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Postures of protest: The reinterpretation of FAK folk songs as expressions of (a new) nationalism and nostalgia

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In post-apartheid South Africa, as part of deep-rooted socio-political and cultural disputes, Afrikaner ethnic anxiety is pervasive, while marginal and liminal experiences of being white and Afrikaans bring to the fore both self-protective positions of whiteness, and those that strive to undo regressive ideas of white power. Even before the demise of apartheid, Afrikaans alternative music has voiced dissenting positions that confront questions of race, ethnicity, and power. In this article 'recycled' FAK songs are analysed by way of Postural Theory, a theoretical framework developed by the South African philosopher Johann Visagie. Complemented by relevant perspectives relating to an understanding of opposing dislocated apartheid and post-apartheid senses of self, our examination of the deeper strata of the songs highlights postures of (morally and ethically) *taking care*, either of the self or the other – but also postures of *meaninglessness* and *suffering*, pointing to loss as a central aspect of the 'threatened identity'.

Keywords: protest songs, postural theory, threatened identity, "Siembamba", "Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira"

Introduction

Within South African scholarship, following the dawn of democracy in 1994, questions of identity have resulted in a growing stream of studies on the dislocation of post-apartheid identifications. From these it is evident that white Afrikaans identities in particular struggle to come to terms with their place and status in post-apartheid South Africa, which has prompted an intensification of scholarly concentration on what is globally referred to as 'critical whiteness studies' (see Marx and Milton 2011: 723).¹ While the delegitimisation of whiteness and other counter-narratives of previously dominant discourses of white Afrikaans identities are thus keenly construed within the intellectual realm, in practice, racism persists. Although transformation in post-apartheid South Africa is characterised by an unavoidable dismantling and re-establishing of identities, at the same time, it is hindered by deep-rooted socio-political and cultural disputes. Among these, Afrikaner ethnic anxiety is "pervasive in this moment of dislocation of Afrikaner ideology" (Steyn 2004: 144). While the turbulence in cultural status among Afrikaners is met by many with insecurity or resentment, others struggle to come to terms with the nation's traumatic history of racial segregation and oppression (see Steenkamp 2011: 20; Steyn 2004). For the youth, in particular, marginal and liminal experiences of being white and Afrikaans in post-apartheid South Africa have brought to the fore defensive positions of whiteness, or those that strive to dismantle and expose regressive ideas of white power (see Steyn 2004: 147).

In her study of post-apartheid social identification as manifest within forms of popular music, Lolkema (2014: 11) says that popular culture is one of the most discernible ways in which young people express themselves, and within which they engage with processes of identification and questions of belonging (Lolkema 2014: 14). Forms of popular music, in representing social groups or subcultures, can indicate social inclusion or exclusion. This viewpoint is shared by Storey (2003: 3-4) who says that popular culture – including popular music – is an important arena for confronting questions of race, ethnicity, gender, generation, and social class. In many cases such confrontation takes the form of protest, where popular songs act as a powerful force for social and political change (Ramet in Street et al. 2007: 6).

Within the South African popular music scene, the first stirrings of dissidence in the Afrikaans language were registered in the 1980s with the subversive music of the so-called *Voëlvrý* movement, driven by artists such as Johannes Kerckorrel,

1 Within the global terrain of critical whiteness studies, the specificity of South Africa's recent history renders post-apartheid studies to be of special relevance (see, among others, McEwen and Steyn 2013; Hook 2011; Matthew 2010; De Kock 2007; Green et al. 2007; Willoughby-Herard 2007).

Koos Kombuis, Bernoldus Niemand and Dagga-Dirk Uys.² The movement had as its aim the deployment of rock music as an instrument of rebellion against the authoritarian and patriarchal structures that undergirded the policies of the apartheid government and Afrikaner nationalism.³ One of the ways in which the *Voëlvry* artists registered their resistance was by performing parodies of 'traditional' Afrikaans songs that were widely associated with ethnic mobilisation in service of Afrikaner nationalism.

However, the early post-apartheid era – the so-called euphoric 'rainbow nation' period – was marked by collaborations between white and black musicians, notably those of Johnny Clegg and Juluka (Taylor 2014). As the general optimism felt by many South Africans during these early years of democracy made way for disillusionment, an inescapable and self-conscious awareness of whiteness grew, portrayed also across the forms and genres of popular music. Among the initial responses, Ballantine (2004: 105) notes, straightforward criticism of the new dispensation and satire was foregrounded. A revealing example from this period is "Blaas hom" by the group Battery 9, which graphically relates racial outrage over repeated house robberies and the rapper's revenge in shooting two (presumably black) robbers (Ballantine 2004: 119).⁴ During the early 2000s, Afrikaans artists such as Karen Zoid, *Fokofpolisiekar* and *Die Heuwels Fantasties* shifted goalposts by displaying in their music various hostile anti-establishment attitudes (Klopper 2009).

The critical undertakings of this time most likely prepared the way for the emergence of a younger generation of artists who, similar to *Voëlvry*, were (and are) not afraid to speak their minds in Afrikaans. Representative of a radically unsettling white Afrikaans identity, zef culture, specifically as promoted by *Die Antwoord* and Jack Parow, pursues the explicit aim of decentering white privilege and the normalisation of traditional Afrikaner culture, constructing what Marx

2 These names were satirical and signified the irreverent, anti-establishment attitude of the Afrikaans rock revolution. While in its literal meaning the term 'voëlvry' may be translated 'free as a bird'; in its idiomatic sense it refers to an outlaw. More crudely, it may be understood as referring to promiscuity (Viljoen 2015: 274).

3 The story of Afrikaans alternative music has been documented in a number of important recent studies (see, among others, Van der Merwe 2017, Klopper 2017, Pienaar 2012, Marx and Milton 2011, Klopper 2009, Grundlingh 2004, Ballantine 2004, Jury 1996).

4 "Shoot him" from the album *Wrok* 1999.

and Milton (2011: 724) term “bastardised identities”.⁵ These defy conformance not only to conventional notions of race and class, but also those of gender (see also Klopper 2017: 83). Such de-territorialised shifting of cultural space and of hybrid identity in contemporary South Africa has turned a sharp focus onto “a liminal space where all identities are destabilised and open for reconfiguration” (Marx and Milton 2011: 724).

Simultaneous with these subverting trends, it was perhaps predictable that elements of nostalgia after the fall of apartheid would surface within Afrikaans popular music. An iconic example is Valiant Swart’s *Die Mystic Boer* (1996), portraying the search for the mythological ‘Ideal Afrikaner’ – a search which, as the song intimates, is one of existential loss and futility (Lambrechts & Visagie 2009: 83–4). A more controversial version of Afrikaner nostalgia was invoked in Bok van Blerk’s war song “De la Rey” (McGreal 2007), which, as Lambrechts and Visagie (2009) conclude, in recalling the Afrikaner’s so-called ‘era of innocence’ offers an ideologically one-sided perspective on the loss of an established sense of Afrikaner identity.

During the early 2000s, the earlier objective of the *Voëlvrý* movement to break away from and destabilise hegemonic Afrikaner identity was rekindled by some Afrikaans fans and artists (Pienaar 2012: 10). Both Grundlingh (2004) and Laubscher (2005) moot the idea that “the nostalgia and resultant mythologizing of *Voëlvrý* have helped ‘to manufacture an anti-apartheid past’ for young Afrikaners grappling with post-apartheid issues of identity” (Pienaar 2012: 9). This revival was marked by a renewed interest in Afrikaans songs that had been parodied by *Voëlvrý* during the 1980s.

The *Voëlvrý* artists performed parodies of ‘traditional’ Afrikaans songs that were activated in service of Afrikaner nationalism by the *Federasie vir Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings* (FAK).⁶ The FAK was founded in 1929 with the ostensible purpose of serving as an umbrella organisation for the myriad Afrikaans cultural organisations that had sprung up during the preceding two decades. In truth, however, the federation was established in order to function as the ‘public front’

5 ‘Zef’, an abbreviation for ‘Ford Zephyr’, denotes a vulgar strand of Afrikaans rap emerging during the past decade. The concept of zef originated in the 1960s and 1970s as a derogatory term to refer to working-class whites (Krueger 2012). In rap songs by *Die Antwoord* it involves a way of presenting the artistic persona in a purposefully degrading way through a musical repertoire that is banal and nihilist, celebrating a hybrid identity that resists being named or compartmentalised (Marx and Milton 2011: 734).

6 Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies

of the *Afrikaner Broederbond*,⁷ the secret organisation that emerged as the ideological vanguard of Afrikaner nationalism during the 1930s (Pelzer 1980: 120). The first FAK Songbook appeared in 1937 with the explicit aim of inspiring Afrikaner nationalism and patriotism; various FAK Songbooks published over the next decades continued to serve as building blocks of Afrikaner ethnic mobilisation and Afrikaner nationalism (Klopper 2009: 91).⁸ During 1980s, *Voëlvry* artists recycled FAK songs as critical expression, often with slightly changed/new lyrics and/or melodies, or with melodic/lyric elements of the original songs incorporated into newly composed renditions.

FAK-inspired songs that will feature in our discussion include “Siembamba” in a rendering performed by Koos Kombuis and Johannes Kerkorrel during the *Voëlvry* tour (1989), as well as two versions of “Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira” by Lucas Maree and by Karen Zoid. From an ideology-critical point of departure these songs may reveal fundamental underlying ethical and moral values suggestive of philosophical deep structure that we shall identify in our analysis as ‘postures of protest’. As will be highlighted in our analysis, these postures concern the basic existential questions of ‘Who are we?’ and ‘What must we do?’ – problems that lie at the heart of local critical whiteness discourse.

Conceptual framework

The overarching point of departure for our analysis pertains to a theoretical framework developed by the South African philosopher Johann Visagie, which forms part of a more encompassing model called Discourse Archaeology (DA). This model consists of several interacting sub-theories that are used to examine the deeper strata of symbolic discourse, enabling the analyst to examine wide-ranging fields, “all of them having to do with questions of origin and ground, root and centre, on the level of praxis as well as theory” (Visagie 2007: 1).⁹ Postural Theory¹⁰ deals with postures that are central to the most basic states of the human

7 The *Afrikaner Broederbond* (Confederation of Afrikaner Brothers), a secret organisation promoting Afrikaner nationalism (Bloomberg 1990) exercised undue power during the era of apartheid, in that its members occupied key positions within governmental, military, educational and religious bodies. Through the state-controlled South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) cultural content, including music was regulated.

8 Schutte and Viljoen (2017) as well as Lüdemann (2008) point to the influence of Nazi ideology within FAK Songbooks.

9 Visagie’s theory has been employed to analyse Afrikaans protest songs in the recent past; see Viljoen (2005, 2011), Lambrechts and Visagie (2009), and Lambrechts and Viljoen (2010).

10 Postural Theory is grouped under the ‘Ethics and Belief faculty’ of Visagie’s Discourse Archaeology.

condition. The elements of the set are both descriptive of what *is*, and normative as to what is *proper* or *valued* or *ideal* (Visagie 2007: 2).

The first group of postures is the 'dark side' postures: experiencing *meaninglessness*, *suffering* and *guilt*, all of which are arguably factual conditions experienced by humans from time to time. Each of these postures is *independent* of and *irreducible* to the others, and each also has a *normative side* to it, meaning that we should occasionally allow ourselves to *be* in these states in order to avoid inauthenticity and self-alienation (Visagie 2004: 1). When confronted with loss, for example, one should allow oneself to experience *meaninglessness* or *suffering*.

On the 'light side', Postural Theory differentiates between *vita activa* (ordinary life – being at work, being at rest or at play) and *vita contemplativa* (retreating from the ordinary and reflecting on life and its meaning). The prominent posture of *taking care* (either ethically or morally) can be seen as taking care of nature, culture, oneself as well as others (Visagie 2007: 13). Related to this are the 'gestures' of *justice* and *love*. A further posture includes some general normative values such as *letting go* of (or *giving up*) persons, dreams, ideals, cherished pain and suffering. When *humility* is intertwined with *taking care* (of the other), it produces the notion of *respect*, but combined with *suffering*, *humility* becomes the anti-normative figure of humiliation (Visagie 2004: 2). A final group represents postural themes that are connected to the inner states of minds that we value: experiencing *joy*, *hope* and *peace* (*calmness*, *serenity*).

As will become apparent in our analysis of FAK-inspired protest songs, postures might act as clusters, stand in opposition, or work together. Moreover, the songs to be studied imply that Afrikaner identity is not a homogenous state of being. For this reason, in addition to Visagie's Postural Theory, complementary interpretative perspectives will add to our discussion. These hold relevance for our enquiry in that they have the potential to illuminate identity construction from perspectives that inform an understanding of dislocated post-apartheid senses of self. The first is Elwira Brygola's (2011) model for studying 'the threatened identity', which addresses the existential question 'who am I?' according to five categories of compromised being. These are (1) constructive re-evaluation; (2) key experience; (3) stable narrative sequence; (4) the seeking of power and autonomy; and (5) the loss of part of oneself.

As supplementary interpretative lens, Nicholas Vanderhaegen's (2014: 31) notion of 'othering' and 'self-othering' will be considered as pertaining to concepts of difference. Vanderhaegen (2014: 31) maintains that othering can exist in (a) the position in which an individual finds himself in relation to the external group; that is, the 'othering' of the self in relation to the 'other other', and (b) the 'othering' of

the self in relation to the self. Regarding the post-apartheid context, according to Vanderhaegen (2004: 1), “Self-othering takes place within discourses of guilt, loss, fear, belonging, transformation and reconciliation, at a time when a national identity imagined as a ‘Rainbow Nation’ is being contested by discourses of Africanism, nativism and minority rights.”

Finally, our reading of identity construction in the songs concerned will refer to the notion of ‘over-determinism’ as formulated by way of Visagie’s concept of the hypernorm. Within Visagie’s frame of reference, a hypernorm is an autonomous norm, value or practice that dominates and controls other norms, values or practices to such an extent that ideological bias and partiality results (see also Schutte and Visagie 2012: 115ff). This construct is useful, in particular, for understanding discourse about language, culture and identity that is characterised by non-reflexive, one-sided thought.

Postures of protest in FAK-inspired songs

In their original versions, the songs to be discussed as part of our analysis all form part of the 1968 version of the FAK songbook.¹¹ They are included in our analysis on grounds of their critical engagement with, or affirmation of, normative white subjectivities.

The most recent edition of the FAK Songbook was issued in 2012,¹² and reprinted in 2019. This edition contains 400 contemporary Afrikaans songs – some of which were contributed by non-conformist artists such as Koos Kombuis, Anton Goosen, and Karen Zoid. However, it is notable that in this large selection of songs provocative content is either avoided or concealed by way of category placement. An example is Bok van Blerk’s controversial “De la Rey”, which appears under the section ‘Evergreen and Popular’. None of the songs analysed in this article are included in the new FAK Songbook.

The first song introduced in our discussion is Johannes Kerkorrel’s and Koos Kombuis’s version of “Siembamba” as performed during the *Voëlvrý* Tour in 1989. Du Plessis (1935: 113) traces the roots of the first verse of the original FAK version of “Siembamba” to the 18th-Century Cape Malay slave community. Though many of the *ghoema* songs originating from this period constituted “satirical commenting

11 Although all the songs appear in later editions of the FAK songbook, we prefer to use the 1968 version of the FAK songbook because it was published during a time in which apartheid flourished. The song “Siembamba” can be found in the FAK editions printed between 1937 and 1979. “Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira” was added in 1961.

12 <http://www.fak.org.za/2012/06/13/fak-sangbundel-afrikaners-is-weer-plesierig-metfak-sangbundel/>.

on the ways of the white masters, or more frequently, madams” (Winberg 1992: 78), “Siembamba” was sung as a lullaby (Du Plessis 1935: 113). Provided with five new verses by CJ Langenhoven, the author of the apartheid anthem “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” (‘The Call of South Africa’), the song is generally still seen as a nursery rhyme or lullaby. Clearly, Langenhoven intended his lyrics as humorous satire, its message being that all men remain babies until they die.¹³

Langenhoven’s amusing lyrics, however, are a different category of satire than was the case with the Cape Malay songs – which later have been claimed as Afrikaner cultural goods. Winberg (1992: 89) underlines this irony, “[t]he satirical traditions of the ghoemaliedjie live on [...] in the most soulful utterances of Afrikanerdom”. While in the case of “Siembamba” most adaptations retained the song’s original de-politicised meaning, C Louis Leipoldt’s (1980: 22) dramatic monologue “Siembamba” laments the harsh conditions in the English concentration camps during the South African War. The poem displays strong Nationalist sentiments, yet Leipoldt acknowledges the indigenous origin of “Siembamba’s” first verse as “‘n lokasieliedjie” (a location song) (Leipoldt 1980: 22).

Koos Kombuis’s and Johannes Kerkorrel’s subversive ‘recycled’ version, “Siembamba”¹⁴ was recorded during a live performance in 1989 and appears on the CD, *Voëlvry, die toer*, released as a compilation in 2002. Kombuis and Kerkorrel co-wrote this adaptation. Despite their provocative lyrics, they maintained the original song’s innocent musical atmosphere using a simple piano accompaniment based on a repetitive, broken-chord figure.

Siembamba¹⁵, baba is 'n junky
Siembamba, baby is a junky

Siembamba, baba is 'n junky
Siembamba, baby is a junky

Want pappa naai escorts
because daddy fucks escorts

En mamma lê dronk
and mommy lies drunk

en baba gooi 'n handvol pille in sy mond
and baby throws a handful of pills in his mouth

13 Siembamba was included in the FAK for the first time in 1937 but without the original first verse (Gutsche et al. 1937).

14 This song was also adapted in 1989 to criticise the decision of the University of Stellenbosch to ban a *Voëlvry* performance on the campus (Hopkins 2006: 183).

15 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYw2ieDATGQ>

[At this point, Koos Kombuis engages the live audience with the following comment: “Hierdie liedjie is geskryf deur my woonstelmaat en daarvoor is hy *gefire* uit die staatsdiens.”¹⁶]¹⁷

Siembamba, Siphoo gooi klippe
Siembamba, Siphoo throws stones

Siembamba, Siphoo gooi klippe
Siembamba, Siphoo throws stones

slaan hom met 'n knuppel
hit him with a club

rol hom in die sloot
roll him into the ditch

laat hom op seep gly dan is hy dood
let him slip on soap and then he will be dead

Siembamba, vergeet van 'n toekoms
Siembamba, forget about a future

Siembamba, vergeet van jou hoekoms
Siembamba, forget about your why's

bly in jou suburb, lees jou koerant
stay in your suburb, read your newspaper

en voor jy weet is die fokken plek aan die brand
and before you know it, the fucking place is burning

Siembamba, Rozanne skryf gedigte
Siembamba, Rozanne writes poems

Siembamba, Rozanne skryf gedigte
Siembamba, Rozanne writes poems

Vat haar pen af, stuur haar na haar moeder toe
Take away her pen, tell her to sod off

Sê vir oupa daarvan dan kry hy kreef
Tell grandfather about it and he will get lobster

While the original FAK version of “Siembamba” is well-known and cherished as light-hearted Afrikaner culture, in its revised version, the two left-wing artists

16 This song was written by my flatmate and for this, he was fired from the civil service.

17 Although this is not part of the lyrics, it can be heard on the recording, and serves to emphasise the risks involved for artists at the time – notably the members of *Voël/vry* (Truscott 2011).

radically challenged dominant discourses of Afrikaner identity at the time. Not oblivious to the original song's cultural value, Kombuis and Kerkorrel intended to shock with their brutal perspective on the falseness and pretence of the Afrikaner ethos.

In the first verse, both literally and metaphorically, a stark contrast is created between the original lullaby's innocence and the reality of apartheid society, which, as insinuated, was rotten to the core. The focus then turns to the violent, state-controlled repression of black protest during apartheid in referencing 'hit[ting Siph]o] with a club', and 'let[ting]him slip on soap so that he could die'. These phrases refer to the South African Security Forces Special Branch's gross human rights violations during apartheid, and the unconvincing reasons offered for deaths in detention of black anti-apartheid activists (see Swenson 2017).¹⁸ Indeed the phrases 'roll him into the ditch' and 'let him slip on soap and then he will be dead' accentuate the extreme disregard for black lives at the time and the 'accidental deaths' or 'deaths in detention' so common during apartheid. Then the artists highlight Afrikaners' complacency and ignorance ('forget about your why's') and their refusal to acknowledge the political crisis of apartheid ('stay in your suburb; read your newspaper'). The latter phrase also refers to the Afrikaans newspapers' silencing or covering-up of apartheid atrocities, including black protest ('... before you know it, the fucking place is burning'). The song ends with a satirical allusion to the then State President's daughter, Rozanne Botha, and to her poems that evaded political content and were also of low quality (Hambidge 1991).

In terms of a postural reading, a curious similarity may be postulated between the mother who *takes care* of her child in the original version of "Siembamba" and Kombuis's and Kerkorrel's subversive rendition. In *contemplating the suffering* of fellow (black) South Africans, the artists undoubtedly risked being cast out by their cultural group. Thus, the posture of *taking care* becomes ambiguous in that they did not behave according to rules prescribed by the cultural in-group, but instead took on the plight of 'the other'. As indicated in our exposition of Visagie's (2007: 12) framework, *caring* postures may take on an ethical or a moral stance. While the former seeks superiority and merit for 'me and my people', the latter entails doing the same for other cultures. Kombuis's and Kerkorrel's "Siembamba" suggests a moral posture of *compassion* that seeks *justice* for the oppressed.

18 The recent reopening of inquests into anti-apartheid activists Ahmed Timol's and Neil Aggett's deaths, has again brought to the fore the brutality of Special Branch interventions during apartheid. Testimonies delivered during the sittings of the TRC revealed that some political activists who were detained without trial died while in police custody; others were abducted and assassinated, or disappeared without trace (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa 1998: 181ff).

In his reflection on local white identity, De Kock (2006: 177) identifies two ways in which the sense of self may be fashioned, “first, according to a sense of rebellion *against* the strictures of one’s one cultural habitus, or, second, it may be ‘seamed’ – held together in a strained relation to a perceived alterity”.

Clearly, the posture of *protest* as voiced in Kombuis and Kerkorrel’s “Siembamba” may be categorised under the first, insubordinate type of identity construction. Grundlingh (2004: 485) describes the *Voëlvry* movement as “the first time full-blown rock and roll with biting social commentary was seen to challenge the generally perceived staid and shackled Afrikaans cultural and political world”. This implies that in terms of Vanderhaegen’s (2004: 1) thought, as ‘alternative’ Afrikaners, the artists’ distancing from apartheid oppression is suggestive of his notion of ‘self-othering’. However, there is a single phrase in the lyrics of “Siembamba” where, arguably, the artists momentarily identify with the ‘own’ group, namely ‘... forget about a future’. This statement clarifies their utter disillusionment with apartheid South Africa, suggesting the posture of *meaninglessness*, and their *personal loss* of innocence (see Brygola 2011: 63).

In contrast to Kombuis’s and Kerkorrel’s version of “Siembamba” which openly protests against Afrikaner culture and apartheid, the Afrikaans singer Lucas Maree’s version of “Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira” (‘Take your things and move, Ferreira’), released on the CD *Blouberg* in 2001, represents a more ambiguous response to the delegitimisation of white identity in post-apartheid South Africa.

Speculation exists as to the origin of “Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira”. Cobus Ferreira (1983: 15) ascribes the origin of the song to spontaneous late 19th-Century sing-alongs accompanied by a seraphine in the so-called Onder-Kouga, the cradle of the Ferreira and Gerber families. Indeed, one Ferreira inhabitant was nicknamed Jan (Been) Ferreira (Jan ‘Leg’ Ferreira). Prinsloo (2004), on the other hand, maintains that according to *Die Boerevrou* of October 1926 the original song was written by Mrs Annie Molony and Ada van Aardt, presumably in 1926,¹⁹ in frustrated response to a farmer (Ferreira) who failed to leave his farm after it had been sold to his rich neighbour (Ada van Aardt’s father). SJ du Toit (1932: 15), however, notes that the song was mentioned in 1889 in a book by Dr Hendrik PN Muller, who assumed that this was “a Voortrekker song”. Du Toit, a respected clergyman and staunch Nationalist, makes a surprising case for two other possible explanations. The song might have been written to drive away an unwanted (crippled) suitor or it was sung as a parody (“paskwil”) in 1870 by the

19 As recorded in *Die Boerevrou*, October 1926, <https://maroelamedia.co.za/afrikaans/idiome-en-uitdrukkings/uitdrukking-vat-jou-goed-en-trek-ferreira/>.

residents of a small town as an inhabitant decided to leave his wife and home after it became known that she had engaged in an affair with one of his friends (Du Toit 1932: 15). In this explanation, while “Jan Ferreira” was possibly merely a pseudonym, the man did have bandy legs – and the reference to “heavy carrying on one side” probably referred to the unfaithful wife’s condition (Du Toit 1932: 15).

Another reference to “Vat jou goed en trek” was by Piet Uithalder (a pseudonym for Dr Abdullah Abdurahman) in his satirical column *Staatpraatjes*, which appeared in the official mouthpiece of the African Political Organisation between 1909 and 1922 (Adhikari 1996: 111). In his account, Abdurahman recalls that they (the Muslim community) used to sing this song as children. However, few of them knew that, in the tradition of “ghoemaliedjies”, it mocked South African Party statesman Louis Botha, the first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, known for limiting the rights of black South Africans. Abdurahman’s account underlines the spontaneous cultural exchange that took place between ethnic groups at the time. Apart from lyrics, this also involved musical idioms – the influence of “ghoema” music on “boeremusiek” being a case in point (see Viljoen, Louw and Viljoen (2018).

Whether initially the song was meant as a practical joke, or political satire, musically speaking, “Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira” has a cheerful character, aided by the key of A major and a simple harmonic progression of I-IV-V, befitting the postural qualities of *play*. Perhaps for this reason, Maree’s version of this song is so striking: the ‘innocent’ intent of *playfulness* in the original version is replaced by a more complex postural quality.

Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira²⁰
Take your things and move, Ferreira,

vat jou goed en trek ...
take your things and move ...

ja, vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira -
yes, take your things and move, Ferreira -

Jannie met die hoepelbeen
Jannie with the bandy legs

Swaar dra al aan die eenkant
Heavy carrying on one side

20 Permission to reproduce the lyrics of Maree’s song was granted by Mrs Ilse Maree, personal communication, 15 June 2020.

Swaar dra al aan die eenkant
Heavy carrying on one side

en swaar dra aan die eenkant
and heavy carrying on one side

laat 'n mens in sirkels trek
let you move in circles

Jy is mos gewoond aan trek,
You are used to moving,

jy doen dit al vir jare
you've been doing it for years

want jy het steeds die swerwersbloed
because you still have Diaz's wanderer blood

van Diaz in jou are
in your veins

en jy voel nog steeds
and you sometimes still feel

die winde van die oopsee in jou hare
the winds of the open sea in your hair

as jy bedags moet luister
when you listen to your boss and his complaints

na jou baas en sy besware
during the day

So, vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira
So, take your things and move, Ferreira,

[...]
[...]

want dit hou jou op jou plek
because it keeps you in check

Jy wens jy kon soos Piet Retief
You wish you could trek into the wilderness

die wildernis weer intrek
like Piet Retief

maar die petrol is te duur
but petrol is too expensive

en selfs daar is nie meer plek nie.
and even there no space is left

Selfs al sou jy êrens
Even if you could get

nog 'n stukkie paradys kon kry
a little piece of paradise somewhere

is die kans goed dat jy ook daar
chances are that you would also fight

met jou buurman sal baklei
with your neighbour there

So vat jou goed en trek Ferreira,
So take your things and move, Ferreira,

vat jou goed en trek
take your things and move

want sodra jy klaar verkas het
because as soon as you leave

is daar 'n ander in jou plek
there will be another in your place

en hy sal swaar dra al aan die eenkant
and he will do heavy carrying on one side

swaar dra al aan die eenkant
heavy carrying on one side

want swaar dra aan die eenkant
because heavy carrying on one side

is polities so korrek
is politically correct

Miskien moet mens maar landuit,
Maybe one should leave the country,

soos Van Riebeeck en sy vrou
just like Van Riebeeck and his wife

wat jare terug 'n nasie
who wanted to build a new nation

langs 'n vreemde kus wou bou ...
on a foreign coast ...

Dalk kan ons daar in die vreemde
 Perhaps we should try again

weer 'n keer probeer
 in a foreign country

of dalk moet ons maar bly
 or perhaps should we stay where we are

en kyk of ons iets leer
 and see if we learn something

Ja, vat dan maar jou goed Ferreira,
 Yes, so then, take your things, Ferreira,

vat jou goed en trek
 take your things and move

jou tasse is gepak
 your bags are packed

en op vlug een een nul is plek en hy gaan
 and there is space on flight 110 and it will

Swaar dra al aan die eenkant
 carry heavily on one side

[...]
 [...]

hou jou op jou plek ...
 keep you in check ...

Despite Maree's rendition's playful musical character, the postural question of 'What am I to do?' comes strongly to the fore in the lyrics, with Maree questioning the future of the Afrikaner in South Africa. It is well known that many South Africans emigrated or considered emigrating²¹ after the demise of apartheid, and, at first glance, it seems as if Maree is encouraging people to do the same – or perhaps considering emigration himself. The chorus ends with a reminder that if you carry a heavy load on one side only, you will end up moving in circles.

Thus, in the first verse, the posture of *suffering* becomes apparent by juxtaposing perceived former freedom with the symbolism of moving in a circle of (political) captivity. The chorus affirms the *suffering* stance in referring to

21 According to a White Paper released by the Department of Home Affairs in July 2017, a study had indicated that more than 520 000 South Africans emigrated between 1989 and 2003, with an increase of about 9% per year (Department of Home Affairs 2017: 49)

the lack of personal and professional freedom. This hints at a situation in South Africa where, due to political redress, some Afrikaners resent having become subservient to black superiors (the 'other', in Vanderhaegen's 2014: 1 terms). As Maree indicates, this *suffering* is 'expected' from you: you have to do heavy carrying on the one side under the Afrikaner's complicity with apartheid (the posture of *guilt*).

The second verse is an even more robust expression of the longing for freedom, and *letting go* of political *guilt*. Here, the use of Piet Retief's²² name might evoke an emotive association not only with the Voortrekker Afrikaner heritage, but also with Retief's punitive expeditions in the Cape Colony in response to Xhosa looting (see Giliomee 2003: 136ff). Once again, in this verse, the 'grey posture' associated with new South African limitations (expensive petrol, the wilderness already being too crowded) erases any likelihood of escape as Maree reminds the would-be immigrant (and himself) that the overseas 'paradise' is also rife with problems. Thus, the individual needs to *let go* of any futile aspirations of fleeing to a new life.

Yet Maree adds more fuel to the fire with his assertion that people do not *take care* of one another ("as soon as you leave, there will be another in your place"). Life goes on, and the circle of suffering is here to stay: Being white and an Afrikaner, suffering is mandatory, politically correct and thus to be expected. After a repeat of the chorus a pennywhistle can be heard improvising in a *kwela* style²³ on new material added to the original melody. It is interesting to note that the basic harmonic progressions of this insert (I-I-IV-V and I-IV-V-I) are also basic to the harmonic patterns of *kwela* music (Allen 2005:268), and in the context of Maree's Afrikaans song, instigates a cultural asymmetry between different cultures, at least on a symbolic level.

Finally, Maree does *contemplate giving up* and leaving the country – following the example of Van Riebeeck and his wife. Momentarily it would appear as if he was still *hopeful* and willing to *let go* of the idea of leaving ("perhaps we should stay and see if we learn something"). Yet in the final chorus he instructs 'Ferreira' (and possibly himself) to take his things and leave (by plane). The final phrases are accompanied by ululations²⁴ heard in the background, bringing the song to an evidently *joyous* end. However, this gesture may perhaps be suggestive of the *triumph* of 'the other', expressing a kind of sardonic humour – a final ironic indication of the clash of cultures in post-apartheid South Africa.

22 Piet Retief was one of the leaders of the so-called Great Trek in 1837.

23 Allen (2005: 268) describes the most salient characteristic of *kwela* music as "the repetition of a short harmonic cycle over which a series of short melodies or motifs ... are repeated and varied".

24 Ululations heard in South Africa are typically used by black South Africans to give praise.

In terms of an overarching postural reading, Maree's "Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira" is suggestive of *meaninglessness*. It is an iconic example of Brygola's (2011) 'threatened identity' in imparting the idea of 'the loss of part of oneself', as well as fear of an uncertain future (see Vanderhaegen 2004: 1). Even though Maree is seemingly indecisive about 'staying' or 'leaving', the song projects ideologically biased thought on new South African culture and identity (see Schutte and Visagie 2012: 115ff). In that sense, it may be interpreted as also representing Brygola's (2001) threatened identity type of 'seeking power and autonomy'.

"Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira" again appeared on a CD called *Volksbesit 2* in 2003, two years after Maree had recorded his version of this FAK folk song. This CD's title seems to indicate that the selection of songs belongs to the Afrikaner, integrated into a different historical, political and socio-historical environment than its origin. The South African singer Karen Zoid, born in 1978 and thus one generation younger than Maree, opted for a rock version of "Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira":²⁵

Jy sê jy is 'n nuwe Afrikaan²⁶

You say you are a new Afrikaan

Ek dink dis net 'n rede om selfvoldaan te wees

I think it is just a reason to be complacent

Ons koop die Star vir die Tonight

We buy the Star²⁷ for the Tonight

because what was wrong is still left and right

because what was wrong is still left and right

Jou leuns sal niemand ooit weer kan vang nie

Your lies will never catch anyone again

Mense stel net nie meer belang nie

People just are not interested anymore

Elkeen fight sy eie spoke

Each fights his own ghosts

Dis oraait ons is gebroke

It is ok, we are broken

25 Permission to reproduce the lyrics of "Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira" was granted by Karen Zoid.

26 Lyrics taken from a documentary series called *Die liedjies wat ons ken*, programme no. 7, aired in 2002 on kykNET.

27 *The Star* is an independent daily newspaper based in Gauteng, South Africa. One of the many supplements is called 'Tonight'.

Refrein:

Chorus:

Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira
Take your things and move, Ferreira

Jannie met die hoepelbeen, Ferreira
Jannie with the bandy legs, Ferreira

Agter die huis is ek, Ferreira
I am behind the house, Ferreira

Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira (herhaal)
Take your things and move, Ferreira (repeat)

Geen toekoms, is jy tevrede?
No future, are you happy?

FAK jou verlede
FAK your past

Maak my siek met jou pretensie
Make me sick with your pretentiousness

Gevangene van konsekwensie
prisoner of consequence

(Herhaling van refrein)
(Chorus repeat)

In contrast to Maree's version, this song is an outright pessimistic *contemplation* of the consequences of apartheid. Zoid does not beat around the bush when, in the first verse, she accuses some of her fellow citizens of faking the *taking care* posture to appease their *guilt* ('You say you are a new Afrikaan'). This display of arrogance and pretentiousness implies that a vital posture is lacking, namely that of *humility*.²⁸ However, the 'new Afrikaanses' also constitute a form of 'othering'; in Kriel's (2013: 265) view, they even represent a faction evocative of 'a new apartheid'.²⁹

Intimating that 'new Afrikaanses' form their politically correct opinions on what they read in *The Star* (a daily independent Gauteng newspaper featuring

28 Ironically, historically speaking, the *humility* posture was taken very seriously in the Afrikaner life world, but within apartheid extended only to fervent, Calvinist belief in the sovereignty of God.

29 Kriel (2013: 279) cites Breyten Breytenbach in rejecting the term 'Afrikaanses', defining all those who use Afrikaans as a mother-tongue, including coloured and black South Africans, as 'Afrikaners'.

political opinion pieces), this, too, for her is a mere display of pretentiousness and a concealment of indifference. Thus, in Zoid's view, this faction of post-apartheid Afrikaners, despite their liberalist pretences, only *takes care of themselves* and their own cultural group. Although the concept of *taking care* in Visagie's (2007: 12) terms is categorised under the 'light' postures, in this respect, Zoid's interpretation suggests a 'darker' self-centred stance of self-preservation.

The third verse clarifies that this song targets white Afrikaans-speaking 'neo-nationalists' because of Zoid's contemptuous reference to the FAK Songbook, their unescapable past. Keeping to a rock song structure, the chorus is repeated twice after the bridge towards the end of the song, a seemingly way for Zoid to (also) musically attack those who are not willing to face their *guilt* and political *complicity* without which any *hope of reconciliation* would not be possible.

In admonishing the pretences of false political redress ('because what was wrong is still left and right') Zoid in this song takes on a stance of 'self-othering' (see Vanderhaegen 2004: 1). Implying the type of 'threatened identity' termed by Brygola (2011) the 'constructive re-evaluation of the self', her version of "Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira" infers that those Afrikaners who want to preserve a strong sense of cultural identity, should gather their possessions and leave the country. In postural terms the song constitutes *taking care* morally both of the own group and the other. However, the singer does not escape underlying sentiments of futility and *meaninglessness* if such change would fail to materialise ('No future, are you happy?'). In this sense, "Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira" constitutes both rebellion against Zoid's cultural group, and, in admonishing them, simultaneously her strained yet inescapable ties to this group (see De Kock 2006: 177).

Conclusion

To conclude our postural reading of FAK-inspired protest songs as presented in this article, it is evident that the three songs discussed offer diverging perspectives on Afrikaner apartheid and post-apartheid identity. Though similar postures were featured in all three songs, these were highlighted from different moral and ethical stances, underlining the fact that Afrikaner identity is not (and has never been) a homogenous construct – especially not within an era where the voice(s) of other Afrikaans-speaking ethnicities are ever more strongly heard within local popular musics (see Klopper 2009: 16).

Seen from the perspective of postural theory, it may speculatively be argued that Kombuis's and Kerkorrel's unsettling version of the FAK song "Siembamba" guaranteed attention from the Afrikaner community and apartheid government. The irony of using a memorable folk song to protest against the ruling nationalist

government might have been lost on some listeners. But perhaps the artists intended to go a step further than the subversive voicing of critique, and through moral judgement impel a sense of *guilt* and *blame* through their music.

While post-apartheid artists confronted questions of identity and cultural heritage by employing FAK folk songs as tools for irony, parody, social commentary and criticism, in the case of Lucas Maree's "Vat jou goed en trek Ferreira", we highlighted postures of *suffering* and *meaninglessness* in relation to Afrikaner resistance to political redress. Here, the burden of *guilt* was shown to be an unwelcome consequence of the apartheid past – one from which the singer wished to escape.

In contemplating Karen Zoid's powerful version of "Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira", the root metaphor of 'war', relevant to the central sphere of Postural Theory's 'attack-defend logic' comes to mind (Visagie 2004: 2). While the Voëlvry artists *attacked* the apartheid regime with "Siembamba", a *defend* mechanism became apparent in Maree's "Vat jou goed en trek, Ferreira" in that he inherently upheld and longed for the 'good old days' in his FAK-inspired lyrics. On the other hand, Zoid forcefully *attacked* the post-apartheid 'new Afrikaan' faction, using her rendition of the original folk song to assault the very society in which it was produced with an eschewed version of what used to be a cultural gem.

Our analyses of Afrikaans protest songs in this article, however, underline the fact that even critically-intended remonstrations, while representing liminal experiences of being white and Afrikaans in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, may serve one-sided manifestations of ideological power in a country where, as De Klerk (2010: 52) finds, "the spectre of race shows no sign of dying". While, in principle, all three songs challenge dominant discourses of local ethnic identity, the essentialist (hypernormative) viewpoints propounded by them may also maintain polarisation. Yet, as historical expressions of white Afrikaans identity, they aid understandings of reactionary and radical displays of white individuality as conceptualised within the shifting racial, cultural, gendered, and class-divided space of contemporary local popular music.

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