SOKKIE DANCING IN PRETORIA: POPULAR AFRIKAANS MUSIC, DANCE, AND IDENTITY

by

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Abstract: Afrikaans protest music influenced by rock has received a substantial degree of academic attention in recent years. While significant, the emphasis on Afrikaans protest music has left Afrikaans pop music largely unexamined. As this genre enjoys wide popularity amongst Afrikaners, this article considers this lacuna in academic inquiry. Afrikaans pop music is widely consumed in South Africa and is a major part of its music industry. In this article, I bring into focus how a strand of music, that might seem to avoid meaningful dialogue through superficial lyrics, forms part of an Afrikaner subculture and a strategy to preserve identity, norms, and values. In particular, I argue for a wider contextual understanding of music and the limitations of lyrical analysis to produce meaningful insight into music's role in enabling participants to negotiate identity and place. Drawing on fieldwork conducted at Presley's, a night club in Pretoria, I elucidate this process through the dialogue between Afrikaans music and *sokkie* dance.

Keywords: Afrikaans, sokkie, place, space, dance, music, identity.

Introduction

> *Magdalene and Marco walk onto the floor and find a spot from which to start. He leads her with his left hand to the front, and she from her right, with her hand in his in a* langarm *or waltz-like stance. Magdalene's free hand moves to his shoulder, and his is placed on her hip or back and occasionally slides down to a more "supportive" position, as a bystander jokingly comments. Magdalene and Marco fall in step with the beat, blending in quickly with the crowd. A few couples rush and speed around in the hop/slide manner of sokkie dance, making long strides that quickly carry them far across the dance floor. Their speed appears a reckless, headlong rush to an imminent collision, but each time I wince at the couples' inevitable crash, they manage to twist away to safety and find a clear path. Every so often the man has his dance partner shoot from his side, spinning her forward while tightly holding onto her hand. He then pulls her towards him, generating momentum, to twirl her under his arm and back before pulling her back to himself once more. With his hand on her hip they continue with the twirling, circular movements on the dance floor* (Fieldnotes).

Sokkie is a freestyle couple's dance form that is popular amongst many white Afrikaans South Africans. The dance is practiced at Afrikaans night clubs, weddings, and other social events. This article explores how *sokkie* dance and Afrikaans pop music provide a space for meaning making in which an Afrikaner identity is affirmed. I argue that the origins and history of *sokkie* dance are germane to its importance for Afrikaners at Presley's, as the dance has become a tool for social reproduction, seclusion and the continuation of an Afrikaner identity in the face of perceived threats from the outside. Similarly, Afrikaans pop music has a significance in this space, though the reasons might be opaque.

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The lyrical content of the Afrikaans pop music played at Presley's is bereft of social or political commentary. Consequently, parsing meaning from the music's lyrics becomes problematic, but meaning is revealed through a relationship with *sokkie* dance rather than the lyrics. Its apparent lack of social significance has left the topic of Afrikaans pop music largely in the cold. While it is a widely popular strand, other music with a more directly political or social message often takes centre stage. This article is an attempt to address the lack of academic attention on Afrikaans pop music in general.

Several authors have explored the topic of identity with reference to Afrikaans music. For instance, music created and associated with the *Voëlvry* movement (Bezuidenhout 2007) has been the subject of numerous articles exploring Afrikaner identity and its relationship with the apartheid state at the time. Articles focused on Koos Kombuis and Johannes Kerkorrel, for example, challenge an extremely rigid and idealised Afrikaner identity during the late apartheid years (Laubscher 2005). Scholars such as Bezuidenhout, Laubscher, and others emphasise how protest music subverted the imagery and ideals of apartheid, and, importantly, that Afrikaners themselves played a role in deconstructing myths about identity and what it means to be an Afrikaner. More recently, scholarly attention has been assigned to the Afrikaans rock band, *Fokofpolisiekar*, in post-apartheid South Africa (Klopper 2011, Loubser 2015). This literature has made a considerable contribution to the fascinating discourse on the process of producing and negotiating an Afrikaner identity. However, a large aspect of Afrikaans music, that is, Afrikaans pop music, has been omitted from this kind of consideration.[1] I employ the term pop music to refer to music created for wide appeal that often reaches the top of various sales charts, such as the iTunes top 100 list, or the lists of various music award organisations. Afrikaans pop then, has an analogous definition, but for the language.

Afrikaans pop music

Defining Afrikaans pop music can be an imprecise exercise. Using "pop music" as a definitive genre is problematic. In general, pop music evades a finite definition of a "sound" or genre, and changes over time.[2] Pop music is delineated more appropriately through the charts than any particular sound. Afrikaans pop suffers from a similar identity crisis, with most charts and listening services such as the iTunes top 100 list simply categorising Afrikaans music under "pop" or "Afrikaans." This leaves little room for nuance. For my purposes in this article, Bezuidenhout's categories of Afrikaans music are helpful. Bezuidenhout argues that in post-apartheid South Africa, three strands of Afrikaans music emerged (2007): "These strands are constructed around nostalgia (a longing for an innocent past), romanticism (escapism constructed around a denial of the

[1] To clarify, Afrikaans refers to the language widely spoken in South Africa, while Afrikaner refers to a particular cultural group. I make the distinction when speaking of music, as numerous people who create Afrikaans music, do not themselves identify as Afrikaners.

[2] Kirsten Adams suggests an interesting list of defining features and sound elements that is well worth investigating (2019: 5).

negative aspect of life in South Africa) and cynicism (a critique of the direction of post-apartheid society, but without plausible programmes of action)" (*ibid*.: 11). Nostalgic music, according to Bezuidenhout, is consumed by people who meet in bars to celebrate the resurgent Afrikaans protest music such as that of Bok van Blerk.[3] Many listeners would wear shirts with the words "*Praat Afrikaans of hou jou bek*" (speak Afrikaans or shut up) printed on them, or similar phrases that suggest an attempt to sustain so-called traditional Afrikaner values and the language. Bezuidenhout argues that the romantic strand of music has apolitical lyrics concerning parties, love, and drunkenness. This strand emphasises the need to disassociate from, and forget about pressing social issues, and to relax away from these realities. Lastly, the "cynics" keep to the topics of crime, poverty and a corrupt government. They feel they have had no part in the crimes of apartheid, and as such, attempt to circumvent white guilt. They complain about how things have gone wrong but provide little information on how to improve society.

This article will focus mainly on the romantic strand of Afrikaans pop music. This is a strand of pop music that has received little academic attention, perhaps because of its apolitical lyrics. Lyrical analysis, in this context, is inadequate in understanding the meanings inherent in the romantic strand. It is important to note that the romantic strand is not the only type of music enjoyed at Presley's. Afrikaans and English classic rock music enjoys some air time, as well as English dance music. However, as I will show, Afrikaans pop music has a central role within Presley's, not only as a crowd favourite, but also in the way it creates a cultural sanctuary within this space. The phenomena and socialisation within Presley's suggest a "*laager* mentality" (Viviers 2016), one that guards against perceived threats towards the norms, values, and identity of Afrikaners. The term *laager* refers to a military tactic used by frontier settlers, known as *Voortrekkers*, who, during the nineteenth century, would circle their wagons, forming a temporary defensive position. To have a *laager* mentality then, is the "cultural trope… that means they have a habit of self-isolating themselves from perceived threats, both physical and psychological" (Viviers 2016: 100). This results in a kind of social "gated community" (Low & Lawrence-Zuniga 2003) within the borders of the night club. By itself, however, Afrikaans pop music does not advocate for isolationism. Rather, it is in its amalgamation with *sokkie* dance that the larger cultural strategy is manifest. Key to this arrangement is the historical import and association with past Afrikaner culture that makes the dance significant within this space.

[3] Bok van Blerk, or Louis Andreas Pepler, became famous (Baines 2013) in 2006 for his song "De La Rey" (Bok van Blerk 2013). The song is about a Boer war general who played an important role in the fight against colonial Britain at the time. It was received as a sign of resurgent right-wing nationalism. Some went as far as to suggest that "the song succeeded because it was a muted assertion of white Afrikaner identity: it emphasised the heroic past and thereby commented on a present that had increasingly come to be seen as a problematic place" (van der Waal and Robins 2011: 778).

The origins of *sokkie*

Sokkie is a style of dance popular among self-ascribed Afrikaners.[4] While the style has been uniquely associated with this group, today the dance is enjoyed both within and beyond the Afrikaans community. *Sokkie* has a long history which emerged from "slave orchestras" (Martin 2013: 70) from as far back as 1676. In the eighteenth-century, Lady Anne Barnard popularised European dance styles and music in the Cape.[5] She created an event for those "who wish to be merry without cards or dice but who can talk or 'hop' to half a dozen black fiddlers" (Bouws 1966: 139). This event, the Rainbow Ball, became known for the mixing of cultures, classes and races that took place throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth (Martin 2013). Other heavily choreographed dances such as the quadrille, polka, and valeta, were also performed and were adopted by the Coloured communities in the Cape.[6] The Afrikaners (Boers) retained several of these music and dance styles which were later considered traditional *volkdanse* (folk dances). Afrikaners often enjoyed these dances at celebrations such as weddings and other formal gatherings in rural areas and on farms throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Grobbelaar, Hudson and van der Merwe 1977).

Boeremusiek[7] developed alongside these dance styles in the Afrikaner community, assisting in the retention of traditional waltz-like couples' dances. The Afrikaners participated in the dances, while "the Coloured population of Cape Town who danced Ballroom through every fashion change of the early 1900s, appear to have dropped the Polka, Mazurka and the Galop for the modern dances" (Dunseith 2017: 83). The *langarm*[8] dance style remained a distinct and popular recreational style within various Coloured communities (Holtzman 2007). The *Boere-danse* style (Katzenellenbogen 1984) was less choreographed and not performed as a group. This form of dance was often included as a freestyle category of Afrikaner dance style because it maintained, protected, and revived other older forms. The dance was later

[4] I am aware of the complex and abstract nature of identity and that an attempt to define what it means to be an Afrikaner would be erroneous. Many people speak Afrikaans but do not subscribe to an Afrikaner identity. With this in mind, and for the benefit of clarity, the term "Afrikaner" is used to refer to people who self-identify as such.

[5] Lady Ann Barnard (1750–1825) came from Scotland. She was a writer, artist and socialite. Her brief stay in Cape town had a substantial effect on the cultural and social life at the time.

[6] The term "Coloured" is a nineteenth-century construct that came to be known as a racial category during apartheid. The term "Mixed" and "Other Coloured" was initially used in a nineteenth-century Census Report in the Cape, categorising individuals who did not fit into neatly defined racial groups as a result of so-called racial mixing. Later, especially during apartheid, the term "Coloured" came into common usage (Ridd 1994). I am using the term for perspectival reasons and not to perpetuate such classifications.

[7] This was a form of music played by white Afrikaans people. The music was light-hearted, upbeat and designed for dancing. Contributing to the unique sound of *boeremusie*k are the concertina, which continues to be a keystone of the style, along with the banjo, guitar, piano and a range of other instruments. An example of this is Klipwerf Boereorkes's *Wie se kind is jy?* (Klipwerf 2018).

[8] *Langarm* developed from similar origins as *sokkie*, though it remains distinct. The style is usually danced by couples. The band consists of several instruments including the saxophone, keyboard, bass guitar and percussion.

called *sokkie* dance (Katzenellenbogen 1999). The style was easy to learn and could be danced to numerous musical styles.

At Presley's, however, as I will show, preference is given to Afrikaans pop music for this style of dance. The relationship between music and dance are key to understanding space, place, and the *laager*. This relationship between dance and music forms part of a strategy of developing and sharpening boundaries, and transforming this space into "place." Hudson suggests that place can be described as "complex entities, ensembles of material objects, people, and systems of social relationships embodying distinct cultures and multiple meanings, identities, and practices" (2006: 627). The space literally being the brick-and-mortar building, and the metaphorical place encompassing social relations, interactions, and practices. Through the process of place making, music "plays a unique and often hidden role in the production of place" (Cohen 1991: 288).

Sokkie through the night at Presley's

Presley's opened in 1999, following the success of the first Presley's that opened in Boksburg in 1994. At Presley's the patrons vary in age. All are white and almost all are Afrikaans-speaking. Any people of colour at the night club work there as bartenders, cleaners, and waiters. In my observations, these demographics are the norm. Walking through the bustling crowd, I spot my informant, Magdalene, who has been a semi-regular patron at Presley's for many years. [9] She waves me over. "It's just about having a bit of fun. I do not try to pick up guys here, and in the end, there is nowhere else where we can dance like that. There is nowhere else where we can *sokkie* dance."[10]

We move to the left corner of the establishment, into the VIP section, which is a smoking area with a pool table and seating. A few members of the group are assigned to guard handbags and drinks while the rest find their way to the dance floor. The last notes and beats of the song, *Vem Dancar Kuduro*, by Lucenzo (Ego Italy 2010) are followed by the Afrikaans pop song, *Mengelmoeskardoes* (2007), sung by Juanita du Plessis. The song is accompanied by basic electric guitar chords backed by a simple repetitive bass beat (see the discography for more examples). With the change of the song, small groups enter and leave the dance floor. It does not take too long for the change to occur and for partners who are quick enough to find one another. In a waltz-like display, couples start to twist and turn on the dance floor.

While increasingly complicated moves and twists can be added to the dance (displayed by more advanced dancers) it is not difficult to learn the basics, and, bar a few toe-stepping incidents, *sokkie* quickly becomes an energetic and joyous activity. Participants need not only dance with a "significant other" (though recommended), since many of the women arrive in single gender groups. The men often have to ask them for a dance. A man would offer his hand to a potential dance partner, accompanied by the question, "*wil jy dans*?" (Would you like to dance?). If denied, the man could repeat this question and gesture a few times until he finds a willing dance partner. A

[9] Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of participants.

[10] All translations from Afrikaans to English are my own.

good dancer is a prized find and a nimble man is often passed among friends in a group of women, encouraging each to have a turn. There is also the danger of asking the wrong woman to dance; asking a woman to dance that has a "significant other" within earshot could potentially be a catalyst for confrontation.

This jovial scene contrasts starkly with Presley's reputation. While Magdalene professes not to have had much trouble, her boyfriend testifies to a rather different experience: "I've been there twice and had bad experiences on both occasions," Marco comments. The first was a biker who accused him of flirting with his wife. He ended up hiding underneath a *bakkie*[11] in the parking lot. Marco admits to a little guilt with the second occurrence when he talked to a lone woman at a table: "Her boyfriend arrived and asked me what I was doing talking to his girlfriend. Try as I might to explain I did not know she was with someone. The burly boyfriend and his friends were not particularly interested and I ended up running out the bar and leaving in my car." In my previous observations, such occurrences were not infrequent, though no more prevalent than at other social spaces involving copious amounts of alcohol. While the suggestion of violence is seemingly part of its image, Presley's reputation and image are carefully cultivated and many more subtle barriers of cultural entry belie the space. The night club has a dress code and numerous bouncers to promote a cordial atmosphere. However, the rituals and norms that play out inside the club reveal an isolated and restrictive culture, usually enforced by the male patrons who visit. Social roles are negotiated by men asking the women to dance with them, and the expectations and rewards of being a good and enthusiastic *sokkie* dancer. Afrikaner men in this way are represented as active agents within the space while women have a more passive role. This is illustrated further by the fact that Afrikaner men primarily police identity and space, as illustrated below.

Earlier, I mentioned that Magdalene contradicted herself when saying that she never experienced a violent altercation at the bar. She later told me of a homophobic incident she witnessed: "A 'girl' came in one night. She could dance as you have never seen anyone dance. She was so beautiful. All the men were looking at her. She ended up kissing my male friend. Shortly after that we all discovered that she was really a man. The person ended up being *bliksemed*.[12] People are still very against the gay thing here." This type of attitude towards LGBTQ+ people at Presley's and the generalisation of the terminology reflects Pieterse's (2013) observations regarding the perceived threats that non-conforming male sexuality poses to the pillars on which Afrikaner culture rests. As Pieterse notes, on male homosexuality in particular — notably from the 1960s onward:

The policing of nonconformist sexuality, in turn, evaded historical scrutiny largely because homosexuality posed a threat to the patriarchal, gendered order on which Afrikaner power rested and did not fit into the prevailing meta-narratives of Afrikaners as heroic *volk* (Pieterse 2013).

While homosexuality was ignored, shunned or otherwise marginalised through the latter half of the twentieth century (and into the early twenty-first), arguments have

[11] A South African term for a small truck/lorry with an open body and low sides.

[12] A colloquial term meaning to be hit or assaulted with fists.

been made that a heterosexual, masculine identity was formed as a counter-culture or in response to perceptions of homosexuality: "'For in its policing of the gay subculture, the dominant culture sought above all to police its boundaries. As elsewhere in the world, stereotypes of the 'other' served to construct ideas about the 'self' " (Pieterse 2013: 619). Men within Presley's made a definitive effort to not dance *sokkie* with other men for fear of being labelled as *moffies*,[13] as well as the physical threat this posed. Women often danced with other women in the *sokkie* style and some openly lesbian women participated without harassment. As Magdalene asks, "Why would men care if women are kissing? What is more beautiful to a man than two women kissing? Doing the same thing as two men, however, would get them beaten up in the parking lot." While it is meant in jest, her comments serve to further the notion that men control the acceptable boundaries of sexual behaviour within this space. Women dancing together would not be in conflict with heterosexual, masculine norms within Presley's and are thus a great deal less policed. Here, dance acts as a functional border; creating an isolationist space. Participation is contingent on the norms and values derived from an idealised, heterosexist identity.

Kaeppler conceives of dance as a structured movement system. Dance results from "creative processes that manipulate(s) (to handle with skill) human bodies in time and space. Some categories of structured movement may be further marked or elaborated, for example, by being integrally related to 'music' " (2000: 117). A structured movement system is a system of knowledge, the product of action and interaction that forms part of layers of activity within a group. A structured movement system is socially constructed, created and agreed upon by people, and mainly preserved through memory. Kaeppler further explains that while dance is transient in nature, there exists a structured movement system that can be representative of social relations. These relations are revealed within the context of Presley's and act as a thread connecting the practitioners to an identity and a perceived, shared past.

This connection to the past is emphasised in the relationships between *sokkie* dance and Afrikaans pop music. Switching between Afrikaans pop and other dance music brought about a change in the dance styles. When there was no Afrikaans pop music playing, couples dancing *sokkie* slowed down to a stop and separated. Like a shift change, people drift to and from the dance floor as a new genre of dance song played. It was clear that while this music can be danced to, it was no longer Afrikaans music. Instead, small circular groups started to form, individual dancing took the place of *sokkie* dance and suddenly freed arms waved in the air while bodies shifted to the rhythm. S*okkie* dance is a versatile style and can easily be adapted to many high tempo music genres. The patrons at Presley's, however, make a point of dancing *sokkie* almost exclusively to Afrikaans songs. The fact that the song is sung in Afrikaans or performed by an Afrikaans performer suggests solidarity and association with a perceived ideal. It would suggest that this strand of music is part of a defensive strategy to maintain particular values and norms. What, though, is the significance of this kind of rule?

[13] A derogatory, colloquial term towards a homosexual or effeminate man.

Why this kind of preference for Afrikaans pop music, especially since it is a strand of music that purposefully avoids political or social topics? What is the meaning within the choices participants make on such occasions?

Meaningful music

The significance of a preference for Afrikaans pop music lies in the simplistic nature of the music. Though the lyrics might be devoid of profound meaning, they are, nonetheless, still in Afrikaans. The reason, however, that it is paramount that the music be easy on the ear, is the same reason that Presley's has become a *laager*-like space. That is, a place where there is a fear of the loss of language and culture. I suggest that there is a great a great deal of subtlety that may be overlooked when simply analysing the quality of lyrics or music. What then, does meaning mean in this context? Lévi-Strauss suggests the following:

> The ability of any kind of data to be translated in a different language. I do not mean French or German, but different words on a different level. After all, this translation is what a dictionary is expected to give you – the meaning of the word in different words, which on a slightly different level are isomorphic to the word or expression you're trying to understand (2014: 9).

More importantly, he explains that when speaking of meaning and rules, one is, in fact, speaking of the same thing (*ibid.*). By this definition, he means that placing meaning or relevance onto an object or phenomenon necessitates norms, behaviours, and expectations to follow. I might eat numerous apples without fanfare, but if I were to bite into an apple forbidden to me by God, I encounter a microcosm of rules which I choose to adhere to or flaunt based on my desired outcomes. These actions have consequences absent from the nature of the object itself, but for the significance humans have placed on it.

Meaning is tasked as a motivation for explaining actions by agents within a context. Through understanding the significance of an object, gesture, symbol, or bodily position, we might be able to more accurately understand the motivation and reasoning around behaviour. The individual wishes to achieve certain goals within the context of a space, and through socialised practices, rituals, and norms, expresses their autonomy through the established relevancies and rules that can be followed or broken to convey meaning and intent to those who understand the rules of that space. Drawing meaning from a form of music that deliberately avoids making socially or politically significant statements through trite lyrics can therefore be challenging. Consider the following lyrics by Kurt Darren, a popular artist in the genre:

Kaptein (Span die Seile)	Captain (Set the Sails)
Kaptein, span die seile	Captain, set the sails
Kaptein, sy is myne	Captain, she is mine
Daar waar die son opkom	There where the sun comes up
Daar oor die horison wag sy vir my	There over the horizon she waits for me
Kaptein, span die seile	Captain, set the sails
Kaptein, sy is myne	Captain, she is mine
Daar waar die son gaan lê	There where the sun sets
Het sy gesê sy wag	She said she waits
Oh oh oh oh oh oh oh	Oh oh oh oh oh oh oh
Sy wag vir my	She waits for me

(Darren 2011)

Few people would be able to perceive any deeper political or social meaning to the lyrics of the above song. "Kaptein", however, is typical of the romantic strand of Afrikaans pop music played at Presley's**.** This strand of pop music offers no challenge to social or political questions. I would argue that this strand of music conforms to Horkheimer and Adorno's observation of the culture industry:

The culture industry can boast of having energetically accomplished and elevated to a principle the often-inept transposition of art to the consumption sphere, of having stripped amusement of its obtrusive naiveties and improved the quality of its commodities. The more all-embracing the culture industry has become, the more pitilessly it has forced the outsider into either bankruptcy or a syndicate (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 107).

The culture industry, Adorno argues, may be concerned with generating factory-produced, standardised cultural goods. The idea is that the easy pleasures of such cultural goods would manipulate society into a state of passivity (Laughey 2007: 123). Pop music understood this way is driven by profit rather than the need for creative expression or revolution. The need for profit fosters the adoption of a narrow formula of success that, to Adorno, produces banal music and stifles any attempts toward criticality (1990). I argue that the banal nature of Afrikaans pop music, and the romantic strand in particular, may easily be placed under the rubric of such a cultural industry, although that hardly tells the entire story.

It is important to acknowledge that musicians are under no obligation to produce content that is continuously against the establishment, nor to constantly circumvent existing norms and values as Adorno suggests. Adorno ignores simple human motivations such as having fun, pleasure, and enjoyment. Further, these simplistic topics can give rise to deeply nuanced and fascinating discourses on the topics of pleasure and music, as illustrated by Froneman, for whom:

> the frame of pleasure forms the fictional present and yet the past and its preservation are at stake here. It is as if the dancers are alienated from their actual pleasure by being made conscious of their place in a cultural lineage. The instrumental role of pleasure in preserving traditions that are practically extinct is highlighted by the presence of the portrait. In this case, nostalgia acts as means of subjunctifying present enjoyment, of making it hyperreal, like watching oneself having fun (2012: 40).

Many artists choose to avoid social issues and produce music that is purely for entertainment. This, however, does not disqualify such music from politics or meaning, and, as Adorno argues, it is exactly because music encourages consumers to see the existing status quo as a natural entity that need not be criticised, that this product becomes politicised. In other words, the fact that this kind of Afrikaans pop music is considered part of the presumed mainstream, or as part of a natural representation of the norm, makes it significant.

Avoiding political lyrics is a deliberate feature of Afrikaans pop music. In an interview, Pieter Smith admits he chooses to avoid political topics in his music as it might jeopardise his income (Interview 17 August 2015). Afrikaans pop music then, offers patrons at Presley's a less controversial medium in which to practice *sokkie* dance.

While Pieter Smith argues that he would not be able to survive too much controversy, others, like Steve Hofmeyr seem to thrive on it (Cronje 2011). Hofmeyr[14] is a popular Afrikaans entertainer and performer, yet he is able to portray himself as an imagined political figurehead of the Afrikaner political right. Hofmeyr has managed to tap into a perception of fear, victimhood, and exceptionalism (Broodryk 2016) that is echoed in the conversations I had with many of the patrons at Presley's. Hofmeyr promotes the idea of an embattled people needing to fight for the survival of their culture, language, and place in South Africa. However, this sentiment did not arise out of nowhere. Vermaak asserts that the *laager* mentality is well situated within both the past and the present: "The Afrikaners reveals a history of constant change – even one of the constants, survival itself, meant different things to early Cape wine farmer, to burghers shattered by war, to poor whites in the slums of Johannesburg" (2003: 166).

When asked to clarify perceived threats, patrons would vaguely suggest black political figures from South African political parties such as the African National Congress and Economic Freedom Front, as well as affirmative action policies as examples. Proposed changes to the names of cities (Boddy-Evans 2019) and streets (ShowMe 2007), or the removal of statues (Etheridge 2015), are seen in threatening terms and as examples of Afrikaner identity being removed from public spaces. A comment from a patron at Presley's reveals the connection between place and identity: "They are acting like victors, creating a new history, and taking away the history of the land. Why don't they build their own towns and streets? It's just a waste of money." This is significant, as "place naming is, from a geographic point of view, a territorialisation process that contributes to the identity of particular places, at different scales" (Guyot and Seethal 2007: 3). These are usually an attempt at political redress, renaming politically motivated, incorrect, or offensive names that originated during the apartheid era. These efforts to create a more inclusive and less offensive public space (such as the streets and places named for apartheid leaders), nonetheless created a sense of cultural loss, or even a deliberate erasure of Afrikaner culture and history, for many Afrikaners (Moolman 2011). Giliomee succinctly expresses the argument in an article regarding the issue of language policies at universities that impacted the use of the Afrikaans language.

The Constitutional Court's ruling that Afrikaans as a language of instruction has to be content with a marginal place at Stellenbosch University is the most serious assault of the past 25 years on Afrikaans as a public language and the continued existence of the shrinking Afrikaner ethnic group. The challenge of ethnic survival confronts all small nations living in the proximity of nations that are politically, or economically or numerically much more powerful. Piet Cillié, editor from 1954 to 1978 of *Die Burger* frequently referred to the Afrikaners' vulnerability. As an ethnic group it took

[14] Born in August 1964 in Pretoria, Hofmeyr is a popular actor, presenter, songwriter and musician in South Africa. He has been in several Afrikaans films, television series, and produced several books and albums.

such extremes to ensure its survival that Cillié in the mid-1960's described it as the "polecat of the world" (2019).[15]

The sentiment here suggests a perceived ethnicity and culture that is facing an existential threat. Within the space of Presley's this motivation is keenly felt. Afrikaans pop music and *sokkie* dance forms part of a strategy to avoid the disappearance of this identity. Dance might serve as the renewal and continued reinforcement of internal cultural bonds and relations. With both *sokkie* dance, and Afrikaans pop, a space is negotiated and constructed by patrons. This space, and the seemingly banal Afrikaans pop music being played there, become more then a place for enjoyment. The music mediates meaning, creating a space in which the ideal can be experience and expressed by those who participate, as Frith suggests:

> But if musical identity is, then, always fantastic, idealising not just oneself but also the social world one inhabits, it is, secondly, always also real, enacted in musical activities. Music making and music listening, that is to say, are bodily matters, involve what one might call *social movements*. In this respect, musical pleasure is not derived *from* fantasy – it is not *mediated* by daydreams – but is experienced directly: music gives us a real experience of what the ideal could be (1996: 123).

Given the prevalence of Afrikaans TV channels, musical and cultural festivals, as well as several Afrikaans awards ceremonies, it could be assumed that this kind of existential fear is misplaced. These facts appear as answers to the question, "*Wie sê Afrikaans is dood*?" (Who says Afrikaans is dead?) (Fokofpolisiekar 2008). However, the perception persists, and in the minds of the patrons at Presley's, embodying Afrikaans pop music and *sokkie* dance is to act out their ideal as a practice of defiance. One could perhaps rightly ask whether the festivals, channels, and ceremonies are not a larger extension of this phenomenon. These perceptions of a threat to identity and culture are the catalyst for the *laager* mentality that persists within the space of Presley's. At Presley's dance and song create a space for the persistence of the ideals and identity these patrons hold dear.

Conclusion

Afrikaans pop music serves to elucidate perceptions of loss and threat experienced by patrons at Presley's. The nature of the music offers a non-controversial platform from which to maintain and express an identity. The vehicle of that expression, however, comes in the form of the *sokkie* dance itself. Norms and values are expressed through the interactions surrounding this historically significant dance, the practice of which connects participants to the past, to an idealised identity, and to one another. In Presley's, identity is shielded, preserved and reified through practices that deliberately aim to exclude. This creates the semblance of a gated community (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2008 :35) that enjoys protection from outside influences and threats.

As illustrated by the large support enjoyed by Steve Hofmeyr, it would appear that many Afrikaner people still struggle to overcome the fear of a cultural death that

[15] See also: Hill, Lloyd. 2019 *OP-ED:* "Afrikaans and the University Language Debate: Exploring the Constitutional Court Judgments." *Daily Maverick*: https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-11-19-afrikaans-and-the-university-language-debate-exploring-the-constitutional-court-judgments/

Giliomee (2003) posited as the original motivation for Afrikaner nationalism, the apartheid regime and its policies. Fear continues as a potent force and motivator that garners support for the *laager*. As a response to this perceived threat, participants view *sokkie* dance and Afrikaans music as an act of defiance against forces that would see their cultural heritage relegated to the annuls of the past. Dancing *sokkie* to Afrikaans music is an expression of culture in spite (or perhaps even because) of the perceived malevolent forces of the perceived "other." Language, dance, sound, sexuality, and race seek to overemphasise a narrow definition of Afrikaner identity and ethnicity in this space, and thereby exclude all those who do not fit that imagined definition.

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