Remains of the Social

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In an eight-part series of short videos released on their website chronicling the recording of their latest album, *Bloed, sweet en trane*, the lead vocalist, Francois van Coke, from the Afrikaans rock band Van Coke Kartel (VCK) explained what he deemed was the inspiration for the lyrics on the album:

I think it’s like ... that obviously comes across in the lyrics is like just, where life is at the moment. I think that’s probably my main goal with the lyrics on this album is just to write about normal, everyday things ... like what I’m experiencing ... Ja, I think *Bloed, sweet en trane* is a collection of songs about a new chapter for me and the band, and the realisation that things like love and playing music with others and music makes you part of ... something, even if you’re very insignificant in the greater scheme of things (*Eendag op ’n slag*).

VCK emerged after the break-up of the Afrikaans punk-rock outfit Fokofpolisiekar. Fokofpolisiekar’s 2003 EP, entitled *As jy met vuur speel sal jy brand,* caused an uproar in conservative Afrikaans-speaking communities because of songs, such as ‘Hemel op die platteland,’ which
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openly expressed an antireligious sentiment, so distancing the band from a fundamental tenet of Afrikaner nationalism (see Badprop; De Olim; Herholdt; Nel). Given the ways in which their music challenges the subject position of white South Africans in particular – specifically, Afrikaans-speaking white youth – after the democratic transition of 1994, the group has also been linked with a certain articulation of what it means to be white in a postapartheid South Africa constituted against the racialised apartheid past. Fokofpolisiekar, their music and their lyrics have been seen as marking an important moment in this shift in this set of debates, and their ‘contribution to the South African music scene with their questioning of white patriarchal South African values as well as their visceral and poetic use of the Afrikaans language, paved the way for a fresh alternative movement within South African music’ (Smit 2). Fokofpolisiekar has been seen by Sonja Smit as a direct antecedent of both the hip hop artist Jack Parow and the debate around whiteness in post-1994 South Africa. She notes that Jack Parow ‘emerges from within a context in which (some) young alternative Afrikaans [speaking] musicians are processing and reclaiming their Afrikaans-ness as something that is not always associated with apartheid… before Fokofpolisiekar made it popular and acceptable, singing in Afrikaans was not popular among white alternative bands in South Africa’ (2). The band became a popular cultural sensation, giving rise to a documentary film, Fokofpolisiekar: Forgive Them, a full-page newspaper advert condemning their actions, as well as a 224-page published biography (see Klopper).

As Fokofpolisiekar was well known for giving the Afrikaans music scene ‘a good kick in the balls’ (Weekly Mail & Guardian, 13 May 2004), the expectation that VCK would protest in the same brash manner was not unwarranted. Contrary to these expectations, Van Coke’s thoughts on the album seem subdued, and instead of expressing frustration with the apparatuses of cultural and political power that were the object of Fokofpolisiekar’s protest, Van Coke acknowledges that perhaps protest need not be voiced as explicitly as before; perhaps being a musician is in and of itself protest enough. According to Van Coke, it ‘makes you part of … something, even if you’re very insignificant in the greater scheme
of things’ (Eendag op ’n slag). In a recent review of Bloed, sweet en trane, a critic’s impatience with a song entitled ‘In die agtergrond’ is audible:

Most of all I just don’t get the album. Since when do they sing about shitty jobs and being content on the weekends with an ‘uitsig en ’n ligte bries om in af te koel, son sak in die agtergrond’? When I listen to VCK, I want to escape the lousy whirlpool that is my reality, not be reminded of it. I want to be inspired to go out and break shit and be able to blame it on the music. But with this album I just kind of, you know, can’t (Van der Spuy).

Other reviewers, while not echoing this frustration as dismissively, also refer to VCK’s engagement in Bloed, sweet en trane with a sense of disillusionment. They also note VCK’s espousal of excessive alcohol consumption, substance abuse and a subculture of destructive habits, practices synonymous with ‘Afrikaans-rock junkies’:

With Bloed, Sweet & Trane [VCK] spits in the face of terms like ‘hitting the ceiling’ and ‘circling the creative cul-de-sac’ on their hardest-hitting album yet. They’ve conjured up enough fresh, fist-pumping riffs here to last Afrikaans-rock junkies a lifetime. There’s barbed-wire garage-rock tumbleweeds about gazing te diep in die bottel (‘Die dag’). There’s slow walking power anthems knowing that you know nothing (‘Môregloed’). There are regular intoxicated liaisons with violence and friends with bad habits (‘Here, man’) (Welfare).

In this chapter, I interpret this frustration with Bloed, sweet en trane that manifests in its inability to inspire its listeners to ‘go out and break shit and be able to blame it on the music’ (as Fokofpolisiekar may have done) as an invitation to take VCK’s supposedly absent, reactionary gesture seriously. By reading VCK and Fokofpolisiekar alongside earlier examples of Afrikaans popular music – specifically the ‘cover versions’ or new performances by VCK of previously recorded songs by other artists – as well as the historical narrative of white protest music within which they are inserted, I argue that the expectations placed upon VCK to protest are not unwarranted.
In fact, these expectations are the constitutive grounds upon which VCK (and, by extension, Fokofpolisiekar) can engage the postapartheid social. Moreover, in addition to the investment in dissent that marks the music of both groups, the work of VCK involves a covering, re-covering and a recovery of the everyday as constituted by apartheid’s difference. The ‘cover’ or way in which VCK articulates the unstable terms of the social – as it emerges in the wake of apartheid – echoes insistently in their music, and I suggest that attention to these echoes renders the cover as the form constitutive of the remains that haunt rock and roll after apartheid.10

A season in paradise11
In 1988, the Afrikaans pop singer Carike Keuzenkamp released Ek sing, a compilation of ballads about South Africa. At the time of its release, South Africa was visibly at war, with the Internal Security Act of 1982 granting police greater powers to respond to the growing unrest and resistance in the country. In 1986 and 1987 alone, security forces detained 26 000 people, the majority of whom were under the age of 18 (see Webster). Despite the country being in a state of emergency, the South Africa that Keuzenkamp presented in her album was utopian, pastoral and romanticised. The album – with tracks like ‘Bartolomeu Dias’, ‘As die suidoos gaan lê’12 and ‘Dom diedelie dom’ – was one of many recordings at the time that expressed ‘the escapist, fantasy nature of … mainstream Afrikaans pop’, and was ‘noteworthy for its almost complete denial of the realities of the social realm’ (Jury 100).13 One song in particular, ‘Dis ’n land’,14 demonstrates this in content as much as in form. The ballad’s chorus speaks of an incredibly diverse and inclusive country, one animated by a common goal.

In her references to a country which affords all its people a sense of belonging and which faces a hopeful and bountiful future, Keuzenkamp ascribes to South Africa (both as political and geographic formation) a historical trajectory that will produce a distinctly modern state that ‘works for the people’ and acknowledges the right to self-determination of all its diverse constituencies. This devotion to futurity is encapsulated in Keuzenkamp’s evocation that South Africa is a country of dreams and
progressive sentiment, and the emphatic request that we allow the future to entirely envelope us.

The future that Keuzenkamp offers is one that renders absent the violent, fraught and complex history that South Africa at war presents, and is almost desperate in its repeated recourse to the claim that South Africa will cater for all people within its borders, granting all the right to both a cultural and a political life. While we may attribute this to the tradition of Afrikaans balladry in South Africa, or to the very obvious manner in which Keuzenkamp’s project is the project of apartheid and its ideology of good neighbourliness, we should be aware of other reverberations of its content. Indeed, her lyrics implicitly echo Prime Minister P.W. Botha’s well-known warning to white South Africans of 1979, amid growing unrest, unemployment and looming economic failure, that ‘we are moving into a changing world [and] we must adapt otherwise we shall die’(Giliomee 586). The repeated questions in the third verse about parental responsibility – of the protection of minors, the securing of possibility for the next generation, and the child as South Africa’s locus of potentiality for the nation – resonate with the themes of reform, change and the South African state’s ‘overriding consideration’ in the 1980s that survival was key (587).

What is particularly resonant here is the figure of the child, which appears in various, often contradictory guises throughout ‘Dis ’n land’. In one sense, the child is the detained protester, fighting against the state (emblematic of youth involvement in anti-apartheid activities from the time of the Soweto Uprising of 1976 to the township unrest and resistance of the 1980s). In another sense, he is the soldier, fighting for the state (emblematic of the young white conscripts sent to fight in the border wars and to patrol the townships). Lee Edelman argues that within the child, as constituted in Lacanian psychoanalysis, lies the ‘perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention’ (3), and that to elaborate a politics without the child at its centre is to deny an investment in futurism, or its ‘unquestioned good’ (7). In the case of ‘Dis ’n land’, the figure of the child carries Keuzenkamp’s vision of the future. The child must produce the heteronormativity that
apartheid demands, for ‘the fantasy subtending the image of the Child invariably shapes the logic within which the political itself must be thought’ (2). By invoking the child (who, as social actor within Afrikaner patriarchal society, must be male), and invoking him also through both mother and father as a rhetorical question, Keuzenkamp situates the child as both product and producer of the particular politics of Afrikaner society, a subject that is ensured and protected by the terms of apartheid as well as positioned as its condition of possibility.15 ‘Dis ’n Land’ is prescriptive for the generation that will follow Keuzenkamp, and renders the future of South Africa as dependent not only on the child, but also on the continuation of an unsustainable present. Similarly, ending the song with a repetition of the first two lines of the third verse — which speak specifically about the responsibility of the male and female parent — articulates the commitment to this reproductive futurity; to a politics that cannot account for a future without the child as its locus. Put differently, the children of apartheid must produce apartheid’s future or a future that is apartheid. It is a loop that resembles the rhythmic sympathy and tonal resonance of the cover — that which produces, that which determines the terms upon which what follows it will rest, and is that which follows it.

**Apartheid’s children**

*Bly en leef*

*Want jou dood sal ek nooit verwerk nie*16 (Van Coke Kartel, ‘Dankie, ek is veilig hier’)

In 2011, as the second single off their fourth album, *Wie’s bang*,17 VCK released their own song ‘Dis ’n land’. While not described explicitly as a cover of ‘tannie’ Carike’s version,18 it transforms her composition into what has been called a ‘fist-pumping requiem for a lost dream’ (see Keylock). VCK’s melding of violence and satire in their re-playing detracts from and denies the nostalgic anxiety of place and belonging that Keuzenkamp expresses, preferring instead a sombre and barren reading of the terms of the social set in motion by apartheid. Instead of replicating the chorus verbatim, VCK invoke elements of discord, disillusionment
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and disunity that are in stark contrast to the yearning for togetherness-in-difference that Keuzenkamp articulates:

Dis ‘n land van kleure en klank  
Dis ‘n land van liefde vir drank  
Jy is nie ek nie, ek’s jaloers op jou  
Dis ‘n land van korrupsie en goddank  
Dis ‘n land van liefde vir drank  
Jy is nie ek nie, ek’s jaloers op jou.19

This reappearance of Keuzenkamp’s work in that of VCK can easily be read as parody – aligning VCK, Fokofpolisiekar and other post-1994 white musical groups with the heritage of protest through rock and roll, which has largely been one of parody – but this would obscure the VCK version’s relation to the anxieties of Keuzenkamp’s original. One line that evokes this anxiety (which is elaborated more explicitly than in Keuzenkamp) is the mention of ‘murderers greeting each other with a hi-five’, alongside snide commentary on the postcolonial state, corruption and the complexities of power:

In die land van die blindes is een-oog koning  
Koning loop met die losprys weg  
En moordenaars groet mekaar met ’n hi-five  
Ek wou my krane stadig afdraai  
Maar die lotery is klaar gewen  
met ’n skoot deur die kop van ’n magnaat.20

One could say that anxiety about control – whether in the sense of a stability of self that pervades everyday life or a stability of the social – governs both Keuzenkamp’s and VCK’s renditions. While Keuzenkamp might not render the anxieties of a state at war explicit, it emerges through the investment in futurity that marks her composition. In fact, it is the future promised by apartheid (according to Keuzenkamp) – a future deferred in the wake of apartheid – that prevents any possibility
of VCK covering her work verbatim. VCK express worry about the present after the fall of the apartheid regime, but with an inflection that registers an earlier moment of engagement as a familiar failure – seen in the mention of the ‘king walk[ing] away with the ransom’ – and one that is (almost inevitably) interrupted by violence in the midst of an attempt to retain control: ‘I wanted to slowly turn my taps off/but the lottery has already been won/with a shot through the head of a magnate’. What is revealing is that in the following verse the anxieties of this moment are claimed by VCK, by self-consciously including themselves in the first person within a narrative of what could be referred to as ‘unrest’ (to use the terms of Keuzenkamp’s South Africa):

Blameer die duiwel
Lippe bewe morsig en die spoeg spat
Oorgehaal maar beheer verloor
En ons vier dit met ’n hi-five
Ek wou my krane regtig afdraai
Maar die lotery is klaar gewen
Met skote deur die bors van die magnaat.

In their claiming ownership of land, their complacency and their depiction of post-1994 politics as well as through the line ‘and we celebrate it with a hi-five’, VCK – unlike Keuzenkamp’s song, where such a direct line does not appear – name themselves as part of something that is chaotic, divided and desperate. Preceding this affirmation is statement of being ‘prepared but [having] lost control’, which should be interpreted as the expression of the fulfilment of Keuzenkamp’s anxieties in her original ‘Dis ’n land’. In some sense, the figure of the child that has disappeared in VCK’s cover is represented by VCK themselves, who as the ‘children of apartheid’ must – and do – rearticulate Keuzenkamp’s politics. In the moment when VCK progress from observer in verse one to participant in verse two and, perhaps most prominently, to agent in the shift from ‘this is a land’ to ‘it is our land’ before the final chorus, VCK’s version of ‘Dis ’n land’ moves from a mere repetition and amplification of Keuzenkamp
through the cover, to recovery, in the form of embodying the resonant loop that the cover enables; through becoming the children of apartheid, VCK must cover and re-cover.

To elaborate the work of the cover in inaugurating a different state of emergency more carefully, we need to return to Fokofpolisiekar, not only as musical progenitors of VCK, but also to establish VCK as the inheritors of Fokofpolisiekar’s gesture of protest. In this sense, we can locate VCK within a discourse about whiteness after apartheid. According to Ross Truscott and others, South Africa’s 1996 Constitution – which asks that the ‘injustices of the past’ be recognised – bears ‘the mark of authenticity’ (17), for it represents ‘[the] gaze towards the past of injustice and its legacy, from the “liberated” position of the present’. While the disavowal of any relation to or culpability for apartheid as a political project can be thought of as the constitutive act by which the notion of the postapartheid is inaugurated, the legacies of apartheid are still apparent in the cultural, social and psychological configurations of white South Africans in particular. This suggests that a complete rejection of apartheid would mean disentangling the white subject as produced by apartheid. To become a South African in the fullest sense of the term, one needs to disavow the past in a way that recognises it but does not repeat it. ‘The absence of a radical rupture with the past’ (196, emphasis added), as Gavin Steingo suggests, is what refuses a gesture of denunciation.

In a series of interviews by Cornel Verwey and Michael Quayle with white, middle-class Afrikaners, this specific tension becomes clear. While many ‘did much discursive work to discard certain visible aspects of Afrikaner identity’, they also ‘maintained whiteness as central to [this] identity, thus maintaining their claim to white privilege’ (552). As recent protest marches and allegations of a ‘white genocide’ by white groups such as Red October and other ‘minority advocacy groups’ have shown, this results in the production (in the public as well as private sphere) of a ‘ghettoized Afrikaner identity based on racial exclusivity, racist notions of inherent black inferiority, and out-group threat’ (560). Commenting on
this paranoia, François van Coke speaks, as if in a completely different temporal context – perhaps a state of emergency – about this fear that persists into the postapartheid:

‘I think there are a lot of scared people in South Africa at the moment’ explains Francois, and that fear is expressed succinctly in songs like ‘Einde van die wêreld’ … with lines like ‘Dis oor almal wat al jare vrees/ Altyd gereed vir die ongelukkige einde/Ons hoor dit oor en oor … (It’s about everyone that’s been afraid for years/Always ready for the unlucky end/we hear about it over and over) (Walker).

VCK’s cover of ‘Dis ’n land’ could be thought of as inaugurating a state of emergency around whiteness after the end of apartheid, as well as replaying the politics of an earlier moment of disquiet, as heard through ‘tannie’ Carike. The line ‘you are not me/I am jealous of you’ renders VCK (and, in some ways, their fans) proponents or embodiments of Verwey and Quayle’s threatened whiteness, but it is also an act of dissociation, exacerbated by a distortion of Keuzenkamp through the dismembered chorus that VCK delivers. In much the same way as Keuzenkamp animates white fears by resorting to an insulated space where diversity reinscribes racial difference, VCK’s rendition, in both content and form, performs a similar incomplete gesture. By claiming ‘it is our land’, VCK refuse to relinquish ‘the land of colours and sounds’ (the only line from Keuzenkamp’s chorus that is reiterated unchanged) which they, as the ‘children of apartheid’, must yield. The state of emergency is precisely that the cover cannot escape that which it is covering, nor can it transcend it. It is the act of living in a space where the angst of a community forms the script through which whiteness is worked through. Indeed, we must hear it over and over again.

**Total onslaught**

Let the simulation of ravening commence. Mechanisation means never having to wonder what to pretend to desire next (Daniels).
Francois van Coke’s allusion to the centrality of music to everyday life needs to be taken seriously. In his writings on punk rock and its relation with race, Stephen Duncombe provides an apt point of departure for understanding how VCK’s protest is textured by the work of rock and roll:

My personal alienation was given social expression. In punk I found the outsider identity I desired, without borrowing a (Black) culture and a history that was so evidently not my own. As ridiculous as this might now sound, as a punk I imagined I could be White and not-White at the same time. White Noise [a band] was both a recognition of my race and an imaginary rejection of it (in Duncombe & Tremblay 3).

Duncombe views the relation between punk and race as one that allowed whiteness to be both questioned and affirmed through certain experiences in California in the 1960s in which he was involved. It was in this space that inhabiting the category of white became problematic, as for many the changing social circumstances made race very prominent: ‘Whether through legal restriction, social exclusion or physical violence, non-Whites in the West were … continually reminded of their race’ (1–2). Duncombe stresses that what characterised this particular moment was a deliberate immersion in what he terms a ‘(Black) culture’. But instead of appropriating ‘black’ expressive forms, what is crucial about Duncombe’s articulation of the permeation of race is that through punk there is a negotiation of the category that, while already in question before it could be inhabited, had to be inhabited in order to inhabit punk. In a manner of speaking, punk’s condition of habitation is contestation. In this way punk can both highlight the issues pertaining to a certain articulation of whiteness and at the same time affirm it, despite what those issues may mean for a broader discourse about race. It comes as no surprise that as a student in the 1960s Duncombe played in a band named White Noise.

In the discursive space that punk offers (and it is important to read this discursive space as strongly determined by the genre of punk and the broader genre of rock and roll), whiteness is named as that which no longer constitutes the universal but which haunts any move beyond it.
As Duncombe notes, while whiteness was a subject positioning that many adopted openly, punk ‘forc[ed] … this subject positioning into popular consciousness’; ‘you had to name yourself as White … and figure out what the hell this meant’ (4). It is here that the affirmation of whiteness inherent in the first instances of punk’s racial politics takes on a particularly dissonant tone, one that celebrates difference while it reinforces the very categories it has posited as uncomfortable and contestable. In these terms, the presence of Nazi symbolism and the resounding calls of ‘White Power’, which have become synonymous with the genre, become irredeemable under the banner of something like postmodern pastiche or merely a collection of signifiers haphazardly thrown together. This occurrence is not confined to the US or Europe and can be seen in the name of what is considered the first punk group in South Africa, The Third Reich (Lucey interview). Punk allowed a white riot of a different kind, and it is a white riot that the cover enables.

To return to the point made earlier about inheritance, it is important to note that VCK is hardwired to produce music that must deliver some form of protest not only because of its parentage in Fokofpolisiekar, but because of rock and roll’s rendering as protest music in South Africa. The conflation of rock and roll and protest in South Africa comes to a head through punk, and it is no surprise that Fokofpolisiekar, through their protest, are referred to as a punk band. In her thesis on rock music in Durban from 1963 to 1985, Lindy van der Meulen highlights the connection between rock and roll as music and culture and protest, both in a broader sense and in the context of apartheid South Africa, suggesting that ‘the fact that rock has been linked to protest and defiance throughout its history is important, and that this feature of rock cannot be excluded from its definition’ (16–17). Given this conflation, the function that rock and roll may have within the broader configuration of whiteness after apartheid cannot be anything but protest, and protest in all its ambivalence, particularly as it emerges in South Africa. This not only permeates the sounds that VCK and Fokofpolisiekar produce, but is present in other creative forms as well. The design and layout of Fokofpolisiekar’s biography by Annie Klopper repeat this conflation
through subtle aesthetic references to what is known as punk’s DIY ethos, by the smudged fingerprints on the edges of the pages, and by what looks like handwritten corrections over certain paragraphs. A gesture of defiance is clearly visible on the title page with the words ‘Die Bende’ (The Gang) superimposed with adhesive tape onto the graphic of a Jägermeister brand logo. While this may reference punk rock’s DIY ethos as well as the practice of drinking that has a history alongside the genre, specifically in South Africa in the 1990s, this particular palimpsestic image signifies dysfunction, alcoholism and rebellion in the mind of the reader, setting the ‘bende’ on a journey towards dystopia.

Although VCK deny any real alignment with punk or punk rock, with bassist Wynand Myburgh commenting on the ambiguity of the genre allocation by referring to the fact that ‘commercial guys call us punks, and punks call us commercial’, it is important to listen to the practice of naming at work here. In the same ways as punk rock as a set of practices seems to engage with whiteness in constructive ways but within that engagement complicates its own relationship with race, VCK and Fokofpolisiekar play to the same tune. While there is a visceral protest against visceral conditions, it is a protest that cannot be completed precisely because it affirms what it is attempting to reject. As Duncombe suggested in his own experience with his group White Noise, the gesture must imagine being both white and non-white at the same time, or reject race as well as affirm it. Fokofpolisiekar and VCK play out a rejection of whiteness after 1994 through the scripts of punk rock, which must return to another, familiar articulation of whiteness as reified by apartheid. It must cover in the guise of re-covering.

Lawrence Grossberg’s concept of the rock apparatus is helpful as a way of unpacking the work of genre alongside what punk enables. Grossberg constructs a theory of rock and roll as a lens of empowerment, locating ‘the effects of rock and roll at the level of an (at least potentially) oppositional politics which produces a rupture between the rock-and-roll audience (in their everyday life) and the larger hegemonic context within which it necessarily exists’ (55). Grossberg attempts to define those effects through a definition of rock and roll as a strategy of survival
and empowerment in everyday life. The rock apparatus ‘locates what sorts of “pleasures” or energising possibilities are available to its fans [and] restructures social life by rearranging the sites at which pleasure can be found and energy derived, at which desire and power are invested and operative’ (54). For rock and roll fans, everything is desirable and deniable. The conditions for this reinvestment of energies and the reconstitution of what may be thought of as ‘possibilities’ derive from the youth experience of society – ‘the rock and roll culture transforms many of the structures of contemporary boredom (e.g. repetition and noise) into the structures and pleasures of its musical and listening practices’. Grossberg notes the historical implications of using the term ‘youth’ here in relation to rock and roll, pointing out that ‘rock-and-roll celebrates youth, not merely as a chronological measure but as a difference defined by the rejection of the boredom of the “straight” [heteronormative] world’. The boredom that he refers to is directly related to the ways in which ‘the politics of youth celebrate change, risk and instability’, and ‘the very structures of boredom become the sites of new forms of empowerment’.

Grossberg’s reminder that rock and roll must always reduce its surfaces to pleasure, but only in the terms of covering, is productive to hold on to. If we listen to VCK and Fokofpolisiekar through Grossberg, and if we take Francois van Coke’s words seriously, the protest that VCK and Fokofpolisiekar may make is largely a practice of ex-corporation, of reinvesting the boredom of the postapartheid into a rock apparatus that provides some sort of pleasure. Rock and roll and protest become a mechanism through which to survive, to adapt rather than die, as P.W. Botha exhorted.

Another review of Wie’s bang reads as follows:

Ek is een van daai pretentious faggots wat prentjies sien in hulle kop as hulle musiek luister. Wanneer ek na ‘Wie’s Bang’ luister, sien ek vir Francois, Wynand, Jed en Jason op ’n krans staan. Voor hulle is die einde. Die honger, lee maag van die duisternis, die vrees, die leemtes van die gate in ons kultuur. Voor hulle is die dinge, watookal dit mag wees, wat
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jou bang maak. Dit dreig om hulle in te sluk. Maar die vier lede van VCK staan regop, en skree harder as nog ooit tevore dat hulle fokken WEIER om dit te laat gebeur\(^\text{32}\) (Zirkie).

A verse by the singer and songwriter Koos du Plessis from ‘Skadu’s teen die muur’\(^\text{33}\) demonstrates the very real sense of change in the 1980s in South Africa. With the apartheid state failing, the speaker recognised that bygone visions are now grave and ominous, and that apartheid has had its designated moment. What is interesting, however, is that ‘Skadu’s teen die muur’ is also covered verbatim by VCK in their version with the same name, on their third studio album, *Skop, skiet en donner*, released in 2010.\(^\text{34}\) Ironically, the term ‘skop, skiet en donner’ – while colloquially used in Afrikaans to describe a violent beating – was also used to describe the last whites-only general election in 1987, which was overshadowed by the National Party’s campaign slogan ‘Reform yes, Surrender no’ and was accompanied by widespread stayaway action by trade unions and opposition movements.

Simply through the practice of the cover, VCK repeat Du Plessis’s invocation of desperation, as well as the nonchalant manner in which he presents the dreams that have died. It is similarly fitting that the title of the album invokes violence, while the album that follows it (*Wie’s bang*) reiterates paranoia and fear as its framework, along with other references to war and dystopia found in Fokofpolisiekar album titles (*As jy met vuur speel sal jy brand, Lugsteuring, Brand Suid-Afrika, Antibiotika*).\(^\text{35}\) One reviewer described *Skop, skiet en donner* as ‘exhibit[ing] such a beautiful balance between angst, playfulness and attitude that it can’t help but feel like liberation’ (Young). What the work of the cover amplifies in the cases of ‘Skadu’s teen die muur’ and ‘Dis ’n land’ is not only the feeling of liberation, but the point that Fokofpolisiekar raises in a track titled ‘Verklaar’ off their first album with the line ‘en ons sing al jare saam/aan ons doodslied’.\(^\text{36}\) Put differently, VCK cannot renounce difference, which it must bring into being after those ‘dreams have died’. Subsequently, they (and their fans too) stand on the edge of what is constituted as a perpetual and temporal end that never happens, whether out of choice or not, and scream loudly.
NOTES
1. ‘I am the one who stayed behind (or, I was left behind)/on the pastures of my childhood.’
2. ‘Fuck off police car.’
3. ‘If you play with fire, you will burn.’
4. ‘Heaven in the countryside.’
5. ‘In the background.’
6. ‘being content on the weekends with a view and a light breeze to cool off in, sunset in the background’.
7. ‘gazing too deep into the bottle’ (‘The Day’).
8. ‘Morning Glow’.
10. An attendant question here is whether a postapartheid rock and roll that does not protest is possible. The answer, I argue, is that the cover is the only form in which dissent might be disavowed. I elaborate upon this later.
11. The title of a Breyten Breytenbach work.
12. ‘When the southeaster abates’.
13. Brendan Jury cites Hanneli van Staden and the way in which she describes Afrikaans popular music and its function: ‘By singing about beaches, seagulls, puppy love and rugby, society’s attention is taken away from socio-political issues – that … in South Africa are most relevant. In this way, Afrikaans light music artists help to create and promote a false consciousness’ (100).
14. ‘It’s a land.’ The lyrics of ‘Dis ’n Land’ by Keuzenkamp could not be reproduced in this chapter due to licensing complications, but it is easily accessible online. The album in which the song first appears, Ek Sing (1987), is readily available on iTunes and other online music stores. The lyrics (in Afrikaans) can be read here: http://www.lyricsbox.com/carike-keuzenkamp-dis-n-land-lyrics-pzww9jq.html
15. The child in Keuzenkamp’s ballad is caught up in a larger configuration of gender stereotypes espoused by Afrikaner nationalism that allow Afrikaans ballads such as ‘Dis ’n Land’ and ‘liefdesliedjies’ (love songs) to render women ‘passive, acquiescent, and the victims of unrequited love’, and ‘conversely men … as active manipulators of space and time, usually as farmers, soldiers or men of courage who engage in heroic struggles and quests’ (Jury 101).
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16. ‘stay and live/because I could never work through your death’.
17. ‘Who’s Scared?’

18. ‘Tannie’ can be translated as ‘aunty’. Particularly in white Afrikaans-speaking communities, it is used to show respect to older women. Similarly, the word ‘oom’, ‘uncle’, is its masculine form. On being asked in relation to the music video for ‘Dis ’n land’, where VCK donned clothing associated with elderly Afrikaner women, whether their attire in the video was inspired by Carike Keuzenkamp in the 1980s, bassist Wynand Myburgh responded, ‘Die idee was om op tannie Karike en 80’s tannies te speel [the idea was to play on Aunty Karike and ’80s aunties]’ (Griffin).

19. ‘It’s a land of colour and sound/it’s a land with a love for alcohol/you are not me, I’m jealous of you/it’s a land of corruption and immorality/it’s a land with a love for alcohol/you are not me, I’m jealous of you.’

20. ‘In the land of the blind being one eyed is king/king walks away with the ransom/and murderers greet each other with a hi-five/I wanted to slowly turn my taps off/but the lottery has already been won/with a shot through the head of a magnate.’

21. We see this embodied in the five-track EP Energie released in 2015 by VCK, of which all tracks are covers, ranging from the Beatles’ ‘Help’ to ‘Got to Give It Up’ by Thin Lizzy. Striking here is that the only South African and Afrikaans cover is that of ‘Energie’ by Johannes Kerkorrel, a figure renowned for his position within the white Afrikaans-speaking anti-apartheid cultural collective or protest movement Voëlërvry of the 1980s. We see the foreclosure represented in the fact that the pop singer Keuzenkamp can only be perverted, while the protest musician Kerkorrel must emerge as close as possible to the original, with obvious punk rock inflections.

22. ‘Blame the devil/lips shake messily and the spit splatters/prepared but lost control/and we celebrate it with a hi-five/I really wanted to turn off my taps/but the lottery has been won/with shots through the chest of the magnate.’

23. The use of the term ‘Afrikaner’ here mirrors that of the text cited in this case for the sake of conceptual clarity. There are obvious debates (especially in the postapartheid era and specifically referenced by Verwey and Quayle in their discussion) surrounding whether or not people associate
with or use the term ‘Afrikaner’ or prefer the term ‘Afrikaans-speaking’, and what exactly both the use of the terms and the terms themselves actually mean.

24. On 10 October 2013, a group of protesters representing white rights in South Africa marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria as part of ‘Red October’, and ‘despite arguments that the event was intended to advance minority rights in general, the focus was very much on the rape and murder of white people by black people, something organisers did not shy away from characterising as genocide’ (De Wet).

25. In 2014, Fokofpolisiekar released a single track titled ‘Paranoia’ as a precursor to a new album. Hunter Kennedy (rhythm guitarist and lyricist) noted that Fokofpolisiekar's intent was always to change Afrikaner identity by deconstructing known opinions and stereotypes, and ‘that identity is not fully formed yet and [they] think a big part of forming that identity will be for Afrikaners to accept their “Africanness” … Afrikaners are the ones alienating themselves … Paranoia is one of the side-effects of not understanding who you are and where you fit in’ (in Inggs). At the time of writing, this promised album has yet to be released.

26. ‘End of the world’.

27. Duncombe characterises the adoption by the Ramones and others of Nazi regalia and terms such as ‘blitzkrieg’ as being part and parcel of ‘an attempt by young Whites, dissatisfied with the world they were born into, to grab and forge a new ethnicity for themselves’ (Duncombe & Tremblay 5).

28. From the 1970s onwards, culminating in the late 1980s, there was a significant increase in the nature of cultural resistance, musical protest and involvement from specifically white English-speaking South Africans (later Afrikaans-speaking in the form of the Voëlvry Movement) against the apartheid government and its policies through the musical idiom of rock and roll. Before the 1970s, what was considered rock and roll engaged in playing covers, or ‘hit parade material’, particularly in Durban. However, by the early 1970s, rock and roll had become a veritable white middle-class youth culture, with more and more ‘progressive’ rock, or ‘rock with a message’, beginning to take hold. This growth was paralleled by a noticeable boom in South African popular music in general in the 1970s and 1980s, specifically
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with regard to jazz – said to represent a ‘discourse closest to an international musical vernacular of the oppressed’ (Ballantine 309) – and groups combining Western and African musical idioms, like Johnny Clegg with Juluka and Savuka, among others. The first punk bands emerged in Durban, and sprouted a plethora of bands over the period from 1977 to around 1982 alone, with some trailing into the mid- to late 1980s as well. Nasan Pather argues that ‘since its inception in this country, the idea of the punk rock ... song lyric as a space within which social issues could be addressed then evolved into the highly politicised articulations of the alternative bands in the 1980s’ (2).

29. Lauren Basson highlights this in the context of the punk scene specifically, when she notes: ‘At every Fuzigish gig that I have been to, including the ones at Woodstock (30 September 2005) and Violent Femmes (5 November 2005), the trumpeter whose stage name is Big Willy will suspend a beer funnel from the stage so that the skankers can refresh themselves as they run by. The photograph of Fuzigish in a Stage magazine that was analysed has all four members holding a beer (Stage 2005: 29). A quick quantitative analysis of how many times the words beer, alcohol and drunk are used in any of the Hog Hoggidy Hog interviews on their website reveals that these words appear in twelve of the twenty interviews that are provided. The words beer and drunk are also used extensively in Hog Hoggidy Hog lyrics, for example, in the songs “Sad Goodbye” and “The Incident”. The address of Half Price’s website is www.drunkpunk.co.za. In fact, when the punk bands were starting out in the country they would get drunk and play terribly. A few of them developed serious reputations for being out of control. Half Price has been banned from three Cape Town venues for their drunken behaviour. Half Price’s drinking habits are reflected in their lyrics as well. For example, the song “I Drink All Day” starts with five word repetition of the word beer, which is shortly followed by a list of their favourite local beers: I drink a Castle and an Amstel and a Black Label. I drink as long as I am able. Their songs “Real Men” and “Can-O-Beer” follow a similar theme pattern’ (51).
30. The epigraph at the beginning of the biography, taken from ‘Evening’ by Frederic Prokosch, also creates an image of the band as disturbing, uncomfortable, introducing ‘wildness’ and ‘terror and desire’ (Klopper 5).

31. This was to highlight the response of one reviewer on www.punk.co.za who referred to them as sounding much like Avril Lavigne, an American pop singer (see Badprop).

32. ‘I’m one of those pretentious faggots who see pictures in their head when they listen to music. When I listen to “Wie’s bang”, I see Francois, Wynand, Jed and Jason standing on a cliff. In front of them is the end. The hungry, empty stomach of the wilderness, the fear, the emptiness of the holes in our culture. In front of them are the things, whatever they may be, that make you scared. It threatens to swallow them. But the four members of VCK stand up straight, and scream louder than ever before that they fucking REFUSE to let it happen.’

33. ‘Shadows against the wall’.

34. ‘Kick, Shoot, and Beat Up’.

35. Translation: If you play with fire you will be burnt, Air Disturbance, Burn South Africa, Antibiotics.

36. ‘and we have been singing together for years/our song of death’.

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INTERVIEW