

https://dspace.org/

Voelvry and the "outlawed" Afrikaners: an analysis of "the alternative Afrikaans music movement" and Afrikaner identity

Pienaar, Clara

2012-10-04
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/12051

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

VOËLVRY AND THE "OUTLAWED" AFRIKANERS: AN ANALYSIS OF "THE ALTERNATIVE AFRIKAANS MUSIC MOVEMENT" AND AFRIKANER IDENTITY.

By Clara Pienaar

Student number: 0611021J.

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Johannesburg, 2012.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Clara Pienaar

9 March 2012.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To both my supervisors, Clive and Maria, I owe you an enormous thank you for the long hours spent on careful inspection and constructive advice. I appreciate the fruitful guidance that you made readily available.

I would also like to thank my friends and family for their patient, generous and valuable assistance at all stages of this process. To James, thank you for, among other things, the litres of tea and coffee, the piles of toast, and the calm reassurance; your incredible munificence sustained me. To both my parents, the hours of advice, comfort, translation and information that you have given me, have been vital in making this report come into being. To Mia and Dioné, thanks for helping me to *vasbyt*!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION **5**

CHAPTER ONE **18**

CHAPTER TWO **29**

CHAPTER THREE **39**

CONCLUSION **71**

Introduction

> Afrikaner nationalism and the Afrikaner people bear a heavy historical responsibility for the monstrous crimes of apartheid. Yet it should never be forgotten that there were always Afrikaners who found a different way – men and women who stepped out of the narrow *laager* of the nationalist establishment when this was a lonely, difficult and even dangerous thing to do. While insisting that they too were Afrikaners, each in their own way tried to voice the belief that South Africa was not the God-given preserve of the Afrikaner *volk*, but indeed belonged to all who lived in it, black and white.[1]

> *Ja die lewe is maar swaar*
> *Vir 'n alternatiewe Afrikaner*
> *Die stad is nie my eie nie*
> *Dis 'n nuwe tipe anger…*
>
> (Yes life is tough
> For an alternative Afrikaner
> The city is not my own
> There's a new type of anger…)[2]

In the late 1980s a group of young South African musicians came together to express their fury and discontent with the social, political and cultural condition of the Afrikaner nation. Most of the contributors to the Voëlvry movement, as it is now known, were young Afrikaans men in their twenties and early thirties, although some were English-speaking South Africans. The Voëlvry movement culminated in a nationwide tour in 1989 after which it lost its impetus. The name "Voëlvry" was adopted for this tour; it is a word made up of two Afrikaans words – *Voël* (Bird) and *Vry* (free). Combined, the two words adopt new meaning – "outlawed". It can also be translated as "free as a bird".

The Voëlvry musicians used the medium of rock 'n' roll to attack the monolithic Afrikaner identity. Their lyrics, musical composition, dress style and even their pseudonyms contributed to their bitter mockery of the National Party (NP), the *NG Kerk* (*Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk* – Dutch Reformed Church), the South African Defence Force (SADF) and other institutions and symbols that Afrikaner nationalists held sacred. The Voëlvryers

[1] Dan O' Meara, *Forty Lost Years, The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948 – 1994,* Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1996, p. V.
[2] Koos Kombuis, *Bomskok Babalaas*, lyrics and translation in Pat Hopkins, *Voëlvry, The Movement that Rocked South Africa,* Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2006, p. 138.

(i.e. members of Voëlvry) certainly carried a political message – they unequivocally denounced the apartheid regime but their power lay in their vociferous opposition to the hegemonic Afrikaner cultural identity which weighed so heavily on the personal lives of Afrikaners.

This dissertation will discuss the significance of this short-lived music movement. While Hermann Giliomee ignores the movement entirely in his history of the Afrikaner people, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, others have stated that Voëlvry was of the utmost importance.[3] Koos Kombuis, one of the leading figures in the movement, goes so far as to claim that Voëlvry was the *doodskoot* (killer shot) that finally toppled the regime.[4] This study addresses the question of what historical value Voëlvry holds. I will argue that its significance lies in its role as a cultural rebellion that provided those who took part in it with a means of escape from the dominant Afrikaner identity. My study aims to analyse Voëlvry, arguing that it represented an embryonic social movement.

Voëlvry as a social movement

A "movement" is commonly defined as a group of individuals who work together to promote a set of shared political, social, and cultural values.[5] Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison interpret social movements as "central moments in the reconstitution of culture".[6] They are political and cultural events that challenge the supposedly fundamental elements of a hegemonic culture. The creative activities of a movement construct a space in which there can be experimentation and debate and "habitual behaviour" is questioned.[7] A social movement has significance beyond its political influence in a specific historical moment; however fleeting it may be, it has lasting effects that influence the ways in which collective identities are constructed long after the movement has dissolved. As Eyerman and Jamison put it, "as the movements fade from the political centre stage, their cultural effects seep into the social lifeblood in often unintended and circuitous ways".[8]

It has been suggested that Voëlvry was no more than "a loose group affiliation of individuals".[9] Indeed, it may appear that Voëlvry lacked a clear agenda and did not cohere

[3] Compare Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2003, with Brendan Jury, "Boys to Men: Afrikaans Alternative Popular Music 1986-1990", *African Languages and Cultures*, 9, 2, Gender and Popular Culture (1996), 99-109; and Pat Hopkins, *Voëlvry.*

[4] Koos Kombuis, *Seks & Drugs & Boeremusiek, Die memories van 'n volksverraaier*, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 2000, p. 218.

[5] Based on definition on Oxford English Dictionary online, http://oxforddictionaries.com, accessed 6 February 2012.

[6] Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements, Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 6.

[7] Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*, pp. 1–6.

[8] Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*, p. 6.

[9] Michael Titlestad, correspondence with Clara Pienaar, 14 July 2011.

into something more than a crucially timed group confrontation with the social aspects of the apartheid regime in the late 1980s. In contrast, Albert Grundlingh has argued that Voëlvry should be understood as a social movement, albeit a *weak* one. He makes the following compelling conclusion:

> The embryonic but palpable sense of imminent change and the appeal to new Afrikaner cultural and political sensibilities as well as the enthusiastic following it attracted certainly gave Voëlvry the appearance of a social movement. But the case should not be overstated. It failed to evolve beyond protest music, lacked wider connections, and did not inspire their followers to express themselves in unambiguous and meaningful political terms. At best it can be described as a moderate to weak social movement.[10]

This study accepts Grundlingh's conclusion that Voëlvry can be understood as a very limited social movement. To put it another way, it can be deemed an embryonic social movement; it had the potential to grow into something stronger but ultimately its aims were too vague and its members disagreed in too many ways for it to develop beyond a loosely configured movement that was driven mainly by a desire to escape the restrictions of the dominant Afrikaner identity. It also did not last longer than a brief historical moment; it was driven by its role as a resistance movement against apartheid society and so it could not continue after this society began to collapse after 1990. Nonetheless, as Eyerman and Jamison argue, a movement should not be measured solely by its longevity, power and influence but also by its underlying meaning within a particular context. The Voëlvryers can be considered as "symbols of their times",[11] in the sense that they did represent "new Afrikaner political and cultural sensibilities".[12]

Voëlvry can be analysed as a movement because it consisted of a group of individuals who worked together to advance some basic aims; on a more profound level Voëlvry seems to have had an impact on processes of collective and subjective identity formation; it has left a lingering impression on personal histories. This aspect is harder to research; several informal conversations and interviews as well as newspaper articles and letters to the Afrikaans literary website, Litnet (www.outlitnet.co.za), have led me to this conclusion.

A word on methodology

The available textual sources on Voëlvry consist mainly of newspaper and magazine articles written about the movement in the late 1980s. In addition to this there are a few letters

[10] Albert Grundlingh, "'Rocking the Boat' in South Africa? Voëlvry Music and Afrikaans Anti-Apartheid Social Protest in the 1980s", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 37, 3, (2004), 483-514; p. 498.
[11] Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*, p. 13.
[12] Grundlingh, "Rocking the Boat'", p. 498.

reflecting on the importance of Voëlvry available on Litnet. I have also conducted formal interviews and informal conversations with people who attended concerts and knew some of the musicians personally.

Most of the English and Afrikaans media lavished attention on Voëlvry, much of it favourable, from its beginnings in 1987; it was covered quite extensively even after the 1989 tour. It was through this media attention, I contend, that the movement shaped and articulated the few clear aims and values that it had. If one uncritically accepts the information presented in most of these newspaper articles, it may seem that the movement had an enormous impact. This is far from clear. Notably, as Grundlingh suggests, the media investment in Voëlvry was not driven only by the inherent news-worthiness and unusual nature of the movement, but also by their own political concerns of the time. In the late 1980s, the Afrikaans media began to distance itself from the government and giving Voëlvry so much attention was a way of doing this.[13]

The other sources that I have used, which include interviews, letters, and informal conversations, are all reflective. In looking back on the movement through the haze of nostalgia, these sources do seem to aggrandise certain aspects of it. The issues of nostalgia and memory present certain problems as historical evidence. Memory is affected by the experience of the context in which it is recalled as well as the events that have taken place between the time of the event in question and the time it is evoked; it is also influenced by the opinions and memories of others as they reflect on the same period and bring their own subjective interpretations. Nostalgia is also linked to the fact that all of those interviewed and presumably many of the letter-writers are reflecting on an important period in their *youth*, which may have become a "golden age" in an individual's personal history.[14]

The issue of memory has particular relevance when using oral sources as historical evidence. The debate about the reliability of such sources has raged for long. [15] It is a matter of fact that when people reflect upon the past, they often distort the reality. While this is problematic, it is not insurmountable. Not all interviewees will share the same perspective of one event and by comparing perspectives and integrating them with written sources we can, to a certain extent, assess the factual reliability of a particular view. Moreover, in the words of Alessandro Portelli, "the first thing that makes oral history different is that it tells us less about events than about their *meaning*."[16] Portelli argues that subjectivity is as much the concern of history as "objective" facts are. This study is concerned with understanding an aspect of the meaning of the Voëlvry movement. Oral sources offer a valuable means of analysing this. In addition, Portelli has said that even when oral sources are "factually wrong", they offer value to our historical analysis:

[13] Grundlingh, "Rocking the Boat'", p. 485.
[14] For more on this and related issues see Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories, Form and Meaning in Oral History*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1991; and John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History,* Pearson Education Limited, Harlow, 2010 (fifth edition).
[15] See Tosh, *The Pursuit,* p. 321.
[16] Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different?", in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, Canada and USA, 2006, p. 36.

> Once we have checked their factual credibility with all the established criteria of philological criticism and factual verification which are required of by all types of sources anyway, the diversity of oral history consists in the fact that 'wrong' statements are still psychologically 'true' and that this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts.[17]

The fact that Voëlvry is nostalgically viewed by many in the post-apartheid era as having an enormous importance can tell us something about current trends within the Afrikaner community. This does not fall within the scope of this study but there have been a few works that examine this issue. Andries Bezuidenhout reflects in an unpublished paper on the links between Voëlvry and recent events in Afrikaner music.[18] Grundlingh and Leswin Laubscher have both outlined the idea that the nostalgia and resultant mythologizing of Voëlvry have helped "to manufacture an anti-apartheid past" for young Afrikaners grappling with post-apartheid issues of identity.[19]

My own reasons for studying Voëlvry may have been indirectly affected by these "mythologizing" processes. I have grown up in an "alternative" Afrikaans environment; I have only been exposed to Afrikaans people who rejected the hegemonic Afrikaner identity when they were in their early twenties, if not earlier.[20] My parents, journalists Hans Pienaar and Corné Coetzee, whom I have both interviewed for this study, attended a few Voëlvry concerts and knew a few of the musicians personally. In the 1980s they were both based in Yeoville for five years; this neighbourhood is particularly significant as it is the place where many Voëlvry performances took place.[21] Interestingly, my father takes a more positive view of Voëlvry and believes that the movement had great significance, while my mother does not share this view and did not personally find great meaning in Voëlvry. My interpretation of the movement has also been impacted by the views expressed in the letters about Voëlvry that are available on www.outlitnet.co.za. These letters show that Voëlvry has become a major turning-point in the individual life histories of a significant number of Afrikaners.

Characteristics of the rebellion and the attack on the hegemonic Afrikaner identity

[17] Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different?", p. 37.
[18] Andries Bezuidenhout, "From Voëlvry To De La Rey: Popular Music, Afrikaner Nationalism And Lost Irony", unpublished seminar paper, Department of History, University of Stellenbosch, 2007.
[19] Grundlingh, "Rocking the Boat'", p. 510. See also Leswin Laubscher, "Afrikaner Identity and the Music of Johannes Kerkorrel", *South African Journal of Psychology*, 35, 2 (2005), 308–330; p. 324.
[20] Here I use the term "Afrikaans", instead of "Afrikaner", to indicate that these individuals have completely disassociated themselves from the hegemonic Afrikaner identity; they speak Afrikaans but choose not to think of and express themselves in terms of the latter. Voëlvry, in contrast, was attempting to escape the Afrikaner tribe while still maintaining some aspects of an Afrikaner identity.
[21] For more on this issue see William Dewar, Clara Pienaar and Maria Suriano, "Rockey Street: a Comfortable Home for the "Outlawed" Afrikaners: Voëlvry Music, Identity, Place, and Nostalgic Memories of Yeoville (late 1980s - early 1990s)", in Claire Benit-Gbaffou (ed.), *Yeoville Stories*, UNISA Press, Pretoria, forthcoming.

The main musical acts of the Voëlvry movement were *Die Gereformeerde Blues Band* (The Reformed Blues Band) which included Johannes Kerkorrel, Willem Volume, Piet Pers, Hanepoot Van Tonder and Karla Krimpelien; Bernoldus Niemand (the stage name for James Phillips) *en Die Swart Gevaar* (which can be translated as Bernoldus Nobody and The Black Peril); and André Le Roux Du Toit, who became "André Letoit" and then "Koos Kombuis".[22] This study will pay a special attention to the figures of André Letoit, Johannes Kerkorrel and Dagga-Dirk Uys (André Letoit's manager and organiser of the tour), mainly because they were the most prominent members of the movement.

The musicians' dress style, mocking pseudonyms, lyrics and even their use of traditional Afrikaner musical instruments (which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three), emphasised the cynically humorous attitude that the Voëlvryers adopted in their derision of sacred Afrikaner symbols. For example, the name *Die Gereformeerde Blues Band* took a dig at the *heilige* (holy) Afrikaner institution of *Die Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk* (*NG Kerk* - The Dutch Reformed Church). Ralph Rabie's artistic name "Johannes Kerkorrel" (John Church Organ) was also meant in a mocking, tongue-in-cheek sense.

The Voëlvryers publicly expressed the view that they were there to challenge the more restrictive aspects of mainstream Afrikaner identity and culture. André Letoit said that he was "trying to clear out some of the negative *kak* [crap] that exists in our culture".[23] These musicians consciously sought to show that the non-Afrikaner view of Afrikaners as right-wing, oppressive and oppressed purists was very limited and that the reality was that there were many people who considered themselves as Afrikaners but were not right-wing, stringent Calvinists. As Kerkorrel put it, "we're exposing a lot of Afrikaner myths, cultural lies".[24]

Grundlingh suggests that:

> Central to the protest was an attempt to question, and even to reformulate through the medium of music, what it meant to be an Afrikaner during the latter phases of apartheid.[25]

[22] I will refer to Koos Kombuis (as he is known at this present time) as André Letoit because he only changed his name to Koos Kombuis in 1989 after the Voëlvry tour and after the movement dissolved. Phillips will also be referred to by his stage name, Bernoldus Niemand, as that is the persona he adopted for the Voëlvry movement, after which he reverted to James Phillips.

[23] Koos Kombuis, quoted in Gary Rathbone, "Far out *van die our Kalahari* with a half-jack of biting satire", 1987, Historical Papers Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Collection number AG3212, Johannesburg.

[24] David Perry, "The Dissent of Man", *The Independent*, 15 February 1990.

[25] Grundlingh, "'Rocking the Boat'", p. 484.

The Voëlvry musicians certainly questioned very intensively what it meant to be an Afrikaner; they dug deep and challenged some of the most basic assumptions about the dominant Afrikaner identity. However, it remains unclear to what extent the Voëlvryers were attempting to reformulate Afrikaner identity through music. If this implies that they had a coherent set of values that they hoped would replace the old, then I would say that this was not the case, as identity is a process, "something we put or try on, not something we reveal or discover".[26] This study will argue that the Voëlvry musicians were trying to show that not all Afrikaners were represented by the nationalist institutions and mainstream Afrikaner culture; that "*hulle was nie almal so nie*" (they were not all like that).[27] More than being engaged in reshaping what it meant to be an Afrikaner, they were undergoing personal and collective processes of *escape* from the hegemonic Afrikaner identity. As André Letoit, in a retrospective comment about the meaning of the Voëlvry tour, has stated:

> Contrary to popular opinion, the tour was not about trying to change Afrikanerdom from the inside. That myth was caused by the mistaken label the media gave us (after misquoting Dirk's ['Dagga' Dirk Uys, manager of the *Gereformeerde* Blues Band] first press release): Alternative Afrikaners … what those of us who were Afrikaans really wanted to do, even then, was *escape* from the Afrikaner tribe instead of just attacking its values.[28]

The lifeblood of the Voëlvry movement was its resistance to an authoritarian Afrikaner culture that extended the control of the apartheid regime into the personal lives of Afrikaner individuals. While the movement had clear political concerns, these were less prominent than the cultural "mission" of Voëlvry. Journalist Shaun de Waal explains it in the following way:

> [What] young Voëlvry-supporting Afrikaners (and others) were trying to escape from [was] the suffocating claustrophobia of the Calvinist values and social repressions that underpinned Afrikaner society and, indeed, seeped into Anglophone South Africa.[29]

The motivation behind Voëlvry was to break away from the oppressive expectations of parents and other authority figures such as church leaders and teachers, in other words to detach oneself from *Afrikanerdom*, which represents the hegemonic Afrikaner collective identity. The image of the *laager* (a protective circle of ox wagons) conjures up the defensive and community-orientated outlook of this identity. The Afrikaner identity was of course

[26] Simon Frith, "Music and Identity", in Stuart Hall and Paul du Guy (eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity*,, SAGE Publications, London, 1996, p. 109.
[27] This refers to a novel by Jeanne Goosen entitled *Ons Is Nie Almal So Nie* (We're Not All Like That*)*, HAUM, Pretoria, 1990.
[28] Koos Kombuis in Hopkins, "*Voëlvry",* p. 236. Italics in the original text.
[29] Shaun De Waal, "Having a National party", *Mail & Guardian*, 24 to 30 November, 2006, p. 12.

never a homogenous or "authentic" experience or state of being. Like any national identity, it was deliberately crafted. In the words of Leswin Laubscher,

> [T]he figure of the Afrikaner is not intrinsic to the commonality of history, or 'authentic' in some prior, Platonic manner, but a consequence of articulatory practices which coalesced as identitary unity around the *volkseie* (the nation or people's own; that which is particular to the Afrikaner), and 'began to act as a general principle for the organisation of all social relations.'[30]

The concept of the *volkseie* goes hand in hand with the notion that something can be *volksvreemd* (alien to the people) and is useful in terms of understanding the Voëlvry cultural rebellion. It has been argued that the meaning and power of the movement came from the fact that it represented an anti-apartheid protest from within the Afrikaner nation; in other words it was not *volksvreemd*.[31]

Music and identity

Johannes Kerkorrel and André Letoit often consciously expressed their choice to use music as the medium of expression for their views. Both were working as writers prior to the formation of their musical acts – Johannes Kerkorrel as a journalist and André Letoit as a poet and novelist. André Letoit explained that "music is a far more direct and immediate form of communication."[32] Johannes Kerkorrel expressed a similar view when he said,

> … Look if you say certain things in Afrikaans and you are not supposed to say it, you don't ever get the chance to say it because the media is controlled to the extent that it is. So that's why we're doing what we're doing and using rock 'n' roll or whatever.[33]

The choice of music as a vehicle for exploring identity is exciting in itself. It has been widely recognised in literature on popular culture that popular cultural expressions such as music have the power to create identity and bring about change.[34] In particular, "musical markers",

[30] Leswin Laubscher, "Afrikaner Identity", pp. 308–330. This is Laubscher's own translation of *volkseie*. In my view *volkseie* may be better defined as "the embodiment of the Afrikaner people".
[31] Ingrid B. Byerly, "Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet: The Music Indaba of Late-Apartheid South Africa", *Ethnomusicology*, 42, 1 (1998), pp. 1-44; p. 31.
[32] Koos Kombuis, quoted in Rathbone, "Far out *van die our Kalahari*".
[33] Johannes Kerkorrel, quoted in Jeremy Dowson and Deon du Plessis, "Kerkorrel *en Kie*", *The Star,* 27 May 1989.
[34] See Johannes Fabian, "Popular Culture in Africa: Findings and Conjectures", *Africa*, 48, 4 (1978), pp. 315–334.

as Ingrid Byerly has called them, become important points in people's individual and collective memories, and promote change.[35] In her words,

> Musical markers punctuate people's lives, whether consciously or not. These markers entertain, inform, influence, and instil personal memories that serve as symbols of meaningful demarcations in any life history … [They] preserve cultural attributes and mobilise change.[36]

Music creates an experience that can only be made sense of if the listener or audience member takes on a subjective as well as a collective identity created by the musical encounter.[37] As I have already underlined, identity is not fixed, but rather a process. Music, Simon Frith suggests, is unique in that it contains within it interlayered experiences of both subjective and collective identity.[38] Voëlvry performances, with their subversive songs and attitude, constructed spaces in which it was possible to adopt an anti-establishment stance; it was powerful to stand amongst other Afrikaners who were chiming in with Johannes Kerkorrel when he sang (referring to government propaganda) "*Sit dit af!* (Switch it off!)".[39]

Johannes Fabian tells us that "living culture must be viewed as a communicative process in which a society not only expresses but also generates and forms its world view".[40] It was through musical activity that Voëlvry constructed, to some extent, a temporary alternative identity (however nebulous and ever changing this may have been). As Frith has stated,

> Social groups … only get to know themselves *as groups* (as a particular organisation of individual and social interests, of sameness and difference) *through* cultural activity, through aesthetic judgement. Making music is not a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them.[41]

It was through performance and the act of creating and listening to Voëlvry music that the protest identity of the movement was constructed and assimilated by both its contributors and followers. Laubscher asserts that in Voëlvry "protest *is* the identity" and "is a performance of freedom *from* the [hegemonic] group in order to unshackle and shed a burdened (and

[35] For more on collective identity, see Maurice Halbwachs (translated by Francis J. Ditter), *The Collective Memory*, Harper and Row, New York, 1980.
[36] B. I. Byerly, "Decomposing Apartheid. Things Come Together. The Anatomy of a Music Revolution", in Grant Olwage (ed.), *Composing Apartheid*. *Music For and Against Apartheid*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2008, p. 256.
[37] Frith, "Music and Identity", p. 111.
[38] Frith, "Music and Identity", pp. 109–122.
[39] Based on the views expressed by Charles Leonard. Charles Leonard, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Auckland Park, 1 December 2011.
[40] Fabian, "Popular Culture"..
[41] Frith, "Music and Identity", p. 111.

burdening) past".[42] This act of personal and collective liberation was achieved through making and listening to music. Although it is impossible to separate music from its social and political context, I would like to point out that, as I am not a musicologist, I will offer only limited analysis of the Voëlvry music itself.[43]

The impact of Voëlvry in secondary literature

The movement seemed to have been fairly well-received among young Afrikaners, especially students, who were deeply dissatisfied with the actions of the NP and the authoritarian mentality within Afrikaner society. It is difficult to quantify the popularity of Voëlvry. Even if the numbers of concert attendees were available, this would not necessarily give an accurate measurement of the movement's influence. On the one hand, it is possible that Voëlvry reached further than the actual concert performances and, on the other, those who attended it may have disliked the experience and rejected the Voëlvry views.

While the ban placed on the Voëlvry musicians playing at Stellenbosch University in 1989 was protested by about 1500 students, other students at Stellenbosch and other universities protested their presence on campuses.[44] Indeed, the Voëlvryers were banned from a few university campuses and turned away from some scheduled small town performances when right-wing members of the community heard about what kind of messages they were spreading.[45]

There were certainly many young Afrikaners who felt threatened by the idea of political change. In the late 1980s the majority of Afrikaner youth seems to have still been very much attached to the nationalist cause. These young Afrikaners may not have felt comfortable with the views expressed by the Voëlvry musicians. According to Giliomee,

> Afrikaner nationalism maintained its sway over the school and university education of Afrikaners. Several studies found that the Afrikaner youth at schools and universities were firmly locked into the grid of the communal institutions which bound together Afrikaner society. In a study of history textbooks in use in

[42] Laubscher, "Afrikaner identity and the music of Johannes Kerkorrel", p. 316.

[43] For more on the on-going debate around music and identity, see Annemette Kirkegaard, "Introduction", in Mai Palmberg and Annemette Kirkegaard (eds), *Playing with Identities in Contemporary Music in Africa*, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, 2002. For more on music and identity, cultural activity, and politics, see Fabian, "Popular Culture in Africa"; Laura Fair, *Pastimes and Politics*: *Culture, Community and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890–1945*, Ohio University Press, Athens, 2001; Emmanuel K. Akyeampong and Charles Ambler, "Leisure in African History: An Introduction", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 35, 1 (2002), pp. 1–16.

[44] Compare staff reporter, "Pro-Mike Maties in Anti-Voëlvry March", *The Star*, no date, Historical Papers Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg; Collection number AG 3212; Tony Emerson and Arlene Getz, "Alternative Afrikaners: words become weapons to fight apartheid", *Newsweek*, 19 June 1989.

[45] See for example David Perry, "The Dissent of Man".

> secondary schools in 1980 and 1981 the following were two of the twelve 'master symbols' which appeared repeatedly: 'The Afrikaner has a special relationship with God', and 'South Africa rightly belongs to the Afrikaner'. Another study, undertaken in the mid-1980s, found that Afrikaner youth showed a strong intolerance towards protests against the state which was expressed in a belief that the black revolt of the mid-1980s was caused by intimidation and instigators, that black political violence was not justified and that the state acted properly in suppressing it. In a 1989 nation-wide study 75 per cent of Afrikaner student respondents indicated that they would resist physically an ANC government or emigrate for political reasons. In responses to these questions there was such a difference between Afrikaner and English-speaking white students that one is led inescapably to the conclusion that ethno-nationalism was still very much alive.[46]

Nevertheless, Voëlvry did have an undeniable influence on a significant portion of Afrikaner youth. Curiously, Herman Giliomee makes no mention of the movement in his expansive history of the Afrikaner people. Giliomee's reasons for neglecting Voëlvry might be due to the fact that in the late 1980s, as the above passage suggests, the majority of Afrikaner youth seemed to maintain a right-wing, pro-apartheid stance. Or he may have dismissed the Voëlvry movement simply because in his view it did not represent an important development in Afrikaner history.

Dan O'Meara, in contrast, argues that the movement was especially significant in terms of understanding the agonised condition of Afrikaner society in the late 1980s and, subsequently, in the years of transition that followed. He explains that, especially from the mid-1980s, Afrikaner society was suffering a "profound sense of malaise and self-doubt", and that Voëlvry represented an expression of this condition. This malaise and an underlying sense of guilt, he maintains, was translated by the Voëlvryers into an "anarchistic, angry and satirical" music movement.[47]

In *Voëlvry: The Movement that Rocked South Africa*, Pat Hopkins assigns even more importance to Voëlvry. Hopkins provides a comprehensive overview of the movement and good translations of several of the songs but greatly exaggerates the historical import of Voëlvry. He claims that the Voëlvry musicians had become "the voice of their generation", that they were "a nail in the coffin of apartheid," and that "the Afrikaans Alternative Music Movement … rock[ed] the very foundations of South Africa."[48] Grundlingh's assessment that Voëlvry's influence was limited to the white middle-class and that it "did rock the boat, but more gently than has often been assumed" is, I maintain, a more balanced and well-reasoned stance.[49]

[46] Giliomee, "'*Broedertwis*'", p. 356.
[47] O' Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p. 368.
[48] Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 19 and p. 75.
[49] Grundlingh, "'Rocking the Boat'", p. 510.

Chapter outline

Chapter one of this study will deal with the broader political and social context that the Voëlvry music emerged from.

In the 1980s Afrikaner political unity was compromised to the extent that the NP split officially in 1982 when Andries Treurnicht formed the Conservative Party (CP). The NG Kerk was fundamentally affected by this political division and it too split in 1986. Notably, Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert, who was the leader of the official parliamentary opposition from 1979 to 1986, represented an Afrikaner political alternative to the NP and CP. Questions about Afrikaner identity inevitably arose from this unstable situation and the political uncertainty that hung like a mist over the country led to the "profound sense of malaise" that O'Meara indicates.

The country was also engaged with several border conflicts and national service requirements gradually increased from the late 1960s when conscription was first extended to all white males. For many young Afrikaner men the Border Wars had formative and lasting influence. The conscription experience led to the emergence of what became known as *grensliteratuur* (border literature) which was produced by disturbed ex-soldiers writing about their experiences of war.

It is also crucial to note that there was a significant number of Afrikaner dissidents that came before and existed in the same period as the Voëlvry movement. The links between the Voëlvry rebellion and the *Sestigers* (generation of the sixties) literary movement could provide an interesting subject for further historical research. It is plausible that Voëlvry would not have come into existence at all if the *Sestigers* had not opened a space for cultural resistance.

Chapter one situates Voëlvry within this context and distinguishes it from other existing forms of Afrikaner dissidence.

Chapter two engages in a brief discussion of the musical background from which the Voëlvry musicians emerged, with a special focus on the kind of Afrikaans music that was popular and sanctioned by the state and the social meaning of this music. It also outlines the local and international musical influences on Voëlvry as well as the broader musical context that it existed in.

Chapter three will discuss the questions around Afrikaner identity and the Voëlvry movement and explores how Voëlvry constituted a cultural rebellion against hegemonic Afrikanerdom.

This chapter describes the way in which the movement came together and attempts to show why Voëlvry can be deemed a weak social movement by summarising its aims and values. The Voëlvryers focused their attack on the Calvinist austerity of Afrikaner society and culture and criticised the restricted mind-set of white South Africans. This is articulated in several Voëlvry songs, a few of which are analysed in this chapter. The movement was deconstructive and did not create a new, reconstituted identity but rather challenged it while at the same time providing some idealisation of the future for Afrikaners. This chapter will discuss the particular aesthetic choices that the musicians made and the way in which these things expressed their frustrations and resistance to the hegemonic Afrikaner identity.

In the conclusion I will summarise and finalise the arguments made throughout the report. I will include some speculative analysis of the lasting significance that this movement has had. There have been at least two studies and a few newspaper articles that refer to the impact of the Voëlvry movement on the current Afrikaans rock music scene with which I will engage.[50]

[50] See Bezuidenhout, "From Voëlvry To De La Rey; and Rebecca Kahn, "Oop Vir Interpretasie: An Examination of the South African Media's Take-up and Representation of the Music of Fokofpolisiekar", MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2009.

Chapter one: The social and political context of Voëlvry

In this chapter I will describe the social and political condition of Afrikaner society in the 1980s. Voëlvry came into existence at the end of the 1980s, a decade in which the apartheid government was finally irrevocably destabilised. Political unity within the Afrikaner community was shattered when the NP split in 1982 – from then on Afrikanerdom was divided between the NP and Andries Treurnicht's CP. In this decade the SADF was engaged in a serious border conflict in Namibia and Angola. Anti-apartheid resistance reached an intensity that proved too great for the NP, led by Prime Minister Pieter Willem Botha; ineffectual reforms did not do anything to improve matters.

Voëlvry came into existence at a time when Afrikaners were experiencing a particular set of fears and doubts about their position in South Africa. The future was uncertain and questions arose about the place of the Afrikaner in a country under black majority rule. Leswin Laubscher describes this situation in terms of an "organic crisis of hegemony" when events no longer made sense in terms of the *volkseie*.[51] I argue that it is in this context that Voëlvry must be understood as it emerged in part as an attempt to engage with this identity crisis. It also filled a gap in the growing mass of resistance which had not effectively reached the Afrikaner population. However protracted Voëlvry's influence may ultimately have been, it is valuable in that it did provide many Afrikaners with a feeling of having been involved in the anti-apartheid struggle, even if this has come about only as a result of reflective processes in the post-apartheid era.

Afrikaner unity is compromised

In the 1960s two broad opposing camps had emerged within Afrikaner politics – the *verligtes* (the enlightened ones) and the *verkramptes* (constricted or narrow reactionaries).[52] The political debates in parliament between these two factions raised questions with no easy answers about Afrikaner identity even within the NP.

The *verligtes* generally believed that it was necessary to break down some of the strict legal barriers between the races so that the country could progress economically. Many argued that the coloured population consisted of "brown Afrikaners" and should not be excluded from the Afrikaner nation. The *verkramptes*, on the other hand, remained firm supporters of the apartheid policy of separate development and enforced segregation. They desperately clung to notions of tradition and a belief that they had a God-given mission to protect the Afrikaner nation. This ideological division was driven by the fundamental question of what an Afrikaner actually was. Layered on top of this essential problem were complex issues about

[51] Laubscher, "Afrikaner identity", p. 310. See Introduction, p. 8, footnote 27.
[52] Translation in Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 549

how the Afrikaner nation should and could survive as well as what the role of the state was to be. This would eventually lead to the official split within the NP.[53]

In the same decade in which the *verkrampte/verligte* debate broke out, a group of Afrikaner poets and novelists initiated a literary movement that caused substantial reverberations within the Afrikaner cultural establishment. The *Sestigers* (generation of the sixties) "polarised the staid Afrikaner cultural establishment" by invigorating Afrikaner literature thematically and stylistically.[54] Poets and novelists such as Anna M. Louw, Jan Rabie, Etienne Leroux, Breyten Breytenbach and André Brink, produced literature that questioned the legitimacy of the NP government and the whole Afrikaner nationalist mission. The *Sestigers* rejected the idea of Afrikaner *lojale verset* (loyal resistance) that well-known and loved Afrikaner poet N. P. Van Wyk Louw had conceived in the 1950s. While Van Wyk Louw encouraged Afrikaners to question the methods of the NP, he maintained that resistance should remain benign and supportive of broader Afrikaner nationalism. *Sestiger* poets like Breytenbach were not interested in remaining loyal; they questioned some of the most essential claims of this nationalist cause.[55]

Verkrampte members of the Afrikaner Broederbond, self-appointed protectors of Afrikaner culture, were outraged by the writing produced by the *Sestigers* as they felt the control of cultural production held by the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings* (cultural front organisation of the Afrikaner Broederbond - FAK)[56] in decades passed was compromised:

> [T]he 1960s saw an all-out battle for the control of Afrikaner cultural institutions and the definition of 'acceptable' Afrikaner culture. The Broederbond, the churches, the Afrikaans press, politicians and eventually the NP itself were all drawn into this struggle.[57]

The *Sestigers* were a key development in the cultural history of the Afrikaners; they began a process within Afrikaner culture that opened a space in which some Afrikaners began to ask fundamental questions about their identity and culture. Voëlvry itself has undeniable historical links to this cultural rebellion. While the *Sestigers* represented a chink in the armour of Afrikanerdom and were taken very seriously by a number of Afrikaners and non-

[53] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, pp. 449–550.
[54] O' Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p. 128.
[55] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 554.
[56] The Afrikaner Broederbond (Brothers' League) was founded in 1918 as part of the nationalist movement that was gathering momentum at that time. It was formed with the aim of "fostering Afrikaner unity and advancement" and became a clandestine organisation in 1920. The *broeders* (brothers) appointed themselves guardians of "authentic" Afrikaner culture and values. The Bond formed the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings* (Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Associations – FAK). Cultural production in Afrikaner society was effectively controlled and approved by the FAK until the 1960s when several Afrikaner writers broke away from FAK control. See O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p. 44.
[57] O' Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p. 128.

Afrikaners alike, they did not at this time seem to make a striking impression on the greater part of Afrikaner society.

In fact, in Afrikaner society, unity appeared to remain intact until the mid-1970s; the NP had support from over 90 per cent of Afrikaners until a series of events from 1976 began to change this.[58] The Soweto uprisings, the Information Scandal and the exposure of the extent of the Afrikaner Broederbond's power, all contributed to a general unease that existed within Afrikaner society in the late 1980s – which is when Voëlvry came into existence. One major factor contributing to the general unease within Afrikaner society was the worsening economic conditions from the early 1970s. The country had enjoyed a high rate of economic growth from the 1960s, but this had changed by 1973.[59] Dissatisfaction with the conditions resulting from the economic downturn contributed to the official split of the NP in 1982.

The Soweto uprisings had an unquestionably fundamental impact on Afrikaner society. The 1976 Soweto uprisings and the grievous mismanagement of affairs by the government were vivid in the collective memory of the country by the 1980s. The government, led by Prime Minister John Vorster at the time, had assessed the political situation of the country poorly and ignored the strong objections that black students had with being taught in the Afrikaans language. When the government tried to enforce the rule that English and Afrikaans should be used on a 50-50 basis as the only media of instruction, violent protests broke out almost immediately and spread throughout South Africa.[60]

These uprisings were followed in 1977 by the death of Steve Biko. The sudden violence of Biko's death and the student riots made the Afrikaner people aware of the "atrocities that were being committed in the state's defence and in their name".[61]

In addition, a fundamental change in South African society had occurred: these events were now televised. Television (T.V.) was introduced to South Africa relatively late as compared to other countries worldwide. Albert Hertzog, who was Minister of Posts and Telegraphs until 1969, backed by conservative members of parliament, saw T.V. as a potentially dangerous weapon against the Afrikaner *volk*; in the conservative view, it posed a threat to the Afrikaans language as T.V. would favour English as a medium. In addition, T.V. could be used as a powerful propaganda tool by the enemies of the apartheid state. It was eventually introduced to a few main cities in 1975 and programmes were broadcast nationwide only in 1976, the year of the Soweto uprisings. This was an important turning-point in South African history. It was harder to ignore the existence of the townships when they flickered into life in the living room. Giliomee has made the point that the introduction of T.V. helped to show

[58] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 580.
[59] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 606.
[60] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 578.
[61] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 580.

white South Africans the extent of black hatred for the apartheid system.[62] Hans Pienaar, an Afrikaans journalist and writer, has gone so far as to suggest that there was an anti-puritanical uprising within the Afrikaner nation that started with the introduction of T.V. to South Africa. It is possible that some T.V. programmes that were popular in the 1980s, such as The Bill Cosby Show, broke down mental barriers regarding race amongst some Afrikaners.[63]

The other shock to the NP system was the so-called "information scandal" which emerged in 1978. A dirty campaign to manipulate public information in and about South Africa was launched by Prime Minister Vorster in the mid-1970s. Eschel Rhoodie, a civil servant in the Department of Information, had convinced the Minister of Information, Connie Mulder, that an "unconventional propaganda war" was not only required, but justified; Mulder had in turn endorsed Rhoodie's proposal and it was decided that as the situation was desperate it was not necessary to stick to official rules and regulations. Secret projects were launched that immersed the government in a tangle of criminal deeds and corruption that ranged from media manipulation to high level fraud and murder. Among other, more sinister deeds, the government founded the English newspaper *The Citizen* and moved large sums of money in violation of exchange control regulations. The scandal broke in early 1978 when Connie Mulder was publicly confronted with the question of whether the government was funding *The Citizen*. He denied the government's involvement and the lie was later exposed. Rumours about the secret and illegal projects of the Information Department were also circulating and Vorster, unable to withstand any further pressure, resigned in 1978.[64]

The unveiling of the inner workings of the Afrikaner Broederbond also caused much controversy and consternation within the Afrikaner community. It was discovered that the Bond members dominated the high level management and leadership positions of virtually every Afrikaner institution and many government entities. Members of the Bond protected and assisted each other in matters of state and business but it was not clear to what extent they helped those who were not affiliated with the organisation. Giliomee argues that the exposure of the structure and operations of this organisation led to questions of its legitimacy and efficiency that may not have been raised in earlier times when Afrikaner power was more stable. The tumultuous conditions of the 1980s led many to ask whether the organisation was useful to the Afrikaner people if it was only concerned with its own survival and success.[65]

By the time P.W. Botha became Prime Minister in 1978 general Afrikaner faith in the government had been damaged. The *verkrampte/verligte* ideological split within the NP that had emerged in the 1960s had deep and lasting impact; it led to the official splitting of the party and the formation of the Conservative Party (CP) led by Andries Treurnicht who had been deputy minister of Bantu Administration and Development in Vorster's government.

[62] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 580.
[63] Hans Pienaar, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Auckland Park, 7 July 2011.
[64] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 582.
[65] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 581.

One major reason for the split was Botha's proposed reforms that would include the creation of two new separate houses of Parliament for Indians and coloureds.[66] By 1982, when the split occurred, solidarity within the NP and among its supporters had demonstrably broken down.

The split in government had had an intensely destabilising effect on the *Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk* (Dutch Reformed Church – NGK). The church, like many other Afrikaner institutions, entered a period of swift and fundamental change in the 1980s. It began to question its own dogmatic justification of apartheid ethics; if the church was to back the nationalist government then it was required that it endorsed Botha's reforms. This meant questioning the fundamental claims about separate development that the NG Kerk had supported and preached. The *verkrampte/verligte* political division spread into the upper echelons of the NGK and finally led to an official split in 1986 when *verkrampte* church leaders first rebelled within the institution against the new "liberal" tendencies and then broke away to form the *Afrikaanse Protestante Kerk* (Afrikaner Protestant Church - APK) in 1987. A handful of the *verkrampte* reactionaries formed the *Nederduitsch Gereformeerde Bond* (Dutch Reformed League) within the NGK establishment. [67]

Religion played a key role in Afrikaner nationalism. "To be an Afrikaner, someone had to subscribe to a Calvinist and conservative world view."[68] Afrikanerdom revolved around a central belief that it was the Afrikaners' God-given mission to survive and prosper; the Afrikaners were a chosen people and their national identity was inextricably linked to this Calvinist calling.[69] It was therefore an ominous sign when the house of the Afrikaner God, the NG Kerk, began to crumble under the weight of divisive politics.

In the mid-1980s, the heavier tax burden on middle-class whites contributed to the political divide within Afrikanerdom. By 1987, whites paid 32 per cent of their incomes on tax and received only 9 per cent in benefits. There was a strong right-wing response against this tax hike.[70] This increased level of taxation took place within the broader context of economic decline that had begun in the early 1970s. In 1985, just after Botha's declaration of the first state of emergency in July, the country was thrust into a deep economic crisis. Foreign investment plummeted as a result of the widespread unrest and South Africa's on-going, poor economic performance. The value of the rand dropped dramatically. This economic black cloud loomed over the Afrikaner nation.[71]

---

[66] Gail Gerhart and Clive Glaser, *From Protest to Challenge, Vol. 6: Challenge and Victory, 1980 -1990*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 2010, p. 7.
[67] O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p. 314.
[68] Giliomee. "*Broedertwis"*, p. 347
[69] Dunbar T. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom, Power, Apartheid and the Civil Religion*, University of California Press, California and London, 1975, p. i.
[70] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 601.
[71] Gerhart and Glaser, *From Protest to Challenge, Vol. 6*, p. 36.

Afrikaner political unity was all but destroyed by the 1980s. However this does not suggest that the majority of Afrikaners no longer supported apartheid and the nationalist mission. The majority of Afrikaners still backed apartheid policies and support was in large part split between the NP and the more right-wing CP. In fact, by 1987 the CP had become the official opposition in parliament with support from nearly half of the Afrikaner population. Polls showed that more than 80 per cent of Afrikaners were extremely afraid about their safety in a South Africa under black majority rule.[72]

The repressive political conditions of the 1980s

Botha responded to the erosion of Afrikaner political unity and the increasing unrest in the country with a mix of ineffectual reform policies and severely repressive measures. When he came into power he gave the impression that the situation was going to change dramatically but the reforms pushed by Botha's government were too few, not drastic enough and far too late.

Despite Botha's rhetoric of change and his political posturing in the townships and homelands he massively increased repressive measures to counteract the rapid spread of protest and resistance across the land. His belief that the country faced a *totale aanslag* (total onslaught) from every sector of society led to the adoption of his total strategy policy. With this he aimed to effectively halt resistance as well as protect South Africa from a communist threat from its neighbouring countries. On the borders of South Africa young men fought against what the state deemed to be a grave threat of communist invasion while in the townships, soldiers were sent to fight against their fellow South Africans.

In the 1980s South Africa underwent a period of intensified militarisation. Botha had been Minister for Defence under Vorster between 1966 and 1980 and had greatly increased the strength and size of the military. In the 1980s, with Botha as Prime Minister, total military expenditure, which had remained relatively low in preceding years, reached thirteen per cent of the state budget.[73] The increase in spending on security was justified in terms of the total strategy which included the international fight against communism. The Cold War had a major impact on South African politics and society in the 1980s. Fear of a communist invasion or of communists within the ranks was pervasive. As Gail Gerhart and Clive Glaser explain, the major Western powers also remained relatively tolerant of the apartheid government as long as South Africa maintained its position as an anti-communist Western ally and depicted all internal anti-apartheid resistance as "communist-inspired".[74]

[72] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 608.
[73] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 551.
[74] Gerhart and Glaser, *From Protest to Challenge, Vol. 6*, p. 5.

Internally, the government was facing an ever-stronger threat from various resistance movements across the entire nation. The uncontrollable spread of protest across the country was met by Botha's imposition of two states of emergency from July 1985 to March 1986 and June 1986 until June 1990. In the 1980s, government oppression and the use of severely repressive methods reached unprecedented levels. Botha and his government were clearly becoming more desperate to maintain control.

After the Vaal Uprising of September 1984, widespread, violent protest reached an extreme. In the Vaal triangle, which encompassed Vereeniging, Sasolburg and Vanderbijl Park, a sudden and surprising outburst of conflict shook this area that had previously remained relatively politically calm. From the early 1980s, the economic downturn had damaged the earlier industrial growth of the Vaal Triangle, rents were high and income inequality was aggravated. The riots that had broken out in the Vaal quickly spread to many other areas in South Africa. Violence reached extreme levels: many people were killed, bombs exploded, buildings were burnt to the ground, and many suspected informers were executed in necklacings, the deeply shocking punishment of placing a petrol-soaked tire around a victim and lighting it.[75]

The fact that young white men were sent as conscripted soldiers into the townships – and for the majority this was the first time they had *ever* been to a township – had a profound psychological impact on young Afrikaner men. As Gerhart and Glaser note, this was an unprecedented move by the government which caused weighty problems for the apartheid state; instead of discouraging further violent resistance, the increased military presence in the townships strengthened the resolve of anti-apartheid movements. It also attracted much negative international attention. For young white soldiers, being sent as conscripts to fight fellow South Africans caused psychological distress; many soldiers were led to question the basic legitimacy of apartheid.[76]

As part of the total strategy Botha's government strove to improve the socio-economic conditions in the townships but these measures were mostly met with criticism and rejection on the part of anti-apartheid movements. While Botha attempted to improve matters through a hearts-and-minds campaign, on the flip side of this he employed harsh and morally questionable methods that were thought necessary to root out resisters: organisations were banned, people were detained without trial, phones were tapped, and the press and various artistic products from books to music were censored. Spies and informers were certainly used.

These relentless and punitive methods affected the personal lives of many South Africans, even those who were not directly involved in the struggle. The tension of suspicion, distrust

[75] See Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 611–613; and Gerhart and Glaser, *From Protest to Challenge, Vol. 6*, p. 68.
[76] See Gerhart and Glaser, *From Protest to Challenge, Vol. 6*, p. 68–74.

and necessary secrecy permeated personal relationships and drove people to do things that may now seem extreme to someone without first-hand experience of the authoritarian atmosphere of the 1980s.[77]

War and conscription

Another series of events that had profound impact on Afrikaner society and Afrikaner unity were the Border wars of the 1970s and 1980s as well as the conscription laws imposed from the late 1960s. The wars in Namibia and Angola and general military conscription provided important formative experiences for young white South African men.

In 1967 military service was made compulsory for all white males over the age of 17; in 1972 the SADF increased the required period of conscription from 9 to 12 months, and in 1977 service was doubled with an accompanying requirement of 30 days of service in the Citizen Force camps; the requirement of service in camps was later extended to 24 months.[78]

The first major event of the Border wars was the SADF involvement in the Angolan situation from August 1975 to March 1976. The affair was conducted in a seemingly secret and haphazard manner. According to Dan O'Meara, the Cabinet was only informed of the matter five months after SADF troops were sent over the border; South African soldiers had already lost their lives in what was effectively the biggest South African military operation since World War II. This episode came to be referred to as the *ligte mistykie* (light, small mistake). This small mistake immersed the SADF in conflict against units of the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola – MPLA) who were receiving backing from the Cubans. The campaign ended in failure for SADF troops. Then, in 1978, SADF troops became involved in another border conflict in Namibia which was engaged in its own struggle for independence. SADF involvement in Namibia continued throughout the 1980s. The management of public information about these military endeavours succeeded in keeping domestic white opinion generally favourable and supportive of the border conflicts; no doubt the fear of communist invasion drove this lack of resistance.[79]

For most young Afrikaner conscripts the Border Wars shook their worlds. Young men were sent marching to the borders to kill. They were sent to the townships to kill. Of course, the official line was that they were sent to maintain order and on the border to fight the

[77] Des Latham, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Rosebank, 22 September 2011; Harry and Sanpat Kalmer, Hans Pienaar and Corné Coetzee, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Observatory, 4 December 2011.
[78] Merran W. Phillips, "The End Conscription Campaign: A Study of White Extra-parliamentary Opposition to Apartheid, 2002, MA thesis, University of South Africa (UNISA), p. 6.
[79] O' Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p. 219.

communists. In Namibia and Angola the racial divisions that the government so strictly maintained at home were blurred. The experience later formed the subject matter of significant Afrikaner cultural and artistic production. For example, *grensliteratuur* (border literature), which emerged in the mid-1970s and continued to spring up throughout the 1980s, was written by young ex-soldiers and expressed a deep anger about the army experience. Despite a blanket ban on any public discussion of military affairs, a number of young war veterans such as Etienne van Heerden and Alexander Strachan, wrote about details of military life and conscription and their disillusionment with the apartheid state.[80]

By the early 1980s a growing number of white South Africans (mainly in the English-speaking community) were voicing their anger at the conscription laws that were forcing young white males to join the SADF. In 1983 several groups of conscientious objectors and other individuals who supported the anti-conscription sentiment joined together to launch the End Conscription Campaign (ECC).[81] This had a limited reach in Afrikaner society. The Afrikaans subcommittee of the ECC – Eindig Nasionale Diensplig (END) – was only formed in 1986 and was disbanded soon after that. Although this subcommittee had very limited success in the Afrikaner community, it was quickly repressed by various Afrikaans institutions such as the Universities of Stellenbosch and Pretoria. Another setback to the success of END arose when the key contact between the English and Afrikaans ECC groups was revealed as a government spy.[82]

Limited Afrikaner resistance

General anti-apartheid resistance was building strength and momentum at a rapid pace in the 1980s. Grassroots movements sprang up at an unstoppable rate throughout the country. New resistance organisations such as the United Democratic Front (UDF) were established. Membership of the UDF, an umbrella organisation of political groups which was formed in 1983, cut across racial and ethnic barriers and attracted significant numbers of white South Africans. The organisation had clear links to the banned African National Congress (ANC) which was known to receive Soviet Union aid. One affiliate, the Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee (JODAC) was created in 1983 in Johannesburg, where Voëlvry was also born. JODAC was a white organisation of non-student UDF sympathisers. Many of the UDF-affiliated organisations experienced difficulty recruiting white members. Gerhart and Glaser explain that for many white liberals who were supportive of the UDF cause, joining the organisations was too radical a step because of their well-known links to the ANC and Soviet Union.[83]

[80] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 593.
[81] Gerhart and Glaser, *From Protest to Challenge, Vol. 6*, p. 66.
[82] Phillips, "The End Conscription Campaign", p. 72.
[83] Gerhart and Glaser, *From Protest to Challenge, Vol. 6*, p. 67.

These organisations, for a number of reasons, had very limited support from Afrikaner society. It is perhaps not surprising that the majority of Afrikaners still supported the NP but a significant number of Afrikaners were angry and disgusted at what the government was doing in the name of the *volk*. There were, however, a few public anti-apartheid Afrikaner figures, such as Breytenbach and Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert but there were very few (indeed, if any) anti-apartheid organisations directed at young Afrikaners. Complex issues arising out of the political and social situation that affected Afrikaner youth in a particular manner were not addressed in an organised and public way. Voëlvry filled a space in Afrikaner society that no other resistance organisation had.[84]

Even though the Voëlvry movement filled a gap, it was not in a vanguard of Afrikaner resistance. Other Afrikaner based anti-apartheid movements (such as the *Sestigers*) and figures (like Breyten Breytenbach and Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert) had emerged before them. Frederik van Zyl Slabbert represented an alternative to the NP for Afrikaners. He was the leader of the official opposition Progressive Federal Party from 1979 to 1986, when he walked out of parliament. In 1987 Slabbert led a group of Afrikaner individuals to a conference with ANC leadership in Dakar. Another key development in terms of Afrikaner anti-apartheid resistance was the launch of the anti-establishment newspaper *Vrye Weekblad* (Free/Independent Weekly), founded in 1988 by journalist Max du Preez. It would become a sponsor of the Voëlvry nationwide tour in 1989. The difference between Voëlvry and these other dissident Afrikaner voices was that, as André Letoit's once put it, "ours was an in your face, fuck you movement".[85]

Crucially, these developments reflect the existence of a significant number of dissident Afrikaners. These "alternative Afrikaners", as they were labelled in the South African magazine *Style* in February 1989,[86] were a small loosely connected group who did not form any specific political or cultural organisation. Many of them were drawn to the Johannesburg suburb of Yeoville in the 1980s where the Voëlvry musicians began their movement.

Conclusion

The Voëlvry movement was formed at a time when Afrikaner unity in general was breaking down. In the early 1980s solidarity within the NP was compromised and Afrikaner support was divided mainly between the CP and NP. The political and economic situation was unstable and the future was unclear. There was widespread concern over the position of the Afrikaner in the future South Africa. The Voëlvryers responded to these fears by rebelling against the rigid, authoritarian restrictions within Afrikaner society and culture and insisting

[84] Based on several informal conversations with Hans Pienaar which took place during the course of 2011.
[85] André Letoit, quoted in Grundlingh, "'Rocking the Boat'", p. 485.
[86] Hilary Prendini Toffoli, "The Alternative Afrikaners", *Style*, February 1989.

that young Afrikaners reject the moral corruption inherent in the apartheid system and become part of the construction of a new South Africa.

The Voëlvry movement came to life in a turbulent and uncertain environment. Afrikaner identity had entered a period of confusion and transition. While the majority of Afrikaners seemed to be entering a state of greater insecurity and even more fierce conservatism there were a significant group of Afrikaners who unequivocally rejected apartheid and the stultifying elements of Afrikaner culture. The Voëlvryers were not the first Afrikaners to voice disillusionment and anger about the actions and policies of the NP but they did provide the only viable and accessible vehicle of expression for many young disillusioned Afrikaners in the 1980s who for varying and complex reasons did not feel they could or should join the established resistance organisations. A major source of the Voëlvry appeal was the fact that the musicians spread a socially and politically conscious message and facilitated an Afrikaner anti-authoritarian rebellion. This provided an experience that for many young Afrikaners effectively broke down the social and cultural restraints that seemed to be an essential part of Afrikaner society.

Chapter two: The musical background of Voëlvry

In this chapter I will provide a picture of the musical background from which the Voëlvry movement emerged. I aim to show that Voëlvry did not emerge in a vacuum; there were important local and international influences that helped shape the movement. Voëlvryers were not the first Afrikaner musicians to use the rock 'n' roll style. Voëlvry developed within a broader context of increased protest music activity and while the Voëlvry musicians did not become involved with formally organised UDF concerts, their music did contribute to what Ingrid Byerly has called the music *indaba* of the late apartheid period.[87] In addition, Voëlvry undeniably shook the Afrikaner cultural establishment and provided a stark contrast to the staid Afrikaner music that was popular in the 1980s.

Mainstream Afrikaner music

From 1929, when the FAK was established, until at least the 1960s most Afrikaner cultural and artistic production, specifically in the fields of literature and music, was heavily influenced by the Afrikaner Broederbond through the FAK.[88] This was part of the organisation's concerted effort to ensure the survival and growth of the Afrikaans language. It promoted the production of Afrikaans poetry, novels, magazines and pamphlets that expressed an "authentic Afrikaans spirit". The Broederbond felt it was important to encourage Afrikaners to sing in their own language and, in order to achieve this, the FAK created a *Volksangbandel* (a volume of folk songs or songs of the people). The volume included Afrikaans translations of German songs and a few local songs, some of which had Malay origins. The *Volksangbandel* continued to be used in schools until and even after the 1960s.[89]

Popular amongst the FAK songs from this collection were the *lekkerliedjies* (nice songs) and *pieknieklie*dj*ies* (picnic songs) which were bland and unchallenging, both in terms of lyrics and music. The lyrics avoided political and social issues and focused instead on places, plants and animals.[90]

One example of a song from the *Volksangbandel* is C. J. Langenhoven's *pieknieklie*dj*ie, Pollie, ons gaan Pêrel toe*. Here is an excerpt from the song:

[87] An *indaba* can be defined as a meeting place where topical problems, news and general social issues and concerns are discussed. The music *indaba* refers to the increased musical activity of the late 1980s that was aligned with the struggle against apartheid. See Byerly, "Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet"; and Byerly, "Decomposing Apartheid".

[88] For explanation of Afrikaner Broederbond and FAK see chapter one, p. 14, footnote 58. (I have changed - page numbers and footnote are different from what you had previously indicated)

[89] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 402.

[90] Byerly, "Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet", p. 38.

Pollie gaan mos Pêrel toe

Pollie gaan mos Pêrel toe

Sy gaan na haar kêrel toe

Sy gaan na haar kêrel toe

En wat sal die wêreld sê?

En wat sal die wêreld sê?

Sy sal aan die wêreld sê

Sy sal aan die wêreld sê

Gaan sy regtig Pêrel toe?

Gaan sy regtig Pêrel toe?

…

(Polly is going to Paarl

Polly is going to Paarl

She is going to visit her boyfriend

She is going to visit her boyfriend

And what will the world say?

And what will the world say?

She will say to the world

She will say to the world

Is she really going to Paarl?

Is she really going to Paarl?)[91]

The tune of the song is equally bland; insipid, light-hearted lyrics like these were common in the *Volksangbandel* collection.

Although the *Volksangbandel* enjoyed widespread use, there were Afrikaner musicians who did not follow its example of light-hearted, non-confrontational lyrics and insipid musical composition. The Briel family singers, for example, became well-known in the 1950s for their songs about the harsh conditions of Afrikaner poverty and working-class life in the 1930s and 1940s.[92] These songs offered social commentary on a hard reality that did not fit into the land of blue skies, quaint conjugal relations, and happy children conjured up in the majority of FAK songs.

[91] Lyrics and translation in Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 35.

[92] Grundlingh, "'Rocking the Boat'", p. 501. According to Grundlingh, the Briel family singers would later become a source of inspiration to the Voëlvry artists and their music was played in between their performances.

In 1963 the NP introduced censorship laws that meant the government had control over what kind of music, literature and art could reach the public.[93] This helps to explain why Afrikaner music was generally devoid of political and social commentary until the Voëlvry movement arrived.

In the late 1970s Afrikaner popular music was re-energised by a new "movement" in Afrikaner music called *Musiek en Liriek* (*M en L* - Music and Lyrics) which was established by a handful of Afrikaans musicians. This was not so much a movement (as it was labelled in the media), but rather a new genre in Afrikaner music. Anton Goosen, Koos du Plessis, Laurika Rauch and Clarabelle van Niekerk were some of the musicians who led the *M en L* genre with an expressed intent to write more meaningful lyrics and play more interesting music. They were influenced by bands and solo musicians like Crosby, Stills and Nash and Bob Dylan and saw themselves as the Afrikaner folk rockers who were trying to get their generation to think about the social reality they were living in.[94] The *luisterliedjie* (listen song) which contained "loaded meanings" and required "careful listening" was the upshot of the *M en L* movement. Several of the *M en L* songs were banned under government censorship laws.[95]

Although the *M en L* musicians evidently caused discomfort within the establishment, they were criticised by many for sending a message that was far too subtle. Indeed, the loaded meanings were so obscure that the government, although it censored a few of the *M en L* songs, included the musicians in public events such as the 1981 Republic Day Celebrations Festival.[96] Hans Pienaar, who was a student at Pretoria University when the *M en L* movement took off, felt that the singers were "very innocuous" and that:

> They had a frisson of daring and, because they sang like the dissident folk music artists from overseas, they also acquired this aura of daring. But they were not really … some of them were also co-opted by the state because they did not really go that far in pushing the dissident movement that was starting to appear among Afrikaans views … [97]

Johannes Kerkorrel saw the *M en L* movement as too elitist and Eurocentric to be successful in spreading a social or political message. He felt that it was too literary and subtle to make a strong impact on young Afrikaners.[98] Nonetheless it is important to acknowledge the

[93] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, p. 555.
[94] See Muff Andersson, *Music in the Mix, The Story of South African Popular Music*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1981, pp. 147-151; and Pierre de Vos, "Nuwe lied van jong Suid-Afrika", *Die Suid Afrikaan*, June 1990, p. 27.
[95] Byerly, "Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet", p. 38.
[96] Andersson, "*Music in the Mix*", p. 149.
[97] Hans Pienaar, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Auckland Park, 7 June 2011.
[98] De Vos, "Nuwe lied", p. 27.

significance of this development in popular Afrikaans music. It may not have been as revolutionary as some may have liked, but it did change the nature of Afrikaans popular music and encouraged Afrikaans musicians to write more interesting, bold and even anti-establishment lyrics. Therefore, *M en L* can be seen as a musical genre that prepared the terrain for the emergence of Voëlvry in the late 1980s. Max du Preez believes that:

> The reason that Goosen [and other *M en L* musicians] was the target of much later rage is that he thought he could change the system from within – toeing the line because he had to make a living. But it must never be forgotten that he paved the way for the Voëlvry movement by demonstrating that rock could be played in Afrikaans and that there was an audience for it.[99]

Moreover, in comparison to other developments in Afrikaans popular music, *M en L* opened the way for change and challenge to the officially sanctioned popular music. Specifically, it stood in significant opposition to the musical phenomenon that was represented by Bles Bridges. The sequinned and smiling personage of Bridges had become a wildly popular performer in the establishment-supporting Afrikaner community. His career took off in the early 1980s and by 1990 he had released twelve albums and sold over one million copies. His preferred style of music was the *liefdesliedjie* (love song), another popular genre of the FAK *Volksangbandel*.[100] Bridges stated that "love is the only thing worth singing about; to sing about politics is a waste of time".[101] But Bridges *liefdesliedjies* were less than profound and, according to Pat Hopkins, many Afrikaners did not take him very seriously.[102] The *M en L* musicians stood in contrast to Bridges's genre of music but ultimately, they did not stray too far from the official line. Voëlvry would become a much more rebellious and extreme alternative to the insipid music that was produced by Bridges.

Rock 'n' roll in South Africa

In the 1950s rock 'n' roll made an impact on South African audiences. Bill Haley and Elvis Presley sold very well. The growing popularity of this genre ignited a small war between youth and parents, as it did in many countries. This music was generally considered by parents and the state as "barbaric" and too closely linked to "primitive music"; this racist attitude meant that records of early black rock 'n' roll musicians were not available at this time in South Africa.[103]

[99] Max du Preez, quoted in Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 57.
[100] Brendan Jury, "Boys to Men", p. 101.
[101] Bles Bridges, quoted in Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 66.
[102] Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 67.
[103] Charles Hamm, "Rock 'n' Roll in a Very Strange Society", *Popular Music*, 5, Continuity and Change (1985), pp. 159-174; p. 159.

Part of the reason for the parental and state distress about the "evil" influence of rock 'n' roll, was that a male youth gang subculture called "The Ducktails" had arisen and spread throughout the major cities in the country. The Ducktails, so-called because of their Brylcreemed hairstyles that formed a flick or "ducktail" at the back of the head, engaged in a variety of anti-social activities such as assault, petty thieving, vandalism, drug and liquor trade, and so on. The Ducktails associated themselves with, among other things, rock music. They took style cues from Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Little Richard and others and would buy rock 'n' roll music records and have "rock sessions" (group dance sessions). The association between this gang subculture and rock 'n' roll led to a concern amongst parents and state bodies that this music genre had a corrupting influence.[104]

Grundlingh points out that the Ducktail subculture was limited to the English-speaking sectors of the white population. It did not spread in a significant way to the Afrikaner community.[105] The latter, although certainly concerned about this gang activity, had additional reasons for concern about rock music.

Throughout the 1950s the press in South Africa – English and Afrikaans – demonised rock 'n roll and despite (or perhaps because of) the immense popularity of this genre amongst young South Africans, whipped itself and its readers into a frenzy of alarm about the potential harmful effects of the music. In 1958 Tommy Steele came to tour South Africa amidst a deluge of warnings in the press about the danger that these concerts presented. To the great surprise and vexation of the alarmist journalists nothing untoward actually happened at Steele's concerts. The grudging acceptance by the English press in the late 1950s of the spread of rock music, argues Charles Hamm, signalled a change of attitude in the English white South African population which in turn established South Africa as a viable venue for international rock 'n' roll performers.[106]

The response by the Afrikaner sector of white South Africa to Tommy Steele's rock concert was more extreme than that of English-speaking white South Africans. The Pretoria City Council, supported by several government members, placed a ban on Steele's Pretoria concert and continued to view rock music as a danger to Afrikaner society. Indeed, the condemnatory attitude of Afrikaner society in general towards rock 'n roll lasted far longer than that of English South African society. The government and Afrikaner institutions such as the NG Kerk continued to condemn it as evil because of its supposed corrupting effects.

[104] Kate Mooney, "Ducktails, Flick-Knives and Pugnacity': Subcultural and Hegemonic Masculinities in South Africa, 1948-1960", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24, 4 (1998), pp. 753-774; p. 760.
[105] Grundlingh, "'Rocking the Boat'", p. 489.
[106] Hamm, "Rock 'n' roll", p. 162.

Apart from the view that rock could have a morally corrupting influence, there was also a concern that it was *volksvreemd* (alien to the people).[107] It was produced in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) and had no Afrikaner counterpart. Throughout the 1950s the Broederbond still had a firm grip on cultural activity within the Afrikaner community which lasted until the *Sestigers* challenged the status quo and shook the Afrikaner cultural establishment.[108]

From the 1960s, amongst the white English-speaking population, rock 'n' roll became more acceptable and more popular and even though the government, the Broederbond, and other Afrikaner institutions did their best to show that this genre was dangerous to the *volk*, rock 'n' roll music was fairly popular even amongst Afrikaner youth. In the 1960s many young Afrikaners listened to the music connected to the international counterculture movement that was taking place mainly in the USA and UK which produced such musicians as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and Simon & Garfunkel. This music was certainly not played on state-controlled radio channels but it was widely accessible through Maputo-based Laurenço Marques radio which had a strong signal that could be accessed in most parts of South Africa. It is pertinent to note that, as Grundlingh points out, although young Afrikaners did listen to this rock 'n' roll music, the majority did not associate with the cultural values promoted in this movement; the majority who listened to this music did not see it as politically significant or as dangerous to Afrikaner values; they simply enjoyed the music.[109]

It is worth noting that it was only when Anton Goosen and others created the *M en L* genre in the late 1970s that the rock 'n' roll style was first used by Afrikaner musicians. Voëlvry musicians were not the first to make Afrikaner rock 'n' roll but, as Charles Leonard, who was a music journalist for *Vrye Weekblad* in the late 1980s, explains they used it in an original way. In his words:

> I think they were the first guys to do it *that* way, in that type of rock format, you know, not just deep, glasses of red wine type of thing – serious rock 'n roll. You can go and dance to it and you can hear the chorus and you can shout along to the chorus.[110]

Local and international influences

[107] Translation by Laubscher ,in Laubscher, "Afrikaner Identity", p. **???.**
[108] For the *Sestigers*, see chapter one.
[109] Grundlingh, "'Rocking the Boat'", p. 489.
[110] Charles Leonard, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Auckland Park, 1 December 2011.

The international counterculture movement of the 1960s did have a great musical influence on some of the Voëlvry musicians. Many of the musicians grew up listening to the music of the Woodstock generation. Bob Dylan was a particular role model for André Letoit.[111]

Locally, a revolutionary musical phenomenon was occurring in the white English-speaking town of Springs in the late 1970s. Punk had arrived in South Africa.[112] Its reach mainly extended to a young (i.e., people in their twenties), white, middle-class, urban, English-speaking population; it did not seem to make a significant impact on the non-white population of the country. Bands like The Clash and The Stranglers captured the imagination of young mainly English-speaking musicians who formed punk rock bands such as Hogs Norton, The Radio Rats and Corporal Punishment. These bands, like their international counterparts, were decidedly anti-establishment but in the initial stages of the Springs punk movement the members of these punk bands did not dress in an overtly punk fashion and resisted the punk label. It is unclear why punk took off in Springs; Muff Andersson suggests that parents were supportive of this movement because it seemed that their children were leaving behind the fashion for scruffy hair and jeans which was associated with "communist hippie types".[113]

As the punk movement gathered momentum, South African bands adopted more musical and stylistic elements from the overseas punk bands. For example, members of Flash Harry, a Johannesburg-based punk band, often dressed in three piece suits very similar to the suits worn by The Stranglers in their music video for *Golden Brown*. In the early 1980s the fad of torn jeans, black leather jackets and a permanent scowl was adopted by most South African punk bands.[114] Paradoxically, this made a happy change for some parents who felt that the transformation in appearance from the denims and long hair associated with the hippies was a good sign. At least their children probably were not communists.

Apart from the clothing and music style, South African punk shared other similarities with its international counterparts. A significant and interesting element of the punk movement in the

[111] See for example Koos Kombuis's autobiography *Seks & Drugs & Boeremusiek*.
[112] "Punk" is a contested term and different Punk bands had slightly differing visions of what punk was. The Sex Pistols, the short-lived and much documented British band, painted a nihilistic picture of a non-existent future and raged against what they felt was excessive state and corporate control. The Clash, another iconic British punk band felt that there was a future but that it was unwritten. American punk, also angry and anarchic, responded to different circumstances and developed slightly different characteristics. What punk bands shared was the common characteristic of an anarchistic outlook that underscored their rebellion against state and parental authority. Punk also cultivated a particular style that demonstrated their values to those outside the punk world. For more on punk see Kevin Mattson, "Did Punk Matter?: Analyzing the Practices of a Youth Subculture During the 1980s", *American Studies*, 42, 1 (2001), pp. 69-97; Kenneth J. Bindas, "'The Future is Unwritten': The Clash, Punk and America, 1977-1982", *American Studies*, 34, 1 (1993), pp. 69-89; for an analysis of style and subcultural politics in the British Punk movement see Dick Hebdige, "The Subculture of British Punk" in Theo Cateforis (ed.), *The Rock History Reader*, Routledge, New York and London, 2007; and Dick Hebdige, *Subculture, The Meaning of Style*, Routledge, London and New York, 1979.
[113] Andersson, *Music in the Mix*, p. 134.
[114] See pictures in Andersson *Music in the Mix*, p. 138.

USA, for example, is what Kevin Mattson describes as the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) spirit. This swarmed up in response to the music that was produced by the monolithic entertainment companies that were monopolising the music market and were driving the creation of what punk musicians considered to be formulaic and inauthentic music.[115]

I argue that although the DIY spirit operated differently in South Africa in the 1980s, the impact of having few and huge recording companies that dominated the market sparked a similar reaction. Due to the fact that specific music received very little airplay because of the SABC's strict censorship procedures, these recording companies applied their own censorship procedures for financial reasons. Censored music would receive no airplay and therefore simply would not sell widely enough. It was thus financially practical to pre-empt the state and do their own censoring. It was under these conditions that the DIY spirit can be said to have captured Lloyd Ross and Ivan Kadey who established their own recording studio called Shifty Mobile Recording Studio in 1982.[116] Shifty would later produce and distribute all the Voëlvry music and without this small recording outfit, Voëlvry would probably never have existed. Ross established Shifty using money he had earned working for a programme for the SABC. He recorded the music of quite a number of the Springs punk bands, such as Hogs Norton and the Radio Rats and Corporal Punishment. He also recorded the music of a few multi-racial bands and black solo artists, among them National Wake, a punk band consisting of two white and two black members, and Mzwakhe Mbuli, who was known as the "People's Poet". Ross's main guidelines for deciding which music to record was whether or not he felt it was original and "from a place of honesty". When talking about the music he recorded he also often speaks of a "raw energy". More specifically, he asked "does it occupy a time and space in South Africa's musical development?"[117] For Ross, these criteria certainly applied to Voëlvry.[118]

Through the Springs punk wave the international punk movement had direct and indirect influence on Afrikaner popular music. The music style of the *Gereformeerde* (Reformed) Blues Band was labelled "Boerepunk",[119] and it certainly did carry some punk overtones.[120] Voëlvry musicians, in general, took some style elements from the punks like the occasional leather jacket and wayfarer sunglasses.[121] However, most of the band members did not maintain a recognisable punk style; they did not have a specific cultivated style beyond an intentional generally dishevelled appearance. Johannes Kerkorrel, despite being one of those that did look recognisably "punk", resisted the label because he felt that the punk movement was not relevant to the situation in South Africa.[122]

[115] Mattson, "Did Punk Matter?", pp. 72-77.
[116] Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 82.
[117] Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 84.
[118] Lloyd Ross, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Killarney, 26 July 2011.
[119] See for example Shaun De Waal, "Bad-mannered Boerepunk's arrived", *Weekly Mail*, 26 May- 1 June, 1989.
[120] Grundlingh, "'Rocking the Boat'", p. 501.
[121] For pictures see Hopkins, *Voëlvry*.
[122] André Le Roux, "Alternatief? Nee, ons rock en roll!", *Die Burger*, 20 May 1989.

Although the Voëlvryers resisted the punk label, they did have one direct link with the South African punk wave. It was from the Springs punk movement that James Phillips emerged. He was a member of a handful of punk bands such as Corporal Punishment and the Cherry Faced Lurchers and wrote strongly anti-establishment lyrics.[123] But it was his first song as Bernoldus Niemand, *Hou My Vas Korporaal* (Hold Me Tight, Corporal) in 1983, that grabbed the attention of André Letoit before he had even decided to become a musician. It later became one of the anthems of the Voëlvry movement.

South African protest music in the 1980s

As Christopher Ballantine has argued, there was an awakening of protest music in the 1980s; this was in line with the growing resistance throughout the country. Protest music had a long history in South Africa. Jazz and blues and township music such as *marabi*, carrying political messages had been a feature from the 1930s. During the 1960s, however, protest music was repressed by the intensive segregationist efforts of the government. As part of the state's divide-and-rule tactics, in 1960 the SABC introduced an ethnically divided radio service which favoured "traditional, neo-traditional and religious music".[124] By the 1980s this period of stagnation in popular and protest music came to an end. Protest music was gathering momentum; the UDF held concerts in which musicians and politicians shared the stage and the African National Congress (ANC) promoted anti-apartheid cultural activity in general. [125]

By the late 1980s when Voëlvry emerged the question of "culture as a weapon" was given much attention by the ANC. In this decade the organisation, based in exile, put a great deal of effort into organising cultural activity that would help spread the anti-apartheid message. Workshops, festivals, seminars and music concerts were devoted to anti-apartheid cultural mobilisation. The Amandla Cultural Ensemble, for example, was created in 1978 to develop formal cultural activity that could help gain international and local support for the ANC.[126]

Voëlvry did not actively take part in the cultural events organised by the ANC and its affiliated organisations (for reasons that will be discussed in the following chapter), but it can be seen as part of what Ingrid Byerly calls "the music *indaba*" of the late 1980s. This was not a formal collaboration of artists but a general increase in anti-apartheid musical activity. The *indaba* was also not a "communal sing-along" but represented the complicated processes by

[123] See for example the lyrics of *Brain Damage*, composed by James Phillips and Carl Raubenheimer, in Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 83.
[124] Christopher Ballantine, "A Brief History of South African Popular Music", *Popular Music*, 8, 3 (1989), pp. 305–310; p. 308.
[125] See Christopher Ballantine, *Marabi Nights. Early South African Jazz and Vaudeville*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1993.
[126] Shirli Gilbert, "Singing Against Apartheid. ANC Cultural Groups and the International Anti-apartheid Struggle" in Olwage (ed.), *Composing Apartheid*, p. 167.

which people engaged with "the struggle".[127] This is a crucial point about the inherent meaning and historical significance of Voëlvry which is that the process of musical creation in the Voëlvry movement was underscored by profound struggles with identity on both personal and collective levels. It is indicative of a broader identity crisis within the Afrikaner nation that existed in the 1980s. There were different ways of engaging with this identity crisis and Voëlvry represented an alternative to the reactionary right-wing approach of the CP.

Conclusion

The Voëlvry movement did not emerge *ex nihilo*; it arose out of an environment in which protest music in general was growing and gaining strength and support. Prior to the 1980s, the *M en L* musicians had opened a space in which anti-establishment lyrics were introduced; they forced Afrikaner music in a direction that diverged from the state-sanctioned *lekkerliedjie* formula of socially and politically empty lyrics and bland musical compositions.

However, the Voëlvryers did combine the Afrikaans language and the rock 'n' roll style in a unique way to create strong, anti-apartheid protest music. The difference between these and other protest musicians of the 1980s is that the Voëlvryers were rebelling against the particular effect that the apartheid state had *on Afrikaners*; they knew the intimate secrets of the Afrikaner nation and they knew where the soft spots were. Their strength as a cultural rebellion came from this fact; they represented resistance from *within* Afrikanerdom and indicated that Afrikaner power was falling in on itself.

[127] See Byerly, "Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet"; and Byerly, "Decomposing Apartheid".

Chapter three: Voëlvry and the attack on hegemonic Afrikaner identity

In this chapter I will argue that the Voëlvry attack on the hegemonic Afrikaner identity is linked to its role as a social movement. As I have mentioned in the introduction to this study it has been questioned whether Voëlvry can really be considered as a social movement, or rather a "loose group affiliation of individuals".[128] I contend that Voëlvry had more social significance than this implies. However, I do not wish to overstate the case; as Grundlingh argues, Voëlvry can be seen as a *weak* social movement at best and I will give possible reasons for its weakness and ultimate collapse. Despite the nebulous nature of the movement, it can still offer valuable insight into the ways in which "modes of cultural action are redefined and given new meaning as sources of collective identity."[129] Voëlvry tackled Afrikaner identity in a highly subversive way; by adopting a protest identity and rejecting fundamental elements of Afrikanerdom a new space was opened in which the musicians were able to offer some ideals for the new Afrikaner. This chapter will discuss the ways in which Voëlvry achieved this. I will analyse the lyrics of a few Voëlvry songs; except where noted, the analysis is all my own.

I have chosen to concentrate my analysis on a few key members of the movement who were generally more visible because they were the focus of most of the media attention that was lavished on Voëlvry. I also aim to show that these central figures, namely André Letoit, Johannes Kerkorrel and Dagga-Dirk Uys appear to have done the most to shape Voëlvry into a movement (publicly anyway – it is difficult to establish with accuracy and clarity what happened privately amongst all the members of the movement). James Phillips (aka Bernoldus Niemand) is also an important contributor and I will show that Hopkins's statement that Phillips's "influence was of the coincidental variety – and never that strong" is wrong in its dismissal of Phillips's role.[130]

The beginnings

All the Voëlvry members, except for Tonia Selley (and she is certainly the only exception), were white men between the ages of 21 and 35. With the exception of James Phillips (an English-speaker who came from the working-class town of Springs) they all came from conservative Afrikaner backgrounds, although the degree of conservativeness varied somewhat and one musician had an English-speaking mother.[131]

[128] Michael Titlestad, correspondence with Clara Pienaar, 14 July 2011.
[129] Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*, p. 6.
[130] Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 91.
[131] For example, Willem Moller, the guitarist for the GBB, explained that he came from a conservative Afrikaans household, but that his parents gave him a lot of freedom. Gary Herselman had an English mother. G. Herselman and W. Moller (1989 footage), in Lloyd Ross *Voëlvry, the Movie*, Shifty, Johannesburg, 2004 (DVD).

Several of the members' fathers had been ministers. As Jannie "Hanepoot" van Tonder (trombonist and drummer for *Bernoldus Niemand en Die Swart Gevaar* (Bernoldus Nobody and The Black Peril) and the *Gereformeerde* (Reformed) Blues Band - GBB), speaking about other members of the GBB put it:

> James [Phillips]'s father was a minister, Willem [Moller]'s father was a minister, Gary [Herselman aka Piet Pers]'s father was a minister. When I was christened my father prayed I would become a minister.[132]

The influence of the church on the personal lives of these musicians was strong in this way. A conspicuous commonality amongst most of the Voëlvry members is the experience of Afrikaans educational institutions. Most of the musicians had been educated at University level – Willem Moller had an MA degree in philosophy from Stellenbosch; Johannes Kerkorrel had an Honours degree in psychology from the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education; James Phillips (Bernoldus Niemand) had a degree in music from the University of the Witwatersrand and Dagga-Dirk Uys had a degree in politics at the University of the Orange Free State. [133] Notably, André Letoit dropped out of the University of Pretoria because he felt it was simply an extension of the Afrikaans high school experience that he had hated.[134] Lloyd Ross, who played a peripheral role in the making of the movement (he was a facilitator and did not actively shape the content of Voëlvry), chose not to attend any university.[135]

All of the Voëlvry musicians and organisers (except for Selley) had completed their national service and therefore had personal experience of conscription to the SADF. This environment was also dominated by Afrikaners.

In general, the members of the Voëlvry movement came from middle-class conservative and mostly Afrikaner backgrounds where the influence of the church was strong. They had all been educated at high school level and most had continued their education at Afrikaans universities all over South Africa. Thus, they had predominantly been socialised through essential Afrikaner institutions such as the church, Afrikaner schools and universities, and the SADF.

It is possible to argue that Voëlvry began when André Letoit first heard the music of Bernoldus Niemand. Before turning to music, Kombuis started out as a writer. In the early 1980s he became involved in what he calls the *Tagtiger Beweging* (1980s movement) in

[132] Jannie "Hanepoot" van Tonder (2003 footage), in Ross *Voëlvry, the Movie.*
[133] Hopkins, *Voëlvry,* p. 118 and p. 134.
[134] Koos Kombuis, *Seks, Drugs en Boeremusiek*, p. 77.
[135] Lloyd Ross, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Killarney, 26 July 2011.

literature.[136] He joined *Die Kaapse Groep* (The Cape Group), a group of writers who produced work that was described as "new wave" and "punk" by some journalists. It was at this time that André Letoit changed his name from André le Roux du Toit to André Letoit. As he explains in his autobiography, he told people for many years that he had chosen it because it was an anagram of the word "toilet" but he actually chose it as a send-up of the name Leroux (after the well-known Afrikaans writer Etienne Leroux). He only realised later, when someone pointed it out, that it was also an anagram of "toilet".[137]

In the early 1980s, André Letoit decided to shift his attention to music. He began performing duets (written by himself, according to his autobiography) with his coloured girlfriend for student audiences in Stellenbosch who responded well to the songs.[138] He later explained that he felt that literary pursuits would not spread his anti-apartheid message to enough young Afrikaners and this is why he turned to music. A great source of inspiration in this decision was Bernoldus Niemand and his 1983 song *Hou My Vas Korporaal* (Hold me Tight Corporal). In his words:

> I had a feeling that the only way we could get meaningful change in [sic] Afrikaners was by getting the younger market and when Bernoldus's thing came I realised this is the kind of thing we had to look at. [139]

James Phillips started his musical career in the late 1970s in Springs playing for various bands such as Corporal Punishment, Illegal Gathering and the Cherry Faced Lurchers. Corporal Punishment and Illegal Gathering were both names that illustrated the satirically rebellious attitude of Phillips and his fellow musicians; they mocked the establishment by adopting phrases that referred to authoritarian apartheid control as flippant names for anti-establishment punk bands. In 1983 Phillips recorded his first album as Bernoldus Niemand.[140] He later stated simply that he had "always been fascinated by the name 'Niemand'; Mr Nobody".[141] Bernoldus Niemand also explained that he had chosen to sing in Afrikaans because *Hou My Vas Korporaal* was about the army, "so it had to be in Afrikaans because in the army, you speak Afrikaans".[142] In *Voëlvry, the movie*, released in 2004, André Letoit states that he felt "there was no pretence in his [Bernoldus Niemand's'] music" and credits

[136] It is not clear whether this was a "movement". Hans Pienaar believes that the *Tagtiger* was not a movement in its own right, but rather a continuation of the *Sestiger*s (discussed in chapter two, part one). Hans Pienaar, informal conversation with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Auckland Park, 3 February 2012.
[137] Koos Kombuis, *Seks, Drugs en Boeremusiek*, p. 164 - 169.
[138] Koos Kombuis, *Seks, Drugs en Boeremusiek*, p. 176.
[139] Koos Kombuis, (1989 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, the Movie.*
[140] Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, pp. 96 – 97.
[141] James Phillips (1989 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, the Movie.* I will hereafter refer to Phillips as Bernoldus Niemand because that was the name he adopted for the duration of the Voëlvry movement. However, it should be noted that Phillips adopted this persona only temporarily and, according to some friends, it was only a sideline act for him. After the Voëlvry tour in 1989 he continued his musical career as James Phillips. See Shaun de Waal, "The Time of Our Lives", http://www.freshmusic.co.za/cherry_liner.html, accessed 7 March 2012.
[142] Bernoldus Niemand (1989 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, the Movie.*

him with being the first musician to make Afrikaans protest music. In the same documentary Willem Moller explains that

> Bernoldus was a whole other thing and I think he inspired a whole lot of people to go away and say OK, well, these are possibilities; these are things you could do in this country.[143]

In his 2000 autobiography, writing under the name Koos Kombuis, which he adopted in 1989 after the Voëlvry tour, André Letoit describes how listening to Bernoldus Niemand's first record, *Wie is Bernoldus Niemand?* (Who is Bernoldus Niemand?), led him to send a recording of his own music to Ross at Shifty Records:

> Music, Afrikaans music too, was a sideline for me for years, for decades. That's until one fine day when I bought my first ever Afrikaans record at the *Groentemarkplein* [Vegetable market square] in Cape Town. It was called *Wie is Bernoldus Niemand?* and I must say, I also wondered who the guy was. But I couldn't resist a record with such a weird title, not to mention the lurid purple cover. I took the record home … and played it. And played it again. And again. And then I wrote the name and address of the Record Company on an envelope and sat in front of V's tape recorder for a few hours and recorded all the songs that J [his girlfriend] and I had sung together, plus a few others.[144]

Likewise, in his autobiography, Koos Kombuis calls Bernoldus Niemand one of his first role models and goes so far as to state: "When I heard Bernoldus he gave me the confidence to come up with my songs".[145] He was inspired by the album *Wie is Bernoldus Niemand?* to record his own music. Therefore, it seems clear that we should not dismiss, as Hopkins does, Bernoldus Niemand's influence as "never that strong". If these indirect influences were the only links between Bernoldus Niemand and Voëlvry, it may have made sense to describe his impact as "coincidental". But Bernoldus Niemand, performing in his band *Bernoldus Niemand en Die Swart Gevaar*, actively took part in the events that shaped the Voëlvry movement, such as the *Eerste Alternatiewe Afrikaans Musiek Konsert* (First Alternative Afrikaans Music Concert) that was played at the Pool Club in the Johannesburg CBD in 1988, as well as the Voëlvry nationwide tour. In fact, Hopkins himself states that this was the event where the "Alternative Afrikaans Music became a movement".[146]

[143] Koos Kombuis and Moller (2003 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, the Movie.*
[144] Koos Kombuis, *Seks, Drugs en Boeremusiek,* p. 192. The translation is my own.
[145] Koos Kombuis (1989 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, the Movie.*
[146] Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 151.

In 1987 Ross produced a cassette of André Letoit's music, called *Ver Van Die Ou Kalahari* (Far from the Old Kalahari hereafter referred to as *Ver*).[147] Very soon after the release of *Ver* Johannes Kerkorrel (at that time still known as Ralph Rabie), working as a journalist for the Afrikaans newspaper *Rapport*, was sent to interview André Letoit about this new album. André Letoit was scheduled to play his first concert at the Sterreweg (Stars Way) theatre in Bloemfontein and spontaneously invited Johannes Kerkorrel, who was already an accomplished pianist, to join him because he was too nervous to perform alone.[148]

By 1987 Dagga-Dirk Uys was André Letoit's self-appointed manager. Uys would come to play a crucial role in the shaping of the movement and contributed much to formulating some of the few concrete aims that it came to have. He has been defined by Hopkins as "the father of the movement"[149]; according to André Letoit's autobiography, after Uys showed up, things started happening.[150]

Uys had heard *Ver* and felt a connection to André Letoit through the music. As he put it,

> For me it was the first time that an Afrikaner had been so honest in what he felt. I was 24 years old and for the first time I could really relate to another Afrikaner.[151]

Notably, this theme of honesty recurred throughout the movement. Uys has stated that it was this first collaboration between André Letoit and Johannes Kerkorrel at the Sterreweg theatre that brought the three of them together and signalled "the beginning of things".[152] Shortly after meeting André Letoit, and before the Sterreweg concert, Ralph Rabie had found his new persona, Johannes Kerkorrel. According to André Letoit, Johannes Kerkorrel quickly became "the face of the movement" and was suited to the role because, having worked as a journalist, he had an understanding of the way the media worked. Apart from this, he was good-looking, charismatic and articulated the goals of the movement well.[153]

After this first meeting of Uys, André Letoit and Johannes Kerkorrel, the GBB was formed (the name will be discussed in greater detail in the next section of this chapter). As the GBB, André Letoit and Johannes Kerkorrel (with Uys's input) wrote and performed their first cabaret together and began giving regular performances at the Black Sun, a small independently owned theatre in Hillbrow that later moved to Yeoville.[154] The cabaret was

[147] It seems that Koos Kombuis sent his recording to Ross in 1985 and the studio recording only took place two years later. See Koos Kombuis, *Seks, Drugs en Boeremusiek*, p. 192.
[148] Koos Kombuis (2003 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, the Movie.*
[149] Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 132.
[150] Koos Kombuis, *Seks, Drugs en Boeremusiek*, p. 200 and p. 203.
[151] Dagga-Dirk Uys (2003 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, the Movie.*
[152] Uys (2003 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, the Movie*.
[153] Koos Kombuis, *Seks, Drugs en Boeremusiek*, p. 216.
[154] See Koos Kombuis, *Seks, Drugs en Boeremusiek*, p. 207 – 209, and Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 124.

called *Piekniek by Dingaan* (Picnic at Dingaan) which they later performed at the Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit (RAU) in 1988. It was at this concert that Jannie "Hanepoot" van Tonder, who was the trombonist for the multi-racial jazz band, Winston's Jive Mix, at the time, first heard André Letoit and Johannes Kerkorrel perform. The experience was eye-opening; in van Tonder's words: "it was so unbelievably powerful for me, the possibility that people could play rock 'n' roll in Afrikaans". Van Tonder approached Willem Moller to join the GBB as a guitarist. Shortly after this Gary Herselman (aka Piet Pers) joined as the bassist for the group. [155]

When the movement started out it in 1988, it was labelled the "Alternative Afrikaans Music Movement" (AAMM), but some of its members did not accept the word "alternative". According to Uys, the term was actually based on *Die Eerste Alternatiewe Afrikaans Musiek Konsert* (The First Alternative Music Concert) which was held at the Pool Club in the Johannesburg CBD in 1988. The word "alternative" was, according to him, the best for that time and situation. It simply indicated that the music was an alternative to the mainstream Afrikaner music. However, other members of the movement did not feel comfortable with this term because they felt it defined them in relation to the establishment and was therefore, in a way, apologetic about its condition of "otherness";[156] but the Voëlvryers were "alternative" *simply* in the sense that they represented an alternate route that had already been and was being taken by a significant number of Afrikaners. Nonetheless, the Voëlvryers seemed to be more comfortable with the name "Voëlvry". In adopting this name, which they did at the start of the nationwide Voëlvry tour, they made themselves figurative outlaws from the monolithic Afrikaner identity so that they could be free. These meanings are both present in the word *voëlvry*, which means "outlawed" or "free as a bird".

At this time, the members of the movement were in contact with other Afrikaners who had in varying degrees rejected Afrikanerdom. In the words of Corné Coetzee, an Afrikaner who was living in Yeoville in the late 1980s,

> That was the time – maybe five years, ten years before Voëlvry – when Afrikaans people maybe became aware of identity and rejecting it. I never thought about my identity as an Afrikaans speaker or Afrikaner or whatever, until I wanted to leave the *laager*. Or started to do it – I did not want to, I just realised I wasn't thinking like these people. When I started thinking – at age maybe 22 – I realised I did not think like them and that was a few years before Voëlvry came when one just opened up. Afrikaans people, some Afrikaans people started opening up and thinking about their identity and rejecting the Afrikaner thing. There was a lot of debate about 'what is an Afrikaner'.[157]

[155] van Tonder (2003 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, the Movie.*
[156] Moller and Uys quoted in le Roux, "Alternatief?"
[157] Corné Coetzee, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Auckland Park, 4 December 2011.

General themes in the Voëlvry resistance

An essential point about the nature of Voëlvry's resistance against the state and hegemonic Afrikaner identity is that the Voëlvryers were not rejecting Afrikaner identity in its entirety. They aimed to show other Afrikaners and non-Afrikaners alike, that the image or concept of an Afrikaner as projected by the state and other Afrikaner institutions such as the church, school and army, did not apply to all Afrikaners. They wanted to show young Afrikaners in particular that there was a way to resist the state and other nationalist bodies without having to reject Afrikanerdom entirely. Hans Pienaar explains that there were many Afrikaners who were deeply dissatisfied with the monolithic Afrikaner culture and way the state was operating but they felt that the only way to resist was to reject Afrikanerdom completely; "to remove" oneself totally by disassociating oneself from the Afrikaner identity completely.[158] The Voëlvry movement aimed to show that there was a way of holding onto certain aspects of the Afrikaner identity and rejecting others.

Prior to their musical collaboration, the members of Voëlvry had already been moving in "alternative Afrikaner" circles. Both André Letoit and Johannes Kerkorrel had been part of writers' groups that resisted the apartheid government and monolithic Afrikaner nationalist culture.[159] They were consciously expressing the feelings of many Afrikaners who did not associate with hegemonic Afrikanerdom. In fact, Johannes Kerkorrel expressed pleasant surprise at the "sheer numbers" of Afrikaners who seemed to feel the same as he did.[160] In this sense they did not emerge *ex nihilo* but represented the attitudes of an existing, loosely connected community of "alternative Afrikaners".

I have identified a few broad themes of resistance that can be found in the Voëlvry rebellion. Afrikaner Calvinism, state repression and resultant country-wide violence, the mainstream Afrikaner culture (which was very much controlled by the South African Broadcasting Corporation – SABC), hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness of the majority of the white population (English-speakers included), and conscription, make up the major themes of the Voëlvry resistance.

The Voëlvryers rejected the particular brand of NG Kerk Calvinism that Johannes Kerkorrel said affected everyone in South Africa.[161] Johannes Kerkorrel's own flippant pseudonym and the very name *Gereformeerde* Blues Band made oblique satirical comments about Afrikaner Calvinism. Johannes was a common male Afrikaner name which has a biblical origin; the

[158] Hans Pienaar, informal conversation with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Auckland Park, 3 February 2012.
[159] See Koos Kombuis, *Seks, Drugs en Boeremusiek*.
[160] See Dowson and du Plessis, "Kerkorrel en Kie".
[161] Johannes Kerkorrel (1989 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, the Movie*.

English equivalent is John. Kerkorrel means "church organ" and is a fairly obvious symbol of the church. Johannes Kerkorrel explained where the name came from:

> The name Johannes Kerkorrel came from a shop in Goodwood in the Cape. As I passed by I saw the name and thought: That's surely the ultimate fucked up Calvinist idiot you can be.[162]

He also explained that the name *Die Gereformeerde* Blues Band represented the specific emotional response that he felt South African Calvinism produced:

> If you grow up in this country [South Africa] you get hit by Calvinism, whether you like it or not, whether you're black or white or English or whatever, Calvinism hits you, you go through the system. That's the sort of blues we're talking about, blues of growing up in this society here.[163]

It was not Christianity or Calvinism in general that was the focus of the Voëlvry resentment, but what the members viewed as the specific kind of Calvinism practised in South Africa. In an interview Johannes Kerkorrel explained that the song *Wat 'n Vriend Het Ons in P.W.* (What a friend we have in P.W. – referring to Pieter Willem Botha), sung to the tune of a popular religious song "What a Friend We Have in Jesus", was:

> [A] satire about a certain type of religion that is being practised here … in the name of God we're just going to kill you, throw you in jail, and make your life as miserable as possible for you, which we can justify because we're Christians … it's inhuman the way the church has helped perpetuate certain ideologies, telling ordinary people that what they are doing is being done according to the Bible. I see that kind of theology as a lie.[164]

Johannes Kerkorrel expressed disgust for the way in which he felt the Afrikaner state was using Christianity to justify its apartheid policies and actions. In addition to this, the Voëlvry songs reflect a rejection of the repressive, dogmatic values produced by Afrikaner Calvinism.

Related to the Voëlvryers' rejection of the use of Christianity by the state to wash away all manner of sins was their condemnation of state repressive policies and the violence across the country. A handful of the Voëlvry songs described the violence and unrest across the land,

[162] Johannes Kerkorrel, quoted in Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 128.
[163] Johannes Kerkorrel (1989 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, The Movie.*
[164] Johannes Kerkorrel quoted in Evan Aupiais, "Rejection of Volk and liberation of Afrikaners", *Cross Times*, August 1989.

among them *Die Nuus* (The News), *Swart September* (Black September), and *Donker, Donker Land* (Dark, Dark land). The Voëlvryers held Prime Minister PW Botha as a symbol of the apartheid government and continuously mocked him. In one of the GBB's songs, *Sit Dit Af!* (Switch it off!), Johannes Kerkorrel, the singer, is nauseated by Botha's face. Several songs made Botha (who they referred to simply as P.W.) the butt of the joke (such as Where Do You Go To P.W.? by André Letoit and the afore-mentioned *Wat 'n Vriend Het Ons in P.W.*). Although the Voëlvryers did make fun of P.W. and highlighted the oppressive social and political conditions in South Africa, they did not really carry a clearly-defined political agenda and were not publicly aligned with any political organisation or viewpoint. This is not to underplay the political element of Voëlvry; several of their songs carried strong political commentaries but, as Grundlingh puts it, the Voëlvry movement failed to motivate their followers "to express themselves in unambiguous and meaningful political terms".[165]

The movement expressed a much stronger message about mainstream Afrikaans music and culture. It was very much against the "chocolate-box music" that was produced in the Afrikaans mainstream music industry which was approved by the state-owned SABC. This music was "actually a product of this [apartheid] society, in a weird perverse sort of way, trying to escape into rainbows and waterfalls", as Johannes Kerkorrel stated in an interview for *Cross Times*.[166] Bles Bridges became for the Voëlvryers a symbol of the hegemonic Afrikaner culture and the bland, sentimental mainstream Afrikaner music that they were resisting. According to André Letoit, "Bles became a political issue with us. We were actively against him. Not just because his music was so shit".[167] Uys went so far as to print *Ek Verpes Bles* (I despise Bles) t-shirts to sell (and proudly wear) on the Voëlvry tour. Bridges represented the narrow-minded of the mainstream Afrikaans music culture; as he himself said "I do not want to pollute my *volk* [people]'s brains with songs filled with political information".[168] The Voëlvry movement shaped itself as a biting critique of this kind of music.

Indeed, this resistance against Bridges's kind of cultural product can be seen as representative of the broader challenge to *volkskultuur* [the people's culture, i.e. the mainstream Afrikaner culture] made by the Voëlvry movement. Hanepoot van Tonder explained that Afrikaans culture

> Was always this faraway thing that was forced on you. You never felt there was anything that interested you or made you feel good. We did not have rock 'n' roll. We did not have music as pleasure.[169]

[165] Grundlingh, "'Rocking the boat'", p. 498.
[166] Johannes Kerkorrel, quoted in Aupiais, "Rejection of Volk".
[167] Koos Kombuis (2003 footage),in Ross, *Voëlvry, The Movie.*
[168] Bles Bridges (1988 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, The Movie.*
[169] J. H. van Tonder (2003 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, The Movie*.

In addition to these broad themes of resistance, several songs highlighted and mocked the restricted, conservative outlook of some white South Africans. In *Die Nuus* and *BMW*, the callousness of narrow-minded privileged whites is criticised (sections of these two songs will be further discussed in this chapter).

The anti-army theme of *Hou My Vas Korporaal* would also emerge in small ways in songs written by Johannes Kerkorrel for the GBB (for example, the line *"Jy moet staan in jou ry"* - you must stand in your line) in Johannes Kerkorrel's song *Energie* (Energy) can be read as a reference to standing to attention in line as a soldier. As mentioned earlier, all but one of the movement's contributors had completed national service for the SADF. Although there are a few anti-conscription references in other Voëlvry songs the only song that really sent a strong anti-conscription message was *Hou My Vas Korporaal*. This song became one of the most popular Voëlvry songs probably because of its humorous anti-army theme.

It is worth noting that there was only one female member of the Voëlvry movement. As Grundlingh points out, the voice of Afrikaner women was virtually silent in the Voëlvry lyrics, and Tonia Selley's contribution was relegated to "the role of a mini-skirted 'doo wop' girl".[170] Jennifer Ferguson, a contemporary Afrikaner musician whose music can also be deemed "alternative" and included quite subtle anti-apartheid lyrics, was somewhat annoyed by what she saw as "a bunch of men on stage, playing big cock rock"; she stated that she was

> Sceptical about the messianic dimensions that the movement is taking on. About the idea that 'now we come riding in John Wayne-style to save South Africa'.[171]

André Letoit responded later to these comments by saying: "Obviously we were sexist. It was the Voëlvry tour, so what?". He was possibly playing with the word Voëlvry which can also be translated as "free love" or "free penis".[172] Des Latham, an English-speaking musician who attended many of the Voëlvry concerts and knows several of the musicians personally, reflecting later on the Voëlvry movement, commented on this issue:

> One of the down sides of [Voëlvry] was that it was not a big women's movement. It was like a second round of males being males, in a way. But the people at the concerts were not majority male; it was 50/50, I would say.

[170] Grundlingh, "'Rocking the Boat'", p. 496.
[171] Jennifer Ferguson quoted in de Vos, "Nuwe Lied".
[172] André Letoit quoted in Grundlingh, "'Rocking the Boat' in South Africa?'" p. 497.

This particular element of Voëlvry speaks to broader, highly complex issues of gender in apartheid South Africa which, unfortunately, cannot be examined in greater detail in this study due to constraints of length.[173]

The Voëlvry movement can be seen as fairly anti-intellectual. Key members such as Uys, Johannes Kerkorrel and André Letoit expressed the view that music was their choice of medium in conveying the message precisely because music (to them) was not "heavy" and "intellectual".[174]

The dominant emotion that drove the Voëlvry resistance was anger. Although the Voëlvryers used humour in their attack on the establishment and demonstrated that their way of dealing with the broader political and social situation was to party as much as possible, they were driven by a deep, resentful indignation against the state and their parental generation. This stemmed from the fact that the tumult in the country was the fault of the NP and Afrikaner nationalists and that the Voëlvryers unwillingly bore much of the guilt about the situation. "Ons is woedend", said Johannes Kerkorrel, "want ons ouers het alles opgefok." (We are furious because our parents fucked everything up).[175]

<u>The message and aims of the movement</u>

This section will discuss the main message and aims of the movement and the ways in which it addressed issues of Afrikaner identity. A fundamental aim of Voëlvry was to illustrate the fact that not all Afrikaners subscribed to the NP line, nor did they enjoy Bles Bridges; the movement provided a cultural outlet for these Afrikaners. As Uys has stated:

> We are bringing home a lot of those homeless people who have never been able to identify with the current state of Afrikaans culture … what seems to be happening is that instead of Afrikaners being lumped together as one cultural mass with the same tastes a polarisation of attitudes is developing, with the far right on the one side and us on the other.[176]

[173] There are not many studies focusing on the position of Afrikaner women in the late years of apartheid. For more on the historical position of Afrikaner women and related issues of gender in apartheid South Africa, see Cheryl Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in South Africa to 1945*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1990; Deborah Gaitskell and Elaine Unterhalter, "Mothers of the Nation: a Comparative Analysis of Nation, Race and Motherhood in Afrikaner Nationalism and the African National Congress", in Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (eds.), *Women-Nation-State*, Macmillan, London, 1989; and Louise Vincent, "Bread and Honour: White Working Class Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s, *Journal of Southen African Studies*, 26, 1, (2000), pp. 61–78.
[174] Johannes Kerkorrel quoted in Dowson and du Plessis, "Kerkorrel en Kie".
[175] Johannes Kerkorrel quoted in de Vos, "Nuwe Lied".
[176] Uys quoted in Gary Rathbone, "R 'n R headache for guardians of the *volkskultuur*", *Weekly Mail*, 4 June 1989.

The movement advocated a lifestyle that can be described as bohemian, which is one that does not follow the expected social rules and conventions of a particular community.[177] This will be further discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Another key aim of the Voëlvry movement was to free the Afrikaans language from its association with the apartheid oppressors. Johannes Kerkorrel and André Letoit often publicly spoke about their hope that they were showing the Afrikaans language in a new light.[178] They felt that the SABC was controlling the language and denying its multi-racial history. Johannes Kerkorrel insisted that Afrikaans "is a *kombuis taal* (kitchen language) and should remain a *kombuis taal*", in the sense that it should be allowed to develop without the restriction of rigid rules and take in words from other languages.[179]

On another level, however, it was not necessarily the language itself that drove the aims of movement, but rather what Afrikaans represented in terms of Afrikaner identity. What was even more important than changing perceptions about the language was challenging stereotypes of Afrikaners themselves. As Johannes Kerkorrel once put it "We want to alter people's perceptions, whatever their language may be".[180] The Voëlvryers wanted to show other young Afrikaners that "you don't have to deny being Afrikaans to be liberal".[181]

As part of this project Voëlvry gave some key Afrikaner traditions an overhaul and thereby attributed new meaning to some sacred nationalist symbols. In the final verses of *Swart September* the tune of the national anthem is re-appropriated by André Letoit and its words are rewritten in a subversive manner. It is worth quoting the lyrics in full:

Plant vir my 'n Namibsroos
Verafgeleë Welwitschia
Hervestig hom in Hillbrow
En doop hom Khayelitsha

September is die mooiste,
mooiste maand
Viooltjies in die voorhuis

[177] Based on the Oxford Dictionary online definition: "Socially unconventional", http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/Bohemian?q=bohemian, accessed 3 March 2012.
[178] See for example: E. Aupiais, "Rejection of Volk"; Jani Allan, "Afrikaner pride and passion mix with fun and laughter for the new-era boere punks", *Sunday Times*, July 9 1989; Emerson and Getz, "'Alternative Afrikaners'".
[179] Johannes Kerkorrel quoted in Allan, "Afrikaner pride and passion".
[180] Johannes Kerkorrel quoted in de Vos, "Nuwe Lied".
[181] Johannes Kerkorrel quoted in Allan, "Afrikaner pride and passion".

En riots oor al die land

Die swarte sonder pas
O, die swarte sonder pas
Skuifel langs die mure
Red sy eie bas

Die aand was dit vrolik
Om die vure;
Gatiep was olik
By die bure

Die tyres het gebrand
Daar by Manenberg se kant
Al die volk was hoenderkop
Die Casspirs vol R-4s gestop

En die vrou by die draad
Het eerste die gedruis gehoor
Tjank maar, Ragel, oor jou kind
Die bliksems het hom doodgemoer

Almal weet dit, en dis so
Al klink dit ongelooflik:
Die monument op Paarlberg
Is nie argitektonies ooglik

Maar sou jy haar tog liefhê,
Die ongerymde Moedertaal,
Besef jy sy's met clones
En pidgins
Landwyd op die pak

Van Tafelberg tot in die
Transvaal
Loop hênsoppers weer
Deesdae kaal
En is jy wit
Of swart
Kak almal in die symste taal

Uit die blou van ons gekneusdheid
Uit die diepte van ons hiemwee
Oor ons ver verlate homelands
Waar die tsotsis antwoord gee

Oor ons afgebrande skole
Met die kreun van honger kinders
Dis die stem van al die squatters
Van ons land, Azania

Ons sal traangas, ons sal Treurnicht
Ons sal offer wat jy vra
Ons sal dobbel in Sun City
Ons vir jou Suid-Afrika

(Plant me a Namib rose
Remote Welwitschia
Replant it in Hillbrow
And christen it Khayelitsha

September is the most beautiful,
Beautiful month
Violets in the living room

And riots across the land

The black without a pass

Oh, the black without a pass

Shuffles along the wall

Rescues his own ass

This evening was lovely

Around the fires;

Gatiep was sick

At the neighbours

The tyres burnt [referring to necklacings]

There by Manenberg

All the people were drunk

The Casspirs loaded with R-4s[182]

And the woman at the fence

Was the first to hear the roar

Weep, Rachel, for your child

The bastards killed him

Everyone knows it, because it is so

Even if it sounds unbelievable:

The monument on Paarl Mountain [183]

Is an architectural eyesore

[182] The *Casspirs* are notorious police and military vehicles.
[183] The Afrikaans language monument, built in 1975.

But even if you still love her,

This absurd mother tongue

You realise that with clones

And pidgins

She is on the loose across the land

From Table Mountain to the

Transvaal

The betrayers walk

Naked again

Irrespective whether you're white or black

We all shit in the same tongue

From the blue of our bruises
From the depths of our nostalgia
Across our abandoned homelands
Where the tsotsis give answer

Over our burnt-down schools
With the groans of hungry children
It's the voice of all the squatters
Of our land, Azania

We shall teargas, we will not mourn
We shall offer what you ask
We shall gamble at Sun City
We for you South Africa)[184]

[184] Original lyrics and translation in Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, pp. 132–133.

The lyrics of *Swart September* and the very appropriation of the anthem's tune were deeply subversive. This poignant song which presumably refers to the riots that spread throughout the land after the Vaal Uprisings of September 1984, openly addressed the hard political and social reality in South Africa. The opening stanza of the song in which André Letoit invites the listener to unearth a Namibian rose and replant it in Hillbrow, a relatively cosmopolitan suburb of Johannesburg where several of the Voëlvryers lived at various times. He commands that the flower should be christened Khayelitsha, a township in the Western Cape to which thousands of black South Africans had been forcibly relocated. This image can be seen as the way in which specific traumatic events of the 1980s rooted themselves in the consciousness of some South Africans.

The theme of militarisation, as discussed in chapter one, also surfaces in some subtle, and other strikingly clear, references in this song. The *Namibsroos,* for example, can be seen as a more subtle reference to the Namibian border conflict, while the images of soldiers in Casspirs (military personnel carriers used by the apartheid state security forces) in Manenberg, a township in the Western Cape, are unmistakably concerned with the presence of the military in townships. The burning tyres of verse seventeen invoke the grisly practice of necklacing which was then, as it is now, a shocking symbol of the unfathomable fury of black protesters.

André Letoit also alludes to important views about the Afrikaans language. He calls the Paarl Language Monument, which was erected by the apartheid government in 1975, an architectural eyesore; one can read into this the implication that the conservative, restrictive manner in which the government handled Afrikaans rendered the language aesthetically unpleasing and denied it the versatility and vitality that it could have. In stanzas eight and nine, the song indicates that Afrikaans, unhindered by the state's interference, has taken on diverse and dynamic forms; these verses allude to the story of Adam and Eve by suggesting that the traitors who have developed these "pidgin" versions of Afrikaans are walking naked once again and have therefore returned to innocence.

The lyrics were intensely insubordinate; simply calling South Africa "Azania" (a new name for the country chosen by a section of pan-Africanists) caused great uproar amongst nationalist Afrikaners and indeed the song and André Letoit were banned from RAU campus after it was performed there in 1988.[185] The lyrics added salt to the wound; André Letoit adapted the words of the Afrikaner national anthem to reflect the political and social conditions of the country in a way that would have been seen by Afrikaner nationalists as an act of irredeemable, unforgivable treachery. The word "nostalgia" conjures an Afrikaner nation that is simultaneously pathetic and laughable in its inability to acknowledge the reality of a dire situation. The images of abandoned homelands taken over by township gangsters (tsotsis), burn-out schools, and crowds of desperate, impoverished squatters bring listeners

[185] Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 132.

face to face with the trauma of a collapsing country. André Letoit juxtaposes these images with the government's actual response indicated by the word "teargas". The extreme measures of teargas and worse seem even harsher alongside images of hungry, weakened children and squatters. There is a pun on the meaning of the Dutch Afrikaner surname "Treurnicht" (referring to Andries Treurnicht, leader of the Conservative Party) which means "mourn not". This double meaning emphasises the reactionary, irrational unwillingness of conservative Afrikaners to accept the terrible (in their eyes) reality that it was impossible to continue with apartheid. This denialism is epitomised in the reference to Sun City, which was infamous as a place that exposed the hypocrisy of many Afrikaners who, despite the stringent

Calvinism followed by the Afrikaner nation, would gamble and watch strip shows and engage in other forms of sinful debauchery.

In the song *Ossewa* (ox wagon) tradition is once again reformed. The emotive icon of the ox wagon which had long been a figure of the *Groot Trek* (Great Trek) that had been made a unifying point in Afrikaner history, is transformed into a speeding contraption, blaring Elvis Presley's rock 'n' roll, with a "V6 *engine binne-in gemonteer* (V6 engine mounted inside)" and a wagon chest full of beer. As the song helpfully tells us "*dit was 'n regte egte rock 'n roll ossewa* (it was a real, genuine rock 'n roll wagon)*"*. This "*funky, nuwe rock 'n' roll ossewa* (funky, new rock 'n' roll ox wagon)"[186] reflects the desire of the Voëlvryers to urge fellow Afrikaners to progress into a modern world and encourages Afrikaner youth involvement to join in the creation of the new South Africa.

The idea of a new South African and a new South Africa was articulated to the press at different times by several members of the movement.[187] Johannes Kerkorrel once stated that:

> Our only function is to work towards creating a South African culture that is open and free for everybody else. So obviously I think young Afrikaans people have a role to play in helping to create that culture.[188]

He also went on to explain that the Voëlvryers wanted to counter the "no-future type of feeling" amongst young Afrikaners by presenting an alternative future in which culture would be liberated and therapeutic and there would be "a respect for human dignity, and respect for each other and who we are and where we come from".[189]

In order to begin creating a new South Africa the Voëlvryers felt that they had to escape and free others from the confines of hegemonic Afrikaner identity. They wanted young

[186] Original lyrics and translation in Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 13.
[187] See Emerson and Getz, "'Alternative Afrikaners'"; Allan, "Afrikaner pride and passion" Dowson and du Plessis, "Kerkorrel en Kie".
[188] Johannes Kerkorrel quoted in Dowson and du Plessis, "Kerkorrel en Kie".
[189] Johannes Kerkorrel quoted in Dowson and du Plessis, "Kerkorrel en Kie".

Afrikaners to see that they did not have to completely reject their Afrikaner identity in order to be part of the broader anti-establishment struggle. And they wanted to have fun while doing all of this.[190] They felt that the youth had "been lied to all their lives",[191] and that in order to liberate them they simply needed to be honest; honest about religion, the state and the experience of being an angry young Afrikaner in the late 1980s.

Johannes Kerkorrel's position as the spokesperson for the movement meant that he directed the overt goals of Voëlvry. Some songs, such as *Energie* by Johannes Kerkorrel and *Swart Transvaal* by André Letoit, literally suggested that anarchy could be a solution to the problems in the country. I maintain that this stream of anarchism underscoring all that the movement promoted prevented the Voëlvryers from ever settling on and publicising a clear agenda. It was the undercurrent of anarchy led, in part, to the eventual collapse of the movement.

Performance, music, style, lyrics, and location

The Voëlvryers consciously chose music as a medium of expression. André Letoit explained that he felt it was the best way to reach the young Afrikaners. His previous literary pursuits did not reach a wide enough audience.[192] Johannes Kerkorrel stated that he chose it because

> Music speaks to people. It's entertainment, it's fun, it's art, it's not heavy, it's not intellectual. You can only go so far in newspapers or on TV with interviews … I mean, talking is talking.

He chose the rock 'n' roll style because it was "a universal language".[193] Uys also said that rock 'n' roll music in particular was a highly appropriate medium for the Voëlvry task because it was typically associated with protest.[194]

The anti-establishment theme was represented in both lyrical and musical choices. In a few songs "traditional" Afrikaner instruments and musical rhythms were used in a light-hearted mocking way which had the effect of changing their cultural significance. Instead of them being symbols of nationalist unity, they became tools of derision in subversive commentaries about the establishment. *Hou My Vas Korporaal,* for example, used the *vastrap* (two step, which is an Afrikaans folk dance on a dotted rhythm).[195] The mockery was not limited to this musical pastiche. The lyrics combined with the upbeat *Boeremusiek* style (literally farmer's music, but *Boer* is typically taken to mean "Afrikaner") have a humorous effect. The subject

[190] See le Roux, "Alternatief?".
[191] Johannes Kerkorrel quoted in Dowson and du Plessis, "Kerkorrel en Kie".
[192] Koos Kombuis, (1989 and 2003 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, The movie.*
[193] Johannes Kerkorrel quoted in Dowson and du Plessis, "Kerkorrel en Kie".
[194] Uys quoted in le Roux, "Alternatief?".
[195] Jury, "Boys to Men", p. 101.

of satire is the experience of a conscript in the SADF and the joke is that the *troep* (which can be translated as "trooper", but the word has more derogatory connotations indicating the lowly rank of the soldier being addressed) transgresses the macho taboos against affectionate contact between a *troep* and a Corporal when he requests to be held in a tight embrace by his superior officer. His reasons for needing this comfort are referred to in the song. A few excerpts from the lyrics follow:

Hou my vas Korporaal, ek is 'n
Kind skoon verdwaal
Gaan ek weer my cherry sien
As ek van die trein afklim
Ja sowaar Korporaal
Dis maar swaar Korporaal
Ek speel oorlog met my beste dae
Ja ja ja
Ek en al my maaitjies by mekaar

Sal so doen colonel
Sal nie weier, alhoewel
Elke dag deurgekruis
Al hoe nader aan my huis
Hot en haar Korporaal
Ek word naar Korporaal
…
Oogklappe sorg vir 'n
Skoon gewete
Dis my plig en nie my keuse
Hier sit ek, ek sit en vrek
Dis nie my skuld maar ek hou
My bek
Hou jou bek, boet
…

(Hold me tight corporal,

I'm a child totally lost
Will I see my cherry [slang for girlfriend]
when I get off the train?
Yes indeed corporal,
It is heavy [difficult] corporal
I'm playing war with my best days
Yes, yes, yes
Me and all my friends
Together

Will do so, colonel
Will not refuse, although
Every day that is ticked off
Is ever closer to my home
Here and there corporal
I'm feeling nauseous corporal
…
Blinkers take care of a
clean conscience
It's my duty, not my choice
Here I sit, I sit and die [like an animal]
It's not my fault but I shut up
Shut up, brother)[196]
…

This song describes the bewildering experience of a young (notably, Phillips uses the word "child") low-ranking soldier. The soldier is obedient to the point of not questioning why he is in the army and "blinkering" himself in order to cling to a "clean conscience" – in his words: "it's my duty, not my choice". Bernoldus Niemand (Phillips) also makes it very clear that the young soldier cannot wait to leave the army and go home. The song also plays with the theme of command. The soldier seems to be constantly answering orders from his corporal in the affirmative but he also issues the directive: "hold me tight, corporal!" The *troep* is clearly obedient in the extreme but he seems to break down under the pressure of the situation and demand some comfort in the arms of his superior, crossing the boundary between the ranks

[196] Lyrics in Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, pp. 46–47. I have adapted the translation provided by Hopkins.

and displaying what may have been misconstrued by conservative Afrikaner males as homosexual tendencies.

The theme of obedience and command arises in other Voëlvry songs as well. The song *Energie* (Energy) is a good example of this. Johannes Kerkorrel illustrates the heavy sense of duty and authoritarianism by repetitively using the imperative:

Jy moet staan in jou ry
Jy moet jou hare kort sny
Jy moet altyd netjies bly
Jy moet al die pryse kry

Jy moet in 'n huisie bly
Trou en kinders kry
In jou karretjie ry
En stem vir die party

(You must stand in line
You must cut your hair short
You must always be neat
You must win all the prizes

You must live in a little house
Marry and have children
Drive in your little car
And vote for the [National] Party)[197]

The orders issued to young Afrikaners are clearly not limited to military duty. The burden of duty spans a wide range of personal decisions, from hair style to marital status. This song illustrates a stultifying environment that prohibits engagement with anything outside the expected:

O, en moenie vrae vra
Oor die dinge wat jou pla

[197] Lyrics and translation in Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, pp. 76–77.

Jy moet leer om stil te bly
Jy sal 'n goue horlosie kry
Jy vind dit dalk 'n skok
Jy word lieflik opgemors

(Oh, and don't ask questions
About the things that bother you
You must learn to keep quiet
You'll get a gold watch
You might find it quite a shock
You'll get pretty messed up)[198]

Here, it seems that Johannes Kerkorrel suggests that the exchange for a person keeping quiet about things that do not feel right is an unequal one. If, as commanded, people keep silent, they will be rewarded with material possessions and they will appear to others to live a good life, but the choice will cause psychological distress, even trauma. Johannes Kerkorrel then goes on to suggest a possible solution to the problems created in this restrictive environment:

Kom ons probeer anargie
Ons is moeg van apatie
Ons probeer anargie
Soek 'n nuwe energie

Energie, energie
Energie, energie
Ons kry weer energie

(Come, let's try anarchy
We're tired of apathy
We'll try anarchy
Search for a new energy

[198] Lyrics and translation in Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, pp. 76–77.

Energy, energy

Energy, energy

We'll get energy again)[199]

He suggests that anarchy, which is linked to the escapist motives of the Voëlvryers, is a possible solution to lack of feeling and that this could lead to a re-invigoration amongst young Afrikaners. However, the message that is perhaps more important than his promotion of anarchy as a possible solution is that apathy and a close-minded mentality should be overturned by a "new energy".

Through their personal style, the Voëlvryers promoted a bohemian lifestyle. Most of those involved wore shabby, mismatched clothing (with the exception of Johannes Kerkorrel, whose style seems to have been distinctly punk);[200] most of them were unshaven or bearded and often appeared drunk or high or both. Sexual promiscuity was lauded and André Letoit was a hero for his reputation of having a girl in every *dorp* (town).[201] The Voëlvryers moved frequently, settling briefly in various dwellings (André Letoit took up residence in a friend's kitchen for a while) and eventually, at the start of their musical collaboration, settled in Hillbrow and Yeoville for a short time. This kind of bohemian behaviour deliberately flaunted the expectations of Afrikaner parents and society in general which Johannes Kerkorrel succinctly summarised in the song *Energie*. Connected to this idealisation of the bohemian way was a desire to set themselves and other Afrikaners free by simply having a *jol* (party).

The Johannesburg suburb of Yeoville played a formative role for the movement. From the mid-1970s groups of liberal English-speaking whites who were mostly students had been living in Yeoville; by the late 1980s significant numbers of young anti-establishment Afrikaners were also living in this area. As mentioned earlier in this chapter there were increasing numbers of Afrikaners who disassociated themselves from the hegemonic Afrikaner identity. According to Hans Pienaar, a resident of Yeoville in the late 1980s, "us Afrikaans [people] in Yeoville found sustenance from each other because we were these, sort of, ostracised people".[202] For Harry Kalmer, who also lived there in the late 1980s, "it was the first time that I was surrounded by other people like me".[203] It should be noted that while both the liberal English-speaking and anti-apartheid Afrikaner groups were probably drawn to Yeoville because of their shared anti-establishment sentiments, they did not form a cohesive "community".[204]

[199] Lyrics and translation in Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, pp. 76–77.
[200] For pictures see Hopkins, *Voëlvry*.
[201] Koos Kombuis, Moller and Selley (2003 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, The Movie.*
[202] Hans Pienaar, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Observatory, 4 December 2011.
[203] Harry Kalmer, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Observatory, 4 December 2011.
[204] For more on this topic see Dewar, Pienaar and Suriano, "Rockey Street".

The members of Voëlvry were all based in Yeoville from 1988 until after the Voëlvry tour (it is not clear why and when exactly they started moving out of Yeoville). André Letoit says that "[o]ur consciousness was shaped by the small Yeoville subculture".[205] This environment fostered the development of the movement. There were a few venues like the Harbour Café and the Black Sun that provided a performance space. The Voëlvry musicians often performed at the Black Sun in particular.[206] In addition to this, there was a receptive audience consisting of the afore-mentioned liberal Afrikaners as well as a significant proportion of English-speakers who could understand Afrikaans; Voëlvry concerts drew the alternative crowd that frequented the night clubs of Rockey Street, the most lively and famous part of Yeoville.

The Voëlvry tour represented the height of the Voëlvry movement and helped to disseminate the ideals of the Voëlvryers. André Letoit and Ross credit Uys with the idea to take the movement on a nationwide tour. He felt that Voëlvry was not reaching enough people.[207] The tour concerts were usually fully-attended but the Voëlvryers were also turned away from several venues by the conservative church and town leaders. They were also banned on several university campuses. The decision of Stellenbosch University rector Mike de Vries to ban Voëlvry on campus gained a lot of media attention after approximately 1500 students protested the decision. This was also a surprising decision when one considers that in the 1980s Stellenbosch was viewed as the most liberal Afrikaans university.[208]

Anarchism and the lack of political allegiances

As mentioned earlier, the Voëlvryers were driven to some extent by anarchic tendencies. They did not want to align themselves to any organisations partly because they believed that as artists they did not want to be dictated to by anyone as they felt it could compromise the integrity of their artistic and cultural production.[209] But I would argue that this anarchistic sentiment went deeper than this. Latham explained that:

> [We are] individuals first. Don't lump us with everyone else! Don't give us name tags! Don't push us into positions. One minute I'm going to tell you I have five wives, the next minute I'm going to tell you I'm for feminism, but that's *my* role! You've been telling me my whole life don't, don't, don't! So now I'm going to do,

[205] Koos Kombuis, in correspondence with Clara Pienaar, 2 December 2011.
[206] Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, p. 124.
[207] Lloyd Ross and Koos Kombuis, (2003 footage), Ross, *Voëlvry, the Movie*.
[208] Grundlingh, "'Rocking the boat?'", p. 493.
[209] See de Vos, "Nuwe Lied".

> do, do! … [The Voëlvry musicians] were on their own limb; they were not joining the UDF, they were not joining this, they were not joining that, they were them.[210]

As Latham notes, the Voëlvryers did not ever publicly align themselves with any political organisation and this was perhaps because of these very personal emotions resulting from having been strictly regulated through various institutions for most of their lives. Perhaps it was also partly due to the probability that if they had been politically aligned to an organisation like the UDF, they would have discouraged many young Afrikaners from attending their concerts because these political groups were seen as being too closely linked to the supposed communist threat that young white South Africans had been convinced was lurking behind every anti-establishment corner.[211]

These anarchic tendencies were also linked to the escapist mission of the Voëlvry movement. As André Letoit, quoted in chapter one, explained, rather than attempting to change Afrikanerdom from within, the Voëlvryers were engaged in a process of *escape*.

Why in the 1980s? Why and how did it end?

When Voëlvry emerged as a movement in the late 1980s, the NP was still in power and it was unclear what the outcome of the political situation would be. The movement gathered momentum from the fact that a group of young mostly Afrikaners with similar feelings about the state of the country and Afrikaner society came together to play music. I would argue that the novelty of finding fellow Afrikaner rock musicians and the resulting excitement about this should not be underestimated as motivating factor in the Voëlvry movement.

As discussed in previous chapters, Voëlvry responded to a unique set of political, social and cultural circumstances. Afrikaner unity was destabilised; there was a divide between NP and CP supporters, the church had been fundamentally altered in the wake of the political split and Afrikaner society was "etched with a profound sense of malaise and self-doubt".[212] Anti-apartheid resistance was growing swiftly and unstoppably and cultural activity supporting the struggle had increased alongside it. Added to this is what Grundlingh describes as the increasing influence of "globalising cultural impulses". The introduction of television to South Africa in 1975, for example, had an impact on Afrikaner culture that should not be underestimated. Afrikaners began to view themselves in a less insular way.[213] In my view, the instability of the political and social situation, coupled with the realisation that Afrikaners needed to find a viable place within a global context (and the related growing awareness that apartheid was perhaps not the best way to achieve this), created fertile conditions for the

[210] Des Latham, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Rosebank, 22 September 2011.
[211] This argument is based on several informal conversations with Hans Pienaar that took place throughout 2011.
[212] O' Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p. 368.
[213] Grundlingh, "'Rocking the boat?'", p. 490.

sprouting of an Afrikaner anti-apartheid movement such as Voëlvry that tackled the complex questions around Afrikaner identity in a country undergoing major transformation.

The main impetus of Voëlvry was its role as a protest movement and could therefore last only as long as the target of their rebellion, namely the apartheid state, existed. A crucial contributing factor in the demise of the movement was the change in broader political circumstances in the country. The other main cause of the movement's collapse was the quarrelling amongst members of the movement.

The movement was from the start hampered by disagreements amongst the musicians. Willem Moller explains in *Voëlvry, the movie* that Johannes Kerkorrel "did not have the discipline of working in a band" and that this caused friction amongst the musicians.[214] Clashes between André Letoit and Johannes Kerkorrel led to André Letoit leaving the GBB in 1988 and continuing as a solo artist. Indeed Johannes Kerkorrel seemed to be the focus of much annoyance throughout the 1989 tour and afterwards. According to André Letoit's autobiography, by the end of the tour everyone was angry with Johannes Kerkorrel for some or other reason.[215] Soon after the Voëlvry tour, the musicians went their separate ways. Phillips continued to live a bohemian lifestyle, constantly moving and maintaining the scruffiest of appearances. He had a brief solo career which was well-received by critics. He died in 1995 after a car accident at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown. André Letoit disappeared for a short while after the tour and then changed his name to Koos Kombuis. He performed first in a band called *Koos Kombuis en die Kakelakke* (Koos Kombuis and the cockroaches) and then went on once again as a solo artist. Uys acted as his manager for two years and then they parted ways. Johannes Kerkorrel held a few performances as a solo artist in Belgium and later made a connection with Dutch singer Stef Bos who returned to South Africa with him where they recorded a few songs together. In the late 1990s he became increasingly antagonistic towards Uys in particular over the question of credit for the lyrics of GBB songs; the two became embroiled in a bitter public dispute. Johannes Kerkorrel also struggled with personal difficulties – he had come out as homosexual and written several songs about his experience; the depression that he had long suffered from worsened, according to those close to him. In 2002 he committed suicide.[216]

Impact and significance of the movement

Voëlvry certainly made an impact on some key Afrikaner institutions. A NG Kerk minister published an article in the NG Kerk newsletter, *Die Kerkbode,* accusing the musicians of hiding satanic messages on their records. Lloyd Ross of Shifty Records demanded either proof or an apology and when Minister Jannie Malan could provide no proof but refused to

[214] Moller, (2003 footage), in Ross, *Voëlvry, The Movie.*
[215] Koos Kombuis *Seks, Drugs en Boeremusiek*, p. 216.
[216] Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, pp. 198–232.

print a public apology, Shifty issued a summons for defamation against him; the matter was settled the following year.[217] In addition to the church expressing discontent with the Voëlvry musicians, several universities including the University of Potchefstroom and the University of Stellenbosch banned them from performing on their campuses.

In a more positive light, it seems that at least in some cases Voëlvry was successful in its quest to "demythologise the Afrikaner;"[218] the musicians managed to change some biased perceptions of Afrikaners for the good. Latham, an English-speaking South African himself, thinks that

> A lot of the bigoted English speakers *completely* did a 180 on the spot from believing that all Afrikaners were illiberal and unable to cognize [sic] the fact that there should be change.[219]

It also changed perceptions among a significant group of young Afrikaners. Harry Kalmer, a Yeoville resident in the late 1980s who knew several of the Voëlvry musicians personally, says that:

> I think it had significance to people in Kroonstad, you know, like Dana Snyman [an Afrikaans playwright] wrote about it so beautifully when someone was dismissive about [Hopkins's] book. Dana said *he* did not have friends who, like, smoked *dagga* and hung out in trendy places, for him as a *ouk* [guy] from Ventersdorp it was quite major … I think it was amazing. I think it mobilised people in RAU and Stellenbosch.[220]

Harry's wife, Sanpat Kalmer, who also knew some of the musicians, eloquently explained her view of the significance of Voëlvry:

> If you look at it in retrospect, there's always that kind of thing – small movement – that is a sign of the time, of something that's brewing … so whatever the content was, is maybe not now – it was at the time – that significant, but the fact that people found a home where they felt comfortable, where they could protest, where they felt that all, where they could escape into that which was away from what was acceptable in the Afrikaans society – in that way I think it was very significant … There were individual songs that really touched a nerve but whether you liked the music or were followers is not necessarily that significant.[221]

[217] Hopkins, *Voëlvry*, pp. 191–192.
[218] Koos Kombuis quoted in "Afrikaner pride and passion".
[219] Des Latham, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Rosebank, 22 September 2011 .
[220] Harry Kalmer, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Observatory, 4 December 2011.
[221] Sanpat Kalmer, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Observatory, 4 December 2011.

Ultimately the meaning of Voëlvry as a social movement does not lie in its success in terms of numbers or record and cassette sales. It lies in the fact that many young Afrikaners were provided with a space in which they could express their resistance against the government and break free from the authoritarian atmosphere of Afrikaner society.

It may be difficult to analyse some socio-cultural movements because they are not as pronounced as those that have been the focus of more intensive academic analysis (for example the 1960s counterculture movement in USA and Europe). Movements like Voëlvry may be dismissed as insignificant because they did not mobilise as many people, and did not have a clear agenda, but they can still teach us much about the impact of cultural activity on issues of identity and vice versa as well as the processes by which people become politically and socially conscious.

In my view Voëlvry constituted an embryonic social movement. The movement represented the intellectual tendencies of a few "alternative Afrikaners". However, the latter failed to articulate any clear alternative cultural, social and political values. A core, almost sub-conscious tendency that underscored the rather loose intellectual position of the alternative Afrikaners was an anarchic resistance against being defined in terms of any movement. There was a reluctance to pin oneself to any specific identity.[222]

Although Voëlvry represented a social movement that was only in its nascent phase, it symbolises a crucial point in Afrikaner history as well as the history of the country. It represents the emergence of groups of dissident Afrikaners that were growing in number and strength; it spread an anti-establishment message that originated in a specifically Afrikaner context. For many Afrikaners who were young in the 1980s it has become a memorable point of their own personal histories.

I base this claim on the informal conversations I have had with a number of Afrikaners who are now in their late thirties, forties and fifties. When talking about Voëlvry, their recurring comment is along the lines of "Oh, Voëlvry! Yes I was also there!". I maintain that for Afrikaners like these Voëlvry did provide a space in which to resist and escape from the establishment without turning completely away from their Afrikaner identity. There are also a number of recent letters on the Afrikaans cultural website www.oulitnet.co.za that express the personal significance Voëlvry has had for many Afrikaner individuals.

One letter, addressed to the Voëlvry members themselves, reads:

[222] Hans Pienaar, informal conversation with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Auckland Park, 3 February 2012.

To all the Voëlvry members,

I realised once again on Sunday evening when Kyknet broadcasted the documentary, how important [it was] and how much gratitude we owe you all.

As it was clearly said, you freed the Afrikaner-musician and audience and through your witty, unrefined, crass words you did your part in defying and ridiculing the so-called establishment. You provided the impetus to make students think about their own futures.

Easy it was not, and it demanded much alcohol and marijuana, many of you still carry the scars from your actions. I am thankful and still regularly listen to the music of that era.

Upwards with Voëlvry![223]

C. R. de Wet

Another letter entitled "*C.R. de Wet, Ek stem saam met jou!* (C. R. de Wet, I agree with you!)", replied:

People want to dismiss the Voëlvry movement (as well as *Vrye Weekblad*) of the late 1980s as insignificant. As if they did not contribute to freeing the Afrikaner from obsolete principles.

They miss the point. A whole generation of Afrikaners were liberated. It is them, and only those two groups, that gave me and my friends the courage to yell "Sit dit af!" [Switch it off!]. By implication, I can think for myself, and you lot and the party and the church is wrong. So fuuuuck you.

We could never have dreamed of doing it if it was not for Voëlvry and *Vrye Weekblad.*

Coenie K, student '85–'89[224]

[223] C. R. de Wet, "Voëlvry", letter on litnet, 7 February 2006, http://www.oulitnet.co.za/senet/senet.asp?id=41947, accessed 27 February 2012. The translation is my own.

[224] Coenie K, "*C.R. de Wet, Ek stem saam met jou!"*, 7 February 2006, http://www.oulitnet.co.za/senet/senet.asp?id=41947, accessed 27 February 2012. The translation is my own.

Another letter from a person writing under the pseudonym Piet Pompies quoted an article in *Beeld* to explain the historical worth of Voëlvry:

> On the historical significance of the Voëlvry movement for Afrikaans rock, Theunis Engelbrecht put it best. I quote from the *Jip* section in *Beeld* from Monday 29 April:
>
> 'The young [Afrikaners] were not just utterly fed up of the utterly suspect politics of the time, but also of the whole Afrikaans culture and the way in which they were raised: to go through life blinkered, not to think for themselves, to be brainwashed to believe that everything other is evil, to be handled like mere sheep. From the Afrikaans music world there came a hell of a disturbance, a small revolution against all the injustice and brainwashing and indoctrination and culture of mediocrity and superficiality.
>
> In this [Voëlvry] music all the falseness and pretension of the Afrikaans culture was unmasked. They went on tour and turned South Africa upside down. Thousands of people streamed to the concerts. At the more conservative places like Potchefstroom their concerts were banned. They were intimidated by the security police. Their songs were also banned by the SABC. They all showed a middle finger to the miserable *Oubase* [old masters/bosses – figures of authority], instilled a new energy amongst young people, and irrevocably changed the Afrikaner cultural terrain.'[225]

In an interview with myself, Lloyd Ross recalled an interview he held with Pik Botha, the NP Foreign Minister in the last years of apartheid, in which Ross claims Botha said that Voëlvry was the final straw. In the Ross's own words:

> I do not think he meant that in terms of the bigger picture of the thing that brought those guys to their senses, but I think that he meant that it was the final straw that their own children were saying 'this cannot go on'. So that made me feel pretty good, you know, I really felt that we had made quite a big difference here.[226]

Another letter on www.oulitnet.co.za says a multitude simply in its title: "*Houtstok*[227] en *Voëlvry* was My Redding!" (Woodstock and Voëlvry Saved Me!). The author of this letter expresses her gratitude to Voëlvry:

---

[225] Piet Pompies, "Slinkse publisiteit vir Voëlvry?",, 3 May 2002, http://www.oulitnet.co.za/senet/senet.asp?id=6208, accessed 27 February 2012. The translation is my own.
[226] Lloyd Ross, interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Killarney, 26 July 2011
[227] This refers to the Afrikaans rock 'n' roll and folk music concert held for the first time in 1996.

> I thank God (at that time I thought God was a woman) that my eyes were opened at that time, that I am not a mediocre thirty-something who wears shoes and has brushed hair, pink nails and gold jewellery, who listens to music like that of Steve Hofmeyr, Kurt Daren and Patricia Lewis.[228]

In an article on www.litnet.co.za, written after the death of Johannes Kerkorrel, Erns Grundling reflected on the impact that Johannes Kerkorrel and other Voëlvry musicians had for him personally:

> I heard Johannes Kerkorrel for the first time when I was a little standard-five student in Jeffreys Bay … Here was someone who sang about P.W. and BMWs and a rock 'n' roll ox wagon, of all things! And it rocked! It was like walking through Stargate, or for those of you who remember He-Man, that yellow diamond which took a person to another world. (Call it the other side).
>
> Because that is precisely what Kerkorrel, along with Koos Kombuis and Bernoldus Niemand, did in the Voëlvry days: with their rousing music and razor sharp lyrics they encouraged a whole generation to think for themselves and begin to ask questions.
>
> The Voëlvry tour indirectly cleared the way for us – the generation that was still playing marbles in the 1980s – to face the future without chains, suffocating anxiety and angst.[229]

The mythologizing effects of nostalgia, caused by the personal need of Afrikaners living in post-apartheid South Africa to disassociate themselves from the shameful past of the Afrikaner nation, are certainly at play here. Voëlvry, as Grundlingh puts it, has helped "to manufacture an anti-apartheid past for a younger generation of Afrikaners grappling with a sense of identity in a very different context".[230] However, even though the numerous reflective accounts of the significance of Voëlvry may exaggerate the significance of Voëlvry in terms of its role in toppling the apartheid regime (and it is not implausible that it played some small part in this), they do provide strong testament to the truly enormous impact it had on the personal histories of many Afrikaners.

Conclusion

[228] Estee, "*Houtstok* en *Voëlvry* Het My Gered!" (italics in original), 8 August 2002, http://www.oulitnet.co.za/senet/senet.asp?id=7043, accessed 27 February 2012.

[229] Erns Grundling, "Al Lê die Berge Nog so Blues…" (Even though The Mountains Still Lie Blues – this title is a reference to the FAK song *Al Lê die Berge Nog so Blou* – *blou* = blue), http://www.oulitnet.co.za/klank/ernsjk.asp, accessed 27 February 2012.

[230] Grundlingh, "'Rocking the boat?'", p. 510.

While Voëlvry may not have been the *doodskoot* (killer shot) or the stone that hit the giant between the eyes,[231] it was unquestionably a shock and an unexpected source of resistance to the regime. It was a loud, angry protest by the Afrikaner youth against their own *volk*. It could certainly not be dismissed by the establishment as *volksvreemd*.

The Voëlvryers undeniably refreshed the stagnating Afrikaner cultural terrain and whether or not they shook the foundations of South Africa or single-handedly felled the beast, their work represents an illuminating struggle with the incredibly powerful effects that Afrikaner nationalism and Calvinism had on the subjective and collective identities of Afrikaners in the last years of apartheid.

[231] Koos Kombuis in insert to *Voëlvry, Die Toer*, produced by Shifty Music, 2002 (CD).

Conclusion

In this study I have emphasised that Voëlvry responded to specific political, social and cultural circumstances. Dan O' Meara captures the general ethos of Afrikaner society in the 1980s when he states that it was "etched with a profound sense of malaise and self-doubt".[232] In this late apartheid era the rapidly spreading resistance movements seemed only to grow in strength and numbers and to many Afrikaners it seemed that the position of the Afrikaner in a South Africa under black majority rule was far from secure. Afrikaner society had also opened up to global influences to some extent and there was a slow-dawning (and belated) awareness that things could not go on in the way they had for the preceding forty years. "[G]lobalising cultural impulses" meant that Afrikaners began to view themselves in a less insular way.[233] The political situation had reached critical status in the 1980s and extreme violence, which spread across the entire country, up to the borders in the Angolan and Namibian conflicts, underscored almost all state activity. Afrikaners could no longer continue a closed-off existence; it was impossible to carry on ignoring the inherent problems in the apartheid system. Laubscher contends that in the late 1980s the "logic and grammar" of hegemonic Afrikaner identity ceased to explain or make sense of events for the Afrikaner community. A crisis of identity gripped the Afrikaner nation; "signifiers that were previously fixed became dislodged and started to float, open for re-articulation into a new imaginary".[234]

In the context of the mainstream Afrikaner music Voëlvry amounted to a "small revolution against all the injustice and brainwashing and indoctrination and culture of mediocrity and superficiality".[235] The Voëlvryers emerged from a terrain that had been altered by the work of the *M en L* musicians but the Voëlvry artists took the subtle anti-establishment theme of the *M en L* lyrics and developed it into a full-blown cultural rebellion. The did not deliver obscure messages that required further contemplation with the aid of deep glasses of red wine, as Charles Leonard, quoted in chapter two, put it.

The Voëlvryers' choice of rock 'n' roll as a music genre enhanced the function of Voëlvry as a protest movement. While they would certainly have identified themselves as anti-apartheid protest musicians they chose to remain distinct from the UDF and ANC cultural activities that had increased in the 1980s. This was partly because they felt that artists should operate independently from political organisations that attempted to control the cultural product, and partly because they had an anarchic reluctance to join any movement. This attitude might have come from what Des Latham, quoted in chapter three, describes as a wariness resulting from being constantly told what to do in an authoritarian society.

[232] O' Meara, "*Forty Lost Years*", p. 368.
[233] Grundlingh, "'Rocking the boat?'", p. 490.
[234] Laubscher, "Afrikaner Identity and the Music of Johannes Kerkorrel", p. 311.
[235] Piet Pompies, "Slinkse Publisiteit vir Voëlvry?".

The strength of Voëlvry's cultural rebellion lies in part in the fact that the movement emerged from the belly of the beast. By turning on their own nation, the Voëlvryers contributed, to some extent, to the compromise the Afrikaner mission. They challenged the most fundamental tenet of apartheid: that this system was the best way to protect and nourish the Afrikaner *volk*. How could this be true if a significant proportion of young Afrikaners detested and rejected apartheid and hegemonic Afrikaner culture completely? The Voëlvry rebellion could not be dismissed as *volksvreemd* because it was born out of the Afrikaner nation itself.[236] Voëlvry drew on familiar imagery from the monolithic Afrikaner culture but modified its meaning. It operated within a framework created by the hegemonic Afrikaner culture; this rebellion depended on the existence of its nemesis: Afrikanerdom.

Voëlvry's intrinsic meaning comes from its function as a *cultural* rebellion. Cultural activity has a basic power that can be at once creative and destructive. For those who took part in Voëlvry concerts, the music loosened, if not destroyed completely, Afrikanerdom's grip on the personal freedom of Afrikaners.[237] Voëlvry created a space in which Afrikaner individuals could explore the possibility of a new, more liberated Afrikaner identity.

However, as I have argued, this should not be exaggerated. Voëlvry constituted a loosely formed social movement. Its aims were vague and its political agenda remained unclear. It collapsed in part because apartheid ended and South African society began to change on a fundamental level, but also in large part because of the disagreements and petty fights amongst the musicians.

In a post-apartheid setting, Voëlvry can be said to have apparently taken on greater significance for those who want to feel they were part of the anti-apartheid struggle and contributed in some way to the downfall of the regime, even if they were not part of any anti-apartheid organisation. It has taken on new meaning in a context of new, equally complex identity concerns and processes in an Afrikaner community that is unsure of its place in a transformed and transforming South Africa. While it is true that nostalgia has had an impact on the way in which Voëlvry has come to be viewed by many Afrikaners, this should not prevent us from taking such views very seriously in an assessment of the deeper meaning of Voëlvry. As demonstrated in the letters quoted in chapter three, Voëlvry has become a crucial turning point in the individual lives of many Afrikaners.

I hope to have shown in this study that Voëlvry cannot be dismissed as historically insignificant. In line with Albert Grundlingh's argument, I have shown that it can be considered as social movement, albeit a weak one. I believe that what is so meaningful about the Voëlvry movement is that a group of young Afrikaners emerged from the ranks of Afrikanerdom to reject the behaviour and belief system of their own people. This was not a

[236] For a similar view see Byerly, "Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet".
[237] Andries Bezuidenhout, **"**From Voëlvry To De La Rey", p. 10.

subtle literary rebellion; it was a furious and tormented assault on hegemonic Afrikaner identity, expressed in the form of rock ‘n’ roll, a popular music genre that has been quintessentially associated with protest. Voëlvry illustrates the very profound degree to which these young Afrikaners were affected by growing up as Afrikaners in a context in which their *volk* was responsible for one of the most morally reprehensible and infamous political systems of the twentieth century. Voëlvry also gives an imperfect glimpse into the degree to which hegemonic Afrikaner culture was responsible for trauma *within* the Afrikaner nation. It was not only brave but necessary for these Afrikaners to make a stand against this system and attempt to distance themselves from the heavy burden of guilt that followed from it.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Interviews and informal conversations

Coetzee, Corné (former resident of Yeoville; she knew some of the Voëlvry musicians personally), interviews with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Auckland Park, 24 September; 4 December 2011.

Kalmer, Harry (former resident of Yeoville; he knew some of the Voëlvry musicians personally), interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Observatory, 4 December 2011.

Kalmer, Sanpat (wife of Harry Kalmer, former resident of Yeoville; she knew some of the Voëlvry musicians personally), interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Observatory, 4 December 2011.

Latham, Des (English-speaking musician and journalist and Voëlvry fan; he knew some of the Voëlvry musicians personally), interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Rosebank, 22 September 2011.

Leonard, Charles (former music journalist for *Vrye Weekblad* and Voëlvry fan), interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Auckland Park, 1 December 2011.

Pienaar, Hans (former Yeoville resident; he knew some of the Voëlvry musicians personally), interviews with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Auckland Park and Observatory, 6 June; 4 December 2011; informal conversations with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Auckland Park, 3 February 2012; and throughout 2011.

Ross, Lloyd (founder and owner of Johannesburg-based Shifty Records, the label that recorded and distributed all Voëlvry music), interview with Clara Pienaar, Johannesburg, Killarney, 26 July 2011.

Letters to the Afrikaner website outlinet and other correspondence

C. R. de Wet, "Voëlvry", 7 February 2006, http://www.oulitnet.co.za/senet/senet.asp?id=41947, accessed 27 February 2012.

Coenie K, "*C.R. de Wet, Ek stem saam met jou!"*, 7 February 2006, http://www.oulitnet.co.za/senet/senet.asp?id=41947, accessed 27 February 2012.

Estee, "*Houtstok* en *Voëlvry* Het My Gered!", 8 August 2002, http://www.oulitnet.co.za/senet/senet.asp?id=7043, accessed 27 February 2012.

Kombuis, Koos (musician and former Voëlvry artist), personal correspondence with Clara Pienaar, November – December 2011.

Pompies, Piet "Slinkse publisiteit vir Voëlvry?", 3 May 2002, http://www.oulitnet.co.za/senet/senet.asp?id=6208, accessed 27 February 2012.

Titlestad, Michael (literary scholar, lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand), correspondence with Clara Pienaar, 14 July 2011.

Newspaper articles

Allan, Jani, "Afrikaner pride and passion mix with fun and laughter for the new-era boere punks", *Sunday Times*, 9 July 1989.

Aupiais, Evan, "Rejection of Volk and liberation of Afrikaners", *Cross Times*, August 1989.

Dowson, Jeremy, and Chris Du Plessis, "Kerkorrel en Kie", *The Star*, 27 May 1989.

De Waal, Shaun, "R 'n R headache for guardians of the *volkskultuur*", *Weekly Mail*, 4 June 1989.

---, "Having a National party", *Mail & Guardian*, 24 to 30 November 2006.

---, "Bad-mannered Boerepunk's arrived", *Weekly Mail*, 26 May- 1 June, 1989.

de Vos, Pierre, "Nuwe lied van jong Suid-Afrika", *Die Suid Afrikaan*, 4 June 1990.

Emerson, Tony, and Arlene Getz, "Alternative Afrikaners: Words become weapons to fight apartheid", *Newsweek*, 19 June 1989.

Le Roux, André, "Alternatief? Nee, ons rock en roll!", *Die Burger*, 20 May 1989.

Perry, David, "The Dissent of Man", *The Independent*, 15 February 1990.

Prendini Toffoli, Hilary, "The Alternative Afrikaners", *Style*, February 1989.

Rathbone, Gary, "Far out *van die our Kalahari* with a half-jack of biting satire", newspaper clipping, Historical Papers Archive, collection number AG3212, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Staff reporter, "Pro-Mike Maties in Anti-Voëlvry March", *The Star*, newspaper clipping, Historical Papers Archive, collection number AG 3212, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Secondary sources

Books and journal articles

Akyeampong, Emmanuel K., and Charles Ambler, "Leisure in African History: An Introduction", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 35, 1 (2002), pp. 1–16

Andersson, Muff, *Music in the Mix, The Story of South African Popular Music*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1981.

Ballantine, Christopher, "A Brief History of South African Popular Music", *Popular Music*, 8, 3 (1989), pp. 305–310.

------, "Re-thinking 'Whiteness'? Identity, Change and 'White' Popular Music in Post-Apartheid South Africa", *Popular Music*, 23, 2 (2004), 105-131.

Bindas, Kenneth J., "'The Future is Unwritten': The Clash, Punk and America, 1977-1982", *American Studies*, 34, 1 (1993), 69-89.

Byerly, Ingrid B, "Decomposing Apartheid. Things Come Together, The Anatomy of a Music Revolution", in Grant Olwage (ed.), *Composing Apartheid, Music For and Against Apartheid*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2008.

-----, "Mirror, Mediator, and Prophet: The Music Indaba of Late-Apartheid South Africa", *Ethnomusicology*, 42, 1 (1998), 1-44.

Coplan, David, "The African Musician and the Development of the Johannesburg Entertainment Industry, 1900-1960", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5, 2 (1979), 135-164.

Dewar, William, Clara Pienaar, and Maria Suriano, "Rockey Street: a Comfortable Home for the "Outlawed" Afrikaners: Voëlvry Music, Identity, Place, and Nostalgic Memories of Yeoville (late 1980s - early 1990s)", in, Claire Benit-Gbaffou (ed.), *Yeoville Stories*, UNISA Press, Pretoria, forthcoming.

Du Preez, Max, *Pale Native, Memories of a Renegade Reporter*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2003.

Dunbar T. Moodie, and T. ??? Dunbar, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom, Power, Apartheid and the Civil Religion*, University of California Press, California and London, 1975.

Eyerman, Ron, and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements, Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998.

Fabian, Johannes, "Popular Culture in Africa: Findings and Conjectures", *Africa*, 48, 4 (1978), pp. 315–334.

Fair, Laura, *Pastimes and Politics*: *Culture, Community and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890–1945*, Ohio University Press, Athens, 2001.

Frith, Simon, "Music and Identity", in Stuart Hall and Paul Du Guy (eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity*, SAGE Publications, London, 1996.

Gaitskell, Deborah, and Elaine Unterhalter, "Mothers of the Nation: a Comparative Analysis of Nation, Race and Motherhood in Afrikaner Nationalism and the African National

Congress", in Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (eds.), *Women-Nation-State*, Macmillan, London, 1989.

Gerhart, Gail, and Clive L. Glaser, *From Protest to Challenge, Vol. 6: Challenge and Victory, 1980 -1990*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 2010.

Gilbert, Shirli, "Singing Against Apartheid. ANC Cultural Groups and the International Anti-apartheid Struggle", in Grant Olwage (ed.), *Composing Apartheid, Music For and Against Apartheid*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2008.

Giliomee, Hermann, "'Broedertwis': Intra-Afrikaner Conflicts in the Transition from Apartheid", *African Affairs*, 91, 364 (1992), 339-364.

-----, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2003.

Goosen, Jeanne, *Ons Is Nie Almal So Nie* (We are Not All Like That), HAUM, Pretoria, 1990.

Grundlingh, Albert, "'Rocking the Boat' in South Africa? Voëlvry Music and Afrikaans Anti-Apartheid Social Protest in the 1980s", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 37, 3 (2004), 483-514.

Halbwachs, Maurice (translated by Francis J. Ditter), *The Collective Memory*, Harper and Row, New York, 1980.

Hamm, Charles, "Rock 'n' Roll in a Very Strange Society", *Popular Music*, 5, Continuity and Change (1985), 159-174.

Hebdige, Dick, "The Subculture of British Punk" in Cateforis, Theo (ed.), *The Rock History Reader*, Routledge, New York and London, 2007.

----, *Subculture, The Meaning of Style*, Routledge, London and New York, 1979.

Hopkins, Pat, *Voëlvry: the Movement that Rocked South Africa*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2006.

Jury, Brendan, "Boys to Men: Afrikaans Alternative Popular Music 1986-1990", *African Languages and Cultures*, 9, 2, Gender and Popular Culture (1996), 99-109.

Kirkergaard, Annemette, "Introduction", in Annemette Kirkergaard and Mai Palmberg (eds), *Playing with Identities in Contemporary Music in Africa*, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, 2002.

Kombuis, Koos, *Seks & Drugs & Boeremusiek, Die memories van 'n volksverraaier*, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 2000.

------, *Short Drive to Freedom*, Human and Rousseau, Cape Town, 2009.

Laubscher, Leswin, "Afrikaner Identity and the Music of Johannes Kerkorrel", *South African Journal of Psychology*, 35, 2 (2005), 308–330.

Le Roux, Anelma, "Review of Voëlvry: The Movement that Rocked South Africa by Pat Hopkins", *South African Historical Journal* 60, 4 (2008), 710 – 725.

Mattson, Kevin, "Did Punk Matter?: Analyzing the Practices of a Youth Subculture During the 1980s", *American Studies*, 42, 1 (2001), 69-97.

Mooney, Kate, "'Ducktails, Flick-Knives and Pugnacity': Subcultural and Hegemonic Masculinities in South Africa, 1948-1960", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24, 4 (1998), 753-774.

O' Meara, Dan, *Forty Lost Years, The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948 – 1994*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1996.

Portelli, Alessandro, "What Makes Oral History Different?", in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, Canada and USA, 2006.

---, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories, Form and Meaning in Oral History*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1991.

Tosh, John, *The Pursuit of History*, Pearson Education Limited, Harlow, 2010 (fifth edition).

Vestergaard, Mads, "Who's Got the Map? The Negotiation of Afrikaner Identities in Post-Apartheid South Africa", *Daedalus*, 130, 1, Why South Africa Matters (2001), 19-44.

Vincent, Louise, "Bread and Honour: White Working Class Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s, *Journal of Southen African Studies*, 26, 1 (2000), pp. 61–78.

Walker, Cherryl (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1990.

Unpublished papers and MA dissertations

Bezuidenhout, Andries, "From Voëlvry To De La Rey: Popular Music, Afrikaner Nationalism And Lost Irony", unpublished seminar paper, Department of History, University of Stellenbosch, 2007.

Kahn, Rebecca, "Oop Vir Interpretasie: An Examination of the South African Media's Take-up and Representation of the Music of Fokofpolisiekar", MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2009.

Phillips, Merran W., "The End Conscription Campaign: A Study of White Extra-parliamentary Opposition to Apartheid", MA dissertation, University of South Africa (UNISA), 2002.

Online articles and other sources

Grundling, Erns, "Al Lê die Berge Nog so Blues…", http://www.oulitnet.co.za/klank/ernsjk.asp, accessed 27 February 2012.

De Waal, Shaun, "The Time of Our Lives", http://www.freshmusic.co.za/cherry_liner.html, accessed 7 March 2012.

Oxford English Dictionaries Online, http://oxforddictionaries.com, accessed 6 February 2012.

CDs and DVDs

Lloyd Ross, *Voëlvry, the movie*, Shifty Records, Johannesburg, 2004 (DVD).

Voëlvry, *Die Toer*, Shifty Records, Johannesburg, 2002 (CD).