specifically experimental approaches to performance theory) and philosophy. She is fascinated by creative approaches to the production of knowledge and, more specifically, how the practice of art making can be understood as a valid mode of knowledge.

Her PhD research investigated how Whiteness has been challenged through performance in post-apartheid South Africa. The research on Die Antwoord was located within a broader critique of Whiteness by South African artists. She also lectures at the Rhodes Drama Department, and has choreographed, designed and performed on various platforms since 2009. She resides in Grahamstown, South Africa.

## PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This article discusses the notion of authenticity and how the idea of the "real thing" is constructed through a process of myth making. By challenging notions of authenticity that are based on essence alone, one can reveal how perception is informed by representation. Perhaps in doing this, one can also point to the possibilities for alternative presentations through the process of deconstruction. For example, this paper investigates how important authenticity is in the reception and production of hip hop music and what elements constitute this "realness" in hip hop. The article goes on to investigate how the Zef rap-rave group, Die Antwoord embrace simulation (via Jean Baudrillard) by focusing on appearance and surface value in their imagery. The analysis is focused on the music video for "Fatty Boom Boom" (2012) and investigates the problematic use of blackface imagery as an example of the group's satirical version of "authentic" South African hip hop.

1. [↑](#) Received: 11 March 2015  
Accepted: 16 June 2015  
Published: 12 August 2015

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