



The Groovology of White Affect

Boeremusiek and the
Enregisterment of Race in
South Africa

WILLEMIEN FRONEMAN

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“This book is an example of ‘New South African’ scholarship of the very best kind. It is the first academic study of boeremusiek, and it invitingly opens significant new channels for our understanding of white racism, both locally and internationally.”

—Christopher Ballantine, *LG Joel Professor of Music Emeritus,
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

“Out of the convenient closet of academic avoidance comes Willemien Froneman’s bold groovological theorization of white musical pleasure and boeremusiek’s racialized technologies of affect. The result is a wonderful contribution to South African music history, to engaged theories of whiteness and racial formation, and to contemporary research on indexicalities of language and musical practice.”

—Steven Feld, *Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Anthropology
and Music, University of New Mexico, New Mexico, US*

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The proper study of interaction is not the individual and his psychology, but rather the syntactical relations among acts of different persons mutually present to one another ... [N]ot, then, men and their moments. Rather, moments and their men.

Erving Goffman, Interaction Ritual, 1967.

For Stephanus Jacobus van Zyl Muller

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Boeremusiek’s “Heart-Speech”

THE RURAL DREAMTIME OF THE CONCERTINA

“You may be surprised to learn that I enjoyed the couple of sessions of *Boeremusiek*; most probably because it takes me far back to my childhood days on the *platteland*,” writes Nelson Mandela’s confidant Ahmed Kathrada from their Pollsmoor prison cell in 1986.¹ He is writing to fellow anti-apartheid activist Helen Joseph, excited by the latest concession the prisoners have won—access to a television set. “For all our Gujerat origins and the emphasis on Arabic and the Koran,” Kathrada explains his affinity for boeremusiek elsewhere, “we grew up speaking more Afrikaans than anything else ... The women in my family still speak Afrikaans, and *boeremusiek*, traditional folk music played on a concertina, still makes me nostalgic.”²

Kathrada’s descriptions of boeremusiek resonate strongly with the primary discursive context of the genre as a domestic music outside the political public eye. The *platteland* (the rural landscapes of South Africa), childhood innocence, and intimate scenes of home and family are familiar territory in boeremusiek reception. Kathrada appeals to a shared imaginary of a deep rural South African dreamtime to which the “boer” in boeremusiek—which translates directly from Afrikaans as “farmer”—belongs at least in part. The whimsical materialism of boeremusiek titles such as “Dirt

¹ Kathrada (2000), p. 222.

² Ahmed (2004), p. 22.

Road Setees” (*Stofpad seties*), “Dust Storms in the Free-State” (*Stofstorms in die Vrystaat*), “Under the Baobab Tree” (*Onder die kremetartboom*), and “The Sad Waltz” (*Die hartseerwals*) help conjure up this time outside time when the melancholic sound of concertinas could be heard around camp fires, or when South Africa’s white nineteenth-century settler communities and their attending laborers came together to celebrate birthdays, weddings or a New Year with music and dancing. Boeremusiek arouses—among a broad cross-section of South African society—powerful affective associations with a bygone era of South African pioneer life.

As Kathrada notes, the genre’s nostalgic resonances are tied up with the sound of the concertina—the lead instrument in a typical boeremusiek band. Pointing to its braying sound, its mechanisms of respiration, and, perhaps, its stubbornness in yielding to the commands of its handler, the instrument is also known as a *donkielong*—a “donkey’s lung.” In the language of enthusiasts, the concertina is a living, breathing thing. It “quivers” with emotion when players shake the instrument on held notes to effect a vibrato of sorts, or “sighs” in slow exhalations of breath. The sound of the concertina is repeatedly described as “screeching” and “wailing” in a mesmerizingly unpleasant way.

This ambiguous aesthetic is evident in Kathrada’s words. For, rather than stating categorically that he derives pleasure from the music (as in “I enjoyed the couple of sessions of boeremusiek”), he prefaces his enjoyment with a modal clause (“*You may be surprised to learn that* I enjoyed the couple of sessions of boeremusiek”). By anticipating Joseph’s surprise, Kathrada’s utterance ceases to be an unqualified statement of fact. His tentative introduction leads the reader to believe that he has internalized some oppositional framework to his own musical enjoyment.

The sessions Kathrada are referring to were most probably episodes of the 1986 boeremusiek competition aired on South African television between August and December of that year. Far from the maternal warmth saturating his recollections (and equally distanced from the turbulent political realities of 1980s South Africa), Kathrada would have witnessed bands of white musicians perform to a live but fairly unresponsive white studio audience. Among the contestants that year were concertinists Pat Maloney, postmaster of Witbeek on the Johannesburg West Rand, Eddie Wilkinson, a teacher from Cape Town, and Dirkie Smit, an electrician who later worked as sales representative. Boetie Kallis (fisherman, vegetable farmer, and truck driver) played the button accordion and Thys Langeveldt (who started out as welder at the Cape Town harbor) featured on the guitar. In the TV production, the musicians are wearing ill-fitting tuxedo

jackets with bow ties drooping inexpertly around the collars of their shiny shirts. It is hard to imagine the Rivonia Eight glued to a television screen, deriving pleasure from music made by the Dance Band of the apartheid government's South African Police Force—the band who, led by concertist Manie Bodenstein, won the competition that year.³

And yet, Kathrada does not speak of these signs that point not only toward an exclusively white experience of leisure but to the white human infrastructure of late apartheid—its police officers, farmers, and blue-collared workers. This despite the fact that Kathrada—classified as “Indian” by the apartheid government—was systematically and violently excluded from the everyday life referenced by these performances. He is seduced by nostalgia in ways that seem to clash powerfully with apartheid-era logic—an “affective participatory discrepancy” (see Chap. 6) often observed in what Katherine McKittrick and Alexander Weheliye has referred to as the “heartbreak” of racial-musical embodiment.⁴ For Kathrada, it seems, pleasure is produced “somewhere between the signifying and the sublime”: alongside, in spite of, or in juxtaposed emergence with any knowledge of boeremusiek as a prejudicial referential system of signs and indices intimately tied to the politics of his time.⁵ The paradoxical relationship between the music's political appellations and his affective response remains legible only in his hesitant disposition toward his own pleasure, or, as I will refer to it in this book, in the affective modality of his engagement with the music.

For South Africans, Kathrada's aesthetic reticence would feel all too familiar. Boeremusiek is the music we love to hate, and the music and its practitioners are often the butt of jokes and ridicule. Boeremusiek is stigmatized as belonging to a socially clumsy brand of right-wing Afrikaner conservatism and paternalism that would offend if the image of the otherwise machismo white *boer* playing a squashbox weren't so unexpectedly endearing. Boeremusiek does not cause unease merely because it has refused, despite surface appearances, unproblematic classifications of identity, race, and class; it is an uncomfortable topic because it is concerned with a sentimental white-Afrikaner nostalgia that—as Kathrada's response shows—seems to elude the stark rhetoric of power altogether. Although the music is incontrovertibly entwined with the history of white oppression and Afrikaner nationalist ideology in South Africa, it forms part of a popular white culture

³View footage from the 1986 TV Boeremusiek competition here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rD2nIaW9q7c> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vyeqFzw_AY.

⁴McKittrick and Weheliye (2017), pp. 13–42.

⁵Thompson and Biddle (2013).

in complicated relationship to sanctioned (and funded) twentieth-century white cultural practices. It is all the more problematic because boeremusiek has never celebrated nor challenged political ideology head-on, but has toyed with it, manipulated it, and, at times, has made it seem indecently irrelevant. Boeremusiek's claim to whiteness is far removed from the pomp and circumstance of the apartheid-era intellectual project and it has been ignored, sanitized, or wished away from within the Afrikaner establishment from its earliest history. Yet, when the concertina wails, one hears a music unmistakably speeding out ahead or limping after white ideological discourses and agendas, schizophrenically subservient to and resistant against racial politics in South Africa, moving evasively between the spectacular terms of innocence and guilt, revolution and oppression, desire and repulsion.⁶

RACISM ISN'T WHAT WE THOUGHT IT WAS: BOEREMUSIEK, RACE, AND THE ACADEMY

No doubt partly as a result of the classificatory discomforts posed by the genre, scholarly interest in boeremusiek has been negligible. One will find no entry for boeremusiek in Jacques Philip Malan's monumental *South African Music Encyclopedia* compiled in the 1970s, the seminal publication of apartheid-era scholarship on music, and the leading twentieth-century historian of Afrikaans music, Jan Bouws, hardly ever referenced boeremusiek, except where it concerned the development of a more refined national art music.⁷ It is therefore not surprising that the term should not feature in either of the two contributions on Afrikaans music in *The World of South African Music*, the anthology of writing on South African music edited by Christine Lucia. Although a photograph of a concertinist and an accordionist illustrates W.S.J. Grobler's *The FAK and Afrikaans Music*, his article proceeds to describe the compilation of the Afrikaans folk songbook, first published by the *Federasie vir Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge* (The Federation for Afrikaans Cultural Societies) in 1937.⁸ This songbook, published with piano accompaniment, initially featured mainly translated German folk songs—a culturally sanctioned version of popular culture in a largely oral musical landscape. Although it

⁶These oppositions are inspired by Shaun de Waal (2009).

⁷Bouws (1957), pp. 77–81; Bouws (1968), pp. 363–375; Venter (2009), pp. 74–75; Malan (1979).

⁸Lucia (2005), pp. 107–108.

is probably true that “[i]n the development of Afrikaans music in the 1930s prominent instruments were the piano, accordion, concertina, and violin,” as Lucia’s endnote explains, the Afrikaner intelligentsia never displayed any interest in this *konserthinamusiiek* (concertina music) apart from trying to lure popular taste toward more refined Afrikaans folk songs.⁹ Only in recent years did an influential piece on boeremusiek by Stephanus Muller spark renewed interest in the genre.¹⁰ Muller argues cogently that boeremusiek represents a history of the secret spaces of Afrikanerdom. He articulates the emotional currency of the music that explains the estrangement between South African academic discourse and boeremusiek: its “convivial” sound that is a “little low, a little feeble, a little simple, a little direct, a little too close to our uncultivated needs and past”; its traditions of autodidacticism; its opposition to official ideologies of race and gender.

The avoidance of the topic in academic discussion in South Africa is, as Mel Watkins has suggested in the context of blackface minstrelsy, “in part attributable to our lingering unease with openly confronting and examining the shadowy and ineluctable ambivalent issues comprised by the paradigm of race.”¹¹ Although South African music studies have routinely dealt with topics of race—especially after 1994—much of this work has been written from racially revisionist perspectives, demonstrating how the cultural sphere of music operated in synchrony with the political ideology of apartheid. Studies of this kind have cemented the binary opposition between white and black, oppressor and oppressed, to such an extent that studying “white” music in South Africa today implies the imperative of inscribing it retrospectively in a straightforward complicity with apartheid. On the flipside, a strain of (white) musicological writing aligned with a conservatory model of music teaching, continues to stake institutional claims for music’s autonomy seemingly outside of political imperatives.¹² Although the complex texture of complicity is inextricably part of all South African cultural production during apartheid, hardly any scholarly effort has gone into examining the ease with which anomalies have been ironed out in attempts either to make white music making sing in tune with racial discourses or to evade them completely, or to treat music in white South African spaces as anything but one-on-one exemplifications (or exemptions) of political ideology in the cultural field.

⁹ Lucia (2005), p. 333.

¹⁰ Muller (2008), pp. 189–196.

¹¹ Watkins (1996), p. ix.

¹² Froneman and Muller (2020), pp. 203–218.

Boeremusiek slips through the cracks of these disciplinary polarities. Although it is—as the chapters to follow will show—a music patently obsessed with race and always has been, its race-thinking is characterized by confusion rather than category. This may mean two things: that the syncretic nature of boeremusiek presents an anomaly in twentieth-century white cultural production in South Africa, one that often sits paradoxically with received narratives of strict racial separate development. Or—and this is the line I’ll be developing in this book—that white racism isn’t what we thought it was. That precisely because it has been so stigmatized, derided, and ignored, boeremusiek opens up an otherwise obscured channel into hearing the affective pathologies of white displacement and denial by which white racism perpetuates itself more universally. It is only at this perceived rock bottom of white musical taste, a discursive and affective ghetto protected from scrutiny by both a wider societal and a self-directed ridicule hiding in its own seemingly obvious self-evidence, that the musical forces at play in shaping ears and bodies as “white” emerge as technologies of race.

WHITENESS AS AFFECTIVE DISORDER

This book argues that race-thinking in South Africa has lodged itself not only in the material objects, discourses, and practices of white expressive culture, but in the dimensions of the white aesthetic faculty itself. Racism, in this definition, is not merely a question of prejudice; it’s a matter of pleasure and a matter of taste. This was hinted at by the late Richard (Rick) Turner in one of his meditations on the deficits of white consciousness. “The average white South African is scarcely one of the higher forms of life,” Turner mused in the uncompromising prose that probably led to his assassination in 1979.¹³ For Turner, white consciousness was “cabbage consciousness”; an incapacity to experience the freedom of what it meant to be fully human. “Material privilege,” he went on, “is bought at the cost of mental atrophy” and for whites who have recognized this “the desire to change South Africa” manifested as an “urgent need for personal dignity and the air of freedom and love.”¹⁴

The other precedent for considering white race-thinking as a collectively incubated yet individually felt affective disorder is J.M. Coetzee’s influential article on apartheid thinker Geoffrey Cronjé, published 30 years ago. “The

¹³Turner (1969), p. 22.

¹⁴Turner (1969), p. 22.

historical scholarship devoted to apartheid seems to me to suffer from self-imposed limitations," wrote Coetzee in *The Mind of Apartheid*:

Whether or not the historians of apartheid know what apartheid is, the kind of discourse and kind of thinking they elect to use, as I read them, make it impossible for them to write about more than the workings of apartheid in the world.¹⁵

Coetzee contended that apartheid (and the racial segregationism that preceded it) was "a form of madness" that "set for itself the task of reforming (by which we should understand deforming) the human heart" and that it is "ultimately in the lair of the heart that apartheid must be approached."¹⁶ For this reason, Coetzee argued that apartheid could be known empirically, from the outside, only to a limited extent, and that getting at the "obsessional neurosis" of race-thinking required strategies that exceeded the historical method proper. "If we wish to understand apartheid," Coetzee concluded, "we cannot ignore its testament as it comes down to us in the heart-speech of autobiography or confession"¹⁷; we need to "follow its ravings" and "inhabit [it] with part of ourselves."¹⁸

In this book, I approach boeremusiek practice and reception as a similar kind of confessional "heart-speech." In one sense, I take Coetzee's metaphor quite literally: I locate statements of belief about taste, affective experience, and pleasure in boeremusiek's historical record, archival deposits, sonic and material culture, expressive tropes, and contemporary practices. What qualifies as statements of belief about these elusive concepts is, of course, a difficult matter. For one, ideas about musical taste or enjoyment are often not primarily expressed in language; sometimes they are not "ideas" at all, but embodied and performed through movement, posture, and gesture. And even when the medium is linguistic, reflections on taste, affect, and pleasure rarely announce themselves in explicit terms. More often than not, they are hidden away in the performative and pragmatic aspects of language use. To get at boeremusiek's "heart-speech" therefore requires a good dose of critical theory and a Goffmanesque metapragmatic awareness of the code or the frames that structure affective life.

What complicates the matter further is that boeremusiek's pleasure principles more often than not derive from doublespeak, ambivalence, and

¹⁵ Coetzee (1991), p. 2.

¹⁶ Coetzee (1991), p. 2.

¹⁷ Coetzee (1991), p. 2.

¹⁸ Coetzee (1991), p. 3.

erasure. What characterizes boeremusiek's heart-speech more than anything else is how it creates and sustains—as a dimension of pleasure itself—uncertainty around whether the music is (or should be) enjoyable to white people at all. In the context of boeremusiek and Afrikaner whiteness, pleasure is hardly an unequivocally positive affective state. “Pleasure” often sits at the threshold of enjoyment, horror, and damnation, and the music's affect registers as indictment, embarrassment, guilt, disavowal, or fear. Arguably, however, it is precisely the provisionality of white affect that, one, renders it legible in language and performance (albeit not in a primarily denotative sense), and two, allows an interface for examining the aperiodic and disturbing correlations between ideological discourse, sound, and feeling. When listeners and practitioners engage with boeremusiek with reserved commitment, or signal through some symbolic or pragmatic means their concern about the appropriateness of their affective responses, they are creating a metalanguage of affect—a metalanguage that presupposes and entails, as I will show, a theory of race.

THE METALANGUAGE OF MUSICAL AFFECT AND THE ENREGISTERMENT OF RACE

Implied in my approach is an affective and embodied understanding of race and racism that exceeds the constructivist, socio-historical, and materialist paradigms. In recent years, largely under the rubric of “critical affect studies,” a small but significant body of work has sought to reconceptualize race and racism as “technologies of affect.”¹⁹ Despite its biological impossibility, race is not a formation of discourse alone; it survives as a “felt identity,”²⁰ a contingent, affective “event,”²¹ and a set of “seemingly ‘prediscursive’ forms of attachment and belonging” that come to feel “robust” and “substantial.”²² Drawing on Sarah Ahmed's notion of “affective economies,”²³ Derek Hook has argued persuasively that it is precisely the tenuous relationship between affect and representation, “the circulations and investments of affect ... that are not always directly codifiable,” that allows “the recalcitrant and, indeed sublime aspects of whiteness” to

¹⁹ Hook (2005), pp. 74–99; Zembylas (2015), pp. 145–162.

²⁰ Tolia-Kelly and Crang (2010).

²¹ Saldanha (2010), pp. 2410–2427.

²² Hook (2005).

²³ Ahmed (2004), pp. 117–139.

remain a potent undercurrent in the lived experience of race.²⁴ The “doings” of race and racism in the world, so these scholars argue, “breathe life into the concept of race” and account for its ongoing force and tenacity in contemporary societies.²⁵

That “race is necessarily a matter of affect and affect does not walk innocently of race” is an idea that surfaces repeatedly in boeremusiek’s metalanguage of affect.²⁶ The main concern of this book is to circumscribe and analyze the modalities of this metalanguage in relation to the formation of whiteness as a racial category. In my understanding hereof, I hark back to some of the insights of what Steven Feld and Aaron Fox in 1994 called a “musico-linguistic anthropology”—particularly that approach to studying the relationship between music and language they referred to as “language *about* music” (as opposed to “music *as* language” and “music *in* language/language *in* music”). The “language about music” perspective on ethnography, they noted, “is predicated on the fact that people talk about music, and that music interacts with naturally occurring verbal discourse, not only in song texts, verbal art, and the prosodic musical structuring of speech, but also in the interpretative, theoretical and evaluative discourses surrounding musical experiences.”²⁷ An important point to make is thus that it is not only scholars of music who grapple with issues of music’s signification, but that practitioners and listeners have continuously grappled with them too. The concerns of this book, then, are similarly rooted in the observation that listeners routinely speak about (or react against) affect and about the social rules and codes that govern affect in more or less explicit ways. In foregrounding boeremusiek’s vernacular “metalanguage of affect” or its “heart-speech,” I thus build on ideas about the importance of language *about* music.²⁸ But I do so here with a broadened view that includes musical, performative, and non-linguistic forms of reflexivity and a focus on indexicality and pragmatics over explicit meanings and semantics. I have in mind, then, an expanded notion of the “language about music” category. In addition to various kinds of discourse and speech-acts that reflect overtly on the appropriateness of affective

²⁴ Hook (2005); Hook (2011), pp. 107–115.

²⁵ Nayak (2010), p. 2371; Zembylas (2015).

²⁶ Tolia-Kelly and Crang (2010), p. 2313.

²⁷ Feld and Fox (1994), p. 32. Also, see the case studies of talk about music in Steven Feld et al. (2004), p. 47.

²⁸ Feld (1984), pp. 1–18; Porcello et al. (2010), pp. 51–66; Gray (2013); Gray (2021), pp. 1–19; Meintjes (2017).

responses to the music (Kathrada’s pre-emptive note of surprise, for example), this expanded notion also includes a wide range of linguistic utterances that constitute “language *about* music” only implicitly or pragmatically (the racially coded aspects, say, of musical descriptors meant as judgments of taste). Also of interest are all those acoustic and performative signs used to reflect metasemiotically on musical experience (like donning a blackface mask, playing the concertina in secret or from behind a curtain, or abstaining from boeremusiek entirely). In other words, I locate or infer affect in what is called in Michael Silverstein’s definition of pragmatics “the semiotic realm of indexical meaning.”²⁹ And in the tradition of Goffman and Bateson, I view boeremusiek performances and the discourses and practices surrounding them always also as metasemiotic commentaries on themselves and the world around them.³⁰

As Luis-Manuel Garcia has noted, the movement of affect through the world—particularly when affect is thought in relation to sound—is often described in metaphors of “vibration,” “attunement,” and, “resonance.”³¹ But by returning musical affect to the domain of indexical meaning,³² my proposition is to think of affect in music as something more akin to *register* in language,³³ and of the acquisition of affect as something like *enregisterment*, which Asif Agha has described as “the social process whereby diverse behavioral signs (whether linguistic, non-linguistic, or both) are functionally reanalyzed as cultural models of action, as behaviors capable of indexing stereotypic characteristics of incumbents of particular interactional roles, and of relations among them.”³⁴ My project resembles in some respects the materialist take on sound and race as, for example, expounded in Nina Sun Eidsheim’s work on vocal timbre.³⁵ But in the context of whiteness, one listens not only for a one-to-one correlation between race and sound; instead whiteness is produced more frequently in inverse, paradoxical, ironic, or mocking correlation between racially-coded sound and feelings and in an

²⁹ Silverstein (1993), pp. 32–58.

³⁰ Bateson (2000) and Goffman (1974).

³¹ Garcia (2020), p. 12.

³² Lila Ellen Gray has identified “work at the intersection of ethnomusicology, linguistic anthropology and socio-cultural anthropology on speech about timbre and on indexicality” as two of the generative areas of overlap between ethnomusicology and affect theory that remain relatively unexplored. I extend this idea to speech about affect as such. See Gray (2021), p. 331.

³³ For a theorization of “register” in relation to musical affect, see Gray (2016), pp. 60–73.

³⁴ Agha (2015), pp. 27–53. For a similar, if more literal, deployment of “enregisterment” in sonic culture, see Singh and Campbell (2022), pp. 408–430.

³⁵ Eidsheim (2019).

affective logic premised on absences and contradictions as mediated by language and other symbolic forms. Blackface minstrelsy, as I point out in Chap. 3, is the paradigmatic symbolic instance of white musical meaning-making. But the processes of embarrassment, abstinence, and disavowal that also characterize boeremusiek's heart-speech would be difficult to trace in exclusively materialist ways. My suggestion, then, is that one "catches feelings" or learns to (dis)appreciate music like one catches accents or comportments; that a metalanguage of affect finds implicit and explicit expression in a complex and fluctuating textual, sonic, and behavioral "diacritics" that are socio-culturally (and racially) coded; that these diacritics are at once intimately and individually embodied and publicly legible and transmitted; and that—like their linguistic counterparts—these affective diacritics form constellations of what Agha calls "distinct, differentially valorized semiotic registers."³⁶ This book traces a historical trajectory through the history of boeremusiek reception, but I also conceive of the chapters on embarrassment, blackface, epiphanic listening, and disavowal as outlining and analyzing constellations of affective diacritics as they have been regimented into modalities of white aesthetic engagement at particular historical moments.³⁷ Considered together, these modalities describe the contours of a corrupted white aesthetic faculty. They form an embodied archive of affects (the misappropriated, Keilsian "groovology" of the title),³⁸ available for reactivation in contemporary listening and performance: a particularly white way of appreciating music and a particularly musical way of becoming and remaining white.

Locating musical affect primarily in the domain of indexical meaning (which, by definition, comprises but exceeds denotational language and includes non-linguistic forms of communication, social action, and mediation, including sonic and visual expressions)³⁹ thereby bypasses many of the contemporary critical debates on affect: whether affect is prediscursively embodied or mediated through language, subjective or relational, naive or ideological, particular or universal.⁴⁰ This is because my focus is not on defining affect as such, but on locating or revealing vernacular takes on affect in various kinds of discourses and musical practices as the

³⁶ Agha (2007), p. 81.

³⁷ Silverstein's definition of "metapragmatics" as the implicit and explicit code that "regiments" indexicals into identifiable but continuously shifting complexes refers. His notion of "indexical order" is also relevant here. These terms are unpacked in further detail in Chap. 6.

³⁸ Keil (2004).

³⁹ Urban (2006), pp. 401–407.

⁴⁰ For the most recent summary of these debates, see Gray (2021).

basis for ethnographic and historical writing, and on theorizing the relationship between music, affect, and race on the back of these analyses. Understood as socially-scripted yet embodied modalities and processes of enregisterment, affect constitutes itself in boeremusiek's heart-speech by processual, bidirectional movements between these binaries that can be traced or theoretically inferred at the indexical level of semiosis.⁴¹

In attending to the discursive implications and affective investments of the music in this way, I place an inordinate—and some would say an inappropriate—amount of trust in my embodied, subjective experience and understanding. Ethnographic fieldwork stands at the center of this book's concerns, but not in any orthodox sense. While only the two book-end chapters (the one on embarrassment and the concluding theorization of music, race, and affect) incorporate fieldwork materials directly, my choice of and approach to the historical material presented in the other three chapters derive from a situated, ethnographic consciousness attuned to listening for boeremusiek's heart-speech in the records of the past. In the world of the affects, the correlation between race ideology, sound, and feeling is unperiodic and deeply disturbing, and in my attempt to make sense of the affective enregisterment of race in boeremusiek, I exploit my cultural competence and complicity as white insider while struggling against my own prejudices and presumptions. I thus call upon ethnographic observation, historical material, and critical theory—raiding anything from Mary Douglas's reflections on purity, Georges Bataille's economics to Lacan's psychoanalysis and beyond—in ways I intuit best illuminate the material rather than in submission to disciplinary expectations, and aim to stay true to the grain of boeremusiek discourse and practice while uncovering and defamiliarizing its affective discourses of whiteness. This is a dance on razor's edge, but if one is to avoid reductive readings of politically contested material, or irresponsible readings of music's affect, it is a particularly-important premise to uphold. In one sense, this book is positioned on the long list of ethnographic and genre-based studies of South African vernacular musics: a tradition stretching back to John Blacking's *How Musical is Man?* (1973), including influential texts such as David Coplan's *In Township Tonight!* (1985), Veit Erlmann's *African Stars* (1991), Christopher Ballantine's *Marabi Nights* (1993), Louise Meintjes's *Sound of Africa!* (2003) and *Dust of the Zulu* (2017), and the work, among others, of Gavin Steingo, Barbara Titus, Angela Impey, and Xavier Livermon.⁴²

⁴¹ Silverstein (1993).

⁴² Blacking (1973), Coplan (1985), Ballantine (2012), Erlmann (1991), Meintjes (2003), Meintjes (2017), Gavin Steingo (2016), Impey (2018), and Livermon (2020).