

On Being Touched by Boeremusiek: Listening as Haptic Event

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Abstract

Grounded in Aristotle, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Derrida and Peter Sloterdijk's reflections on the synesthesia of touch, the haptic sense as "corpus," and the philosophical possibility of the gestation of a bodily apparatus via the ear, this article takes shape around a thought experiment: that musical practices – boeremusiek, in this case – may incubate a particularly tuned ear-body-sensorium with discreet haptic expectations. I pause at an instructive moment in boeremusiek's reception history: when, in 1948, a certain Mr Spies touches the concertina again for the first time, 52 years after taking a vow of musical abstinence. This moment explicates the "tactile corpus" being incubated in the music's psychoacoustic sphere, showing how listening – conceived here as a haptic event – might have shaped a Protestant-Cartesian bodily apparatus, a haptic aesthetic awareness, and a concomitant sense of settler belonging and racial embodiment in South Africa.

Touch; listening; music; race; affect; boeremusiek; embodiment.

Proposition I: The Synesthesia of Touch

"There is no 'the' sense of touch."

With this provocation by Jean-Luc Nancy (2008, 4:119), Jacques Derrida (2005) launches into his extended meditation on touching centered on his reading of Nancy's *Corpus*. At the outset of his exposition, he pauses at Aristotle's take on the essential synesthesia of touch and the concomitant difficulty in isolating the tactile sense. "It is a problem [an aporia]," Aristotle says, "whether touch is a single sense or a group of senses."

It is also a problem, what is the organ of touch; is it or is it not the flesh (including what in certain animals is analogous with flesh)? Or is it instead that the flesh serves as ‘the medium’ of touch, the real organ being situated farther inward [or inside]? (Aristotle, *De Anima*, 422b19, translation informed by Derrida 2005, 5).

The organ of touch is so diffuse, Aristotle reasons, because the tactile sensations or “tangibles” available to it are so varied; unlike the other senses which have as their object a singular kind of thing, the tactile sense incorporates and extends the other senses. What is more, it is not only the body parts exposed to the outside world that registers touch. “Since every part of the body (other than the hair and nails....),” Mark Shiffman (2012, 70) writes in his commentary on Aristotle’s reasoning, “is sensitive to tangibles, it is the whole body and not just the outer skin that serves as medium for touch— including the bodily parts that also serve as organs for other, more localized senses.”

Concluding that the sense of touch is dispersed through the whole body [or the flesh, in direct translation] and that there is thus no singular sense of touch, it is the body itself (inside and out) that serves as the haptic organ. “Thus,” says Aristotle, “the very body must be naturally grown as a medium of that which has the power of touch, through which the multitude of sensations occurs” (*De Anima*, 423a10).

Proposition II: A “Tactile Corpus” of Body and Words

Let this thought resonate for the moment:

Thus the very body [flesh] must be naturally grown as a medium of that which has the power of touch, through which the multitude of sensations occurs.

This is the starting point for Derrida’s discussion of Nancy’s idea of a *corpus of tact* (cf. Derrida 2005, 70). For Nancy, as Donald Landes (2007, 82) has pointed out, touch “presents both the proper moment of sensuous exteriority and the individuation of each sense” so that by “playing across the senses, touch provides the body with the unity proper to a *corpus*.” The body, then, grows out of its ability to act out different senses of touch while remaining rooted in a kind of surplus weight that forms a *corpus*. Under the heading “Weighing,” Nancy (2008, 93) cryptically expounds what he means with the *corpus of tact* in an extensive list of action verbs:

A corpus of tact: skimming, grazing, squeezing, thrusting, pressing, smoothing, scraping, rubbing, caressing, palpating, fingering, kneading, massaging, entwining, hugging, striking, pinching, biting, sucking, moistening, taking, releasing, licking, jerking off, looking, listening, smelling, tasting, ducking, fucking, rocking, balancing, carrying, weighing ...

Touch, Derrida remarks, “is a matter of thinking the body sooner than tactility ... all the senses are included in this tactile corpus, not only touching, but also seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting” (Derrida 2005, 74–75). But in his typical play on the double-senses of words, Derrida places the domain of touch also in the domain of words, homing in on the multiplicity of meanings of the word *corpus* and on the grammar of touch as it emerges in language: *corpus*, as in corpse, body, flesh; but also *corpus*, as in a body of work, categories, words and indices – a “body of words” that includes and excludes, implies the involvement of mostly unnamed others (Who/what is being touched? And by whom?) and runs across a set of actions ranging from the violent (striking) to the soothing (stroking) (Derrida 2005, 70). As Derrida points out with reference to Nancy’s comprehensive and poetic list, touch is thus also an archival corpus of words; the “senses of touch” weigh on physical bodies as much as they weigh on spoken and written language and the indices of touch in the historical sediments of words and gestures. And even on thinking as such.

Proposition III: Listening as the Primal Touch

A different take on the development of the tactile sense emerges in the work of Peter Sloterdijk. Although Aristotle’s (and Nancy’s and Derrida’s) expanded definitions of touch accommodates the (adult) sense of hearing as part of a “tactile corpus,” Sloterdijk ascribes much more importance to the auditory field in the development of a tactile sense and complicates the clear distinction between the active and passive senses of haptic agency (*touching* versus *being touched*). In *Bubbles*, the first part of his Spheres trilogy which deals with human intimacy structures, he considers the fetus encased in its mother’s womb as the primal scene for understanding touch (2011, 477-520). Essentially, Sloterdijk argues, the womb is a resonant psychoacoustic space where the beginnings of subjectivity emerge in relation to and in resonance with the mother’s voice. As the mother speaks to the child, the first touch between them is a sonorous one, and the ear develops in a responsive manner as the first proper organ of touch. Sloterdijk refers to this condition of the incipient human as

bathing in a “Siren State,” where, much like Odysseus strapped to the pole, it is invited and lured into the world by its mother’s first greeting, tailor-made for this particular embryonic being. In this primal welcoming, Sloterdijk muses, the mother’s voice is distinguished from all others in what can be thought of as the original attention economy. It is not so much that the gurgling of the mother’s digestive system and the myriad other sounds that enter the sonosphere of the womb vie for attention with the maternal calling, as that the sound that will later take the name “mother” defines itself from the outset as more significant than others, in the way it addresses itself uniquely as a welcoming to the ear that is in the process of being formed, which responds in kind by developing that particular ability to be addressed. “It is as if the voice and the ear had dissolved,” writes Sloterdijk (2011, 512), “in a shared sonorous plasma – the voice entirely geared towards beckoning, greeting and affectionate encasement, and the ear mobilized to go towards it and be revived by melting into its sound.”

In this process of sonic absorption, the fetus learns a basic discernment that points to an incipient selfhood: the ability to listen or not to listen. If, Sloterdijk muses, the fetus should have sufficient neurological equipment to record and retain this early auditory input, “such neural ‘engravings’ or imprintings would then – like acquired acoustic universals, so to speak – prestructure everything yet to be heard” (2011, 507):

Through prenatal auditions, the ear was equipped with a wealth of heavenly, acoustic prejudices which, in its later work in the noisy pandemonium of reality, facilitate orientation and especially selection. The wonderfully biased ear would thus be capable of recognizing its primal models at the greatest distance from the origin.

The ability to be touched by the maternal voice thereby develops during a sonospheric incubation period in which the ear forms itself around its own individual desire to be touched by its mother in a particular way, which, in turn, forms a blueprint of sorts for the ego’s future desires, discernments, and pleasures.

The Sonic Incubation of a Tactile Corpus

Taken together, these three quite radical propositions: i) the essential synesthesia of touch, ii) touch as a “tactile corpus” of body and words with historical sediments, and iii) hearing as the primal touch, thus points to a fourth: the philosophical possibility of a sonospheric

incubation of a bodily apparatus (i.e. an apparatus of touch) via the ear. And this provides the makings of the thought experiment I will be attempting in this article: proposing that a practice like boeremusiek incubates a particularly tuned ear-body-sensorium with discreet haptic expectations, and to imagine what boeremusiek's gestational "corpus of touch" or "sonorous plasma" might entail. This forms part of a more extended project on boeremusiek and the affective, aesthetic and "sonospheric" entrainment of whiteness via the ear. In this extended project (Froneman Forthcoming), I take as point of departure the reconceptualization of racism and race identity as "technologies of affect" (Hook 2005; Zembylas 2015). Which is to say that, despite its biological impossibility, race is formed through discourse, but not through discourse alone: it survives as a "felt identity" (Tolia-Kelly and Crang 2010), a contingent, affective "event" (Saldanha 2010), and a set of "seemingly 'prediscursive' forms of attachment and belonging" that come to feel "robust" and "substantial" (Hook 2005). My contention here is that music is fundamentally involved in this affective attunement towards racial thinking and feeling, or, then, in the vocabulary of this article, in the seemingly "naturally grown" and biased affective and haptic sensorium by which this empty category of race comes to be embodied and inhabited. Having set the scene for considering listening as a haptic event, I pause at an instructive moment in boeremusiek's reception history to start explicating the phenomenological body, the tactile corpus, incubated in the music's psychoacoustic sphere.

Boeremusiek as Untouchable: An Explication of Boeremusiek's "Tactile Corpus"

This moment, dated 1948, is recorded in a diary entry by Jo Fourie, who went on a number of extended tours of South Africa in the late 1940s and early 1950s to collect boeremusiek's oral history and to transcribe the tunes she encountered (Froneman 2012):

From Babanango I also visited Amsterdam [in what was then the Natal Province] where Mr. and Mrs. Spies gave me valuable information, but only one tune. That was because Mrs. S – out of religious conscientiousness – only agreed to the marriage if Mr. Spies promised to give up the concertina. He did so, and when I visited them in 1948, he had never broken his promise. However, after I had explained to them the value of folk music, and therefore also of our own boeremusiek, they started thinking and feeling differently about the matter. My concertina lay on the table: Mr. Spies takes it lovingly into his hands, turns it around and around, and, not having touched

an instrument for 52 years, plays an old little mazurka, true to style, almost without missing a beat. It was touching [*aandoenlik*] to behold. (Fourie, n.d.)

Here two directly inverse tactile conditions for boeremusiek emerge. The first is that boeremusiek is not to be touched, that it presents itself – first and foremost – as taboo, as untouchable. The second is that it touches precisely because it is untouchable. As part of the exchange of marriage vows that permit sexual touch, Mr. Spies gives up touching his concertina. Implied in this vow of abstinence is a “law of tact” (Derrida 2005, 66) that outlines the limits of touch. For, as Derrida reminds us, “a vow of abstinence could hardly retain us and impose any restraint except where some un-touchable remains at least possible, already possible” (Derrida 2005, 67). “Conversely,” Derrida (2005, 67) continues, “a vow of abstinence would be pointless if touching the tabooed object weren’t, in fact, possible or promised. It is this “promised possibility ... haunting abstinence itself, sometimes to the point of intensifying its transgression,” that lies at the heart of the interdict.

The scene also outlines the limits of abstinence in regulating touch, because while Mr. Spies may have forfeited boeremusiek, the primal mazurka – the “one tune” he can still enliven and that can still enliven him – is held in his fingers even though he hasn’t touched an instrument for 52 years. Here, therefore, the “law of tact” proves incapable of dislodging the “sonorous plasma” that has grown to be part of the musical tactile corpus. How did Mr. Spies retain this haptic knowledge? Did he practice his air concertina in secret all these years, touching boeremusiek without touching it? Or did he catch himself inadvertently fingering out the primal tune on Mrs. Spies’s back? More likely, perhaps, is that Mr. Spies, like St. Augustine after his exposition on the difficulties he encounters when trying to open up his ears to music without sinfully being consumed by it, might have prayed: “Have pity on me and heal me, for you see that I have become a problem to myself, and this is the ailment from which I suffer” (Confessions, X: 33). Betrayed by his muscle memory, touching becomes a kind of undecidable hovering between doing it and not doing it, which is to say that the vow of abstinence cannot protect against boeremusiek’s touch. If touching boeremusiek is a sin, boeremusiek is the sin that keeps on sinning. Here emerges a “tactile corpus” not only in conflict with itself but one caught in the formation of a judgmental and biased Cartesian cogito that prohibits touching and being touched by boeremusiek even while recognizing its touch as primal: meaning that boeremusiek’s touch is always and fundamentally a transgressive one.

Whence this idea of the musical taboo? While the notion of the untouchable resonates in a particular way in this anecdote recorded in 1948 – the year the apartheid government came to power (we’ll get back to this) – the story transports us back to the 1896, when Mr. Spies would have originally taken his vow of abstinence. What he would have abstained from by swearing off the concertina, are late nineteenth-century frontier parties like these, as described by Sophie Levisieur:

The room was small. The floor was made of mis [dung]. The musicians were four yellow boys, with the musical instruments always used at dances in those days. Two Griquas played the violin and concertina, accompanied on a *fluitjie* [mouth organ] and a guitar by two Hottentots. As the dancing and music became fast and furious, the musicians swayed backwards and forwards, and from side to side. The dancers made no sound with their feet on the mud floor, the only sound heard above the music being a shout every now and then of “*askoek*” or “*hiertjou*” from an excited dancer. Occasionally a mournful wail was produced by the guitar of the small Hottentot player who, when the leader of the orchestra called “*vee! vee!*” [sweep, sweep] swept the backs of his nails along the strings of his instrument.

The music stopped with a sudden jerk. Players and dancers were equally exhausted and the whole party flocked out to the veld to partake of birthday cake and coffee.

Refreshed, the dancers went back into the *voorhuis*, which, in the meantime, had been sprinkled with water to settle the dust.

Amid much laughter and fun, Ouma Gouws and Tan’ Hannie announced that they would be the musicians for the next dance, Ouma armed with the concertina and Tan’ Hannie only with her voice. They both sang in high treble voices while Ouma played “*Jan Pierewiet, Jan Pierewiet, staan stil.*” The dancers twirled round and round and sideways, planting each foot in turn on the ground with a thump at the words, “*staan stil*”.

Presently the musicians came back and played “*Die Bitter Bessie Bos*”, the young people squatting on their heels round the room, clapping their hands, singing and laughing, while each couple took turns at dancing in the middle of the floor. (Levisieur 1944, 25)

Where to start.

There's the concertina first played by one of the four "yellow" boys, described as a "Griqua," and then passed on to the Boer matriarch, Ouma Gouws, herself. And then there's the astounding range of haptic gestures (a corpus!) inspired by the music: nails on strings, hypnotic swaying, squatting on heels, jerking, clapping, whirling, singing, stamping, thumping, vocal gestures pushing language to the edge of meaning.

But no, let's start elsewhere: perhaps with the laughter bursting from this strange parcel gathered in a dusty, pulsating room.

"Laughter," writes Nancy,

bursts at the multiple limit of the senses and of language, uncertain of the sense to which it offered – to the sight of color, to the touch of the mouth, to the hearing of the burst, and to the sense without meaning of its own voice. Laughter is the joy of the senses, and of sense, at their limit. In this joy, the senses touch each other and touch language, the tongue in the mouth.

For Derrida (2005, 38), Nancy's description of laughter forms part of a special instance of touch, which he refers to as the syncope or spasm of contact – a "quasi-masturbatory auto-affection" that "comes down to autorerotism lost in pleasure." In this sense of touch, the laughter around the dung floor is a consummation of sorts of the music's haptic possibilities – a giving in to the touch of boeremusiek that is exactly the thing Mr. Spies is promising to abstain from. This suspension of touch-in-laughter, in other words, is of a kind that occurs not because of some prohibition, but because pleasure has reached its limit "to such a point that it's holding its breath, so as to give itself, still, within the syncope, the pleasure of which it is depriving itself" (2005, 38),

In Levisseur's description, though, these limits of touch are drawn across a racially-defined zone of contact, demarcated in time and atmosphere by the presence or absence of the four "yellow boys" in what remains – despite their musical directives that rile up the (white) dancers to the point of exhaustion – a psychoacoustic dome of singular constructive properties. Noteworthy is that (white) frontier laughter erupts exactly at the point when the

“yellow boys” have left the room and the concertina has changed hands. Thus, where previously there was exhaustion and, perhaps, trance, there is now parody. Which dissolves and changes shape again in the last scene when the “yellow” musicians return to participate in a more orchestrated and orderly dance.

What we have here in the breakdown of language and sensing that is the synesthesia of frontier laughter, is a version of what Michel-Rolph Trouillot has called the “Savage slot” in Western discourse: the space reserved for alterity in the articulation of modern (white) selves. In the process of tracing the origins of anthropology as an academic discipline, Trouillot highlights how Western reason has defined itself structurally in relation to so-called “savage” others, noting that in ethnographic accounts, travel writing and utopian fiction, the savage “functions as evidence” in “a metaphorical argument for or against order” (Trouillot 2016, 22). Boeremusiek has functioned in a similar way in relation to whiteness in South Africa: by enabling, through ambiguous and contradictory articulations and performances, the creation and instantiation of a “Savage slot” in white cultural expression on which the definition of whiteness depends. If, though, Western modernity has defined itself in relation to a geographically-removed alterity, an *elsewhere* (Trouillot 2002), Afrikaner whiteness has found that alterity lurking in its own affective objects (like the concertina) in geographies of depth (often manifesting in gradations of colouring) and – importantly – in an own body politics of the *down below*. Thus, the “savage slot” incubated by boeremusiek occurs, as Levisseur’s description shows, not only as a projection onto a racial other (although there is clearly that too) but as an internalized but disjointed economy of taste and sense that pushes the corpus of boeremusiek to the limits of its own whiteness: to the point, in other words, where the racial category attributed to the self threatens to collapse under pressure of a common aesthetic of “wildness” from which “whiteness” behaved dissociation by laughter if the difference between the two were to be upheld.

Fully to appreciate the weight of this threshold as a haptic event, is to understand something of the almost paganistic religious context of Mr. Spies’s vow, and that of Afrikaner settler thinking in the nineteenth century. For white settler society, race was not merely a prejudice against difference, but was entwined with questions of Christian soteriology – the logic or theology of salvation.

According to theologian James Perkinson, soteriological questions contributed fundamentally to the anxieties of European conquest and the concomitant encounter with

difference in Anglo Protestant colonies. In this conquest, black skin not only symbolized a descent into sin, bedevilment, and “a resistance to God so thoroughgoing it had seemingly reproduced its meaning on the surface of the body,” it also “figured a soteriological threshold ... beyond which Christian destiny became dangerously uncertain” (Perkinson 2004, 59–60). Perkinson explains:

Projections about the capacity of the other “to be saved” became a crucial qualifier in what quickly emerged as a kind of conundrum of the colonizer, a dilemma of the duty to evangelize and civilize. On the one hand, if comprehended as “save-able,” then the “wild savages” of these new lands were *de facto* equal to the colonizers as potential spiritual subjects of the Christian message ... But if potentially equal in the economy of salvation, then how could such souls legitimately be exploited as slave-labor, or destroyed as heathen? (Perkinson 2004, 58)

The conundrum of the colonizer of which Perkinson writes, plays out in the white body’s struggle against itself in its confrontation with boeremusiek. “I do not know what I had expected,” write Lennox van Onselen of a dance of the last generation of nomadic *trekboere* (Dutch herders) in the Northern Cape,

Certainly not the hellish cacophony of sound; *the unearthly screeching and wailing that shattered my composure and made me quiver like a leaf in a high wind ...* The ramkie has a musical range of only two notes ... his initial plink-plink whets the appetite but it is the variations on the theme of plink-plink-plank-plank *that sets the audience back on their heels and unleashes the animal in them.* In conjunction with a guitar that should have been strangled whilst it was still a banjo, a concertina that sounded like asthma on the low notes and a scalded cat on the high ones, *the result was what we sinners deserve but are often spared by divine intervention.* (Quoted by (Worrall 2009, 2:49–50)

If boeremusiek is savage, am I? If savagery spells damnation, am I, too, damned for all eternity? This was the anxiety and the pleasure of being touched by boeremusiek, Mr. Spies would’ve explained. Should Mrs. Spies have cared to listen.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the salvation anxiety of white settler society increasingly started to merge and spill over into the myths of Afrikaner nationalism. At the center of the significance attributed to the Great Trek in the commemorative festivals of 1938, for example, was the myth of the Battle of Blood River. Surrounded, outnumbered thirty to one, and facing a sure defeat by the Zulu king Dingane's 14 000-strong army on 16 December 1838, the Boer commandants – so the legend goes – entered into a covenant with God to build a church and for them and their ancestors to observe the day as a Sabbath should they achieve an unlikely victory. The 470 Voortrekkers emerged triumphant with no loss of life, and a century later the myth would play a prominent role in the centenary re-enactment of the Trek with the leaders repeatedly framing the 1938 event as a year-long extension of “Dingane’s Day” – instituted as a religious public holiday in 1910. Isabel Hofmeyr has noted the role of popular historian Gustav Preller in fabricating the “orthodox” meanings of a public festival that was initially only sporadically remembered and observed but, with Preller’s interventions after the Anglo-Boer War, resembled, according to Hofmeyr, “something between a popular festival, *nagmaal*, and that most under-researched popular cultural institution, the circus” (Hofmeyr 1988, 527).

At the time of the 1938 celebrations, though, the festival retained this essential ambiguity between popular spectacle and stern religious event, the significance of “Dingane’s Day” had already been brought seamlessly into connection with the growing racial ideology of the time: the covenant became a script of sorts for the existential Afrikaner fear of black overpowerment.

An argument for the importance of the Afrikaner’s “internal civilization” was set out in J.D. Kestell’s 1928 guide to the proper execution of Dingane’s Day celebrations. Kestell formulated the “lesson of Dingane’s Day” in terms of the “native question of today” and equated the “danger of the native” with the “danger of mixing”:

The danger is therefore that the native will be civilized and that a part of the white race will become less civilized. Somewhere the two groups will then meet, and that will lead to the danger of mixing and even the possibility that the descending white race will end up at a lower level of civilization than the native, so that the native – at least in part – will be in a position of dominance over a part of the formerly civilized white race.

For Kestell this danger could be averted only if the “civilization of the white race” – specifically its “internal civilization” – ceased its downward trajectory and started “climbing higher” (Kestell 1928, 46). It was the “spiritual capacity” of the Afrikaner that had to be developed, especially by observing the “religious and moral ideals and traditions of the *volk*.” Read against the fear of biological and moral miscegenation, the regulation of musical appreciation was therefore no trivial matter; it became an important factor in the ideological struggle for so-called white race purity and the “just separation of the world of the white from that of the native,” in the words of Kestell (1928, 41). Although Kestell’s words prophetically foretold the large-scale geographic refigurations and material displacement of people during apartheid, his concern with the “spiritual capacity” of the Afrikaner suggests that this separation was, first of all, to be effected *internally* – through the purification of white taste.

This is the frame in which twentieth-century denouncements of boeremusiek and dancing are to be read: as sitting between an atavistic – almost pagan – politico-religious quid pro quo logic of savagery and salvation, and the new impetus of an ideologically-driven notion of cultural ascendancy coupled with the fear of miscegenation and racial degeneracy. Thus, in the 52 years that Mr. Spies did not touch his concertina, his abstinence shape-shifted and his haptic sense – including, fundamentally, his sense of whiteness – enfolded itself around the changing meanings of the untouchable that remained to him simultaneously like a mother’s siren song, the sonospheric blueprint of “home.” By 1926, the Transvaal Provincial Synod of the Reformed Church would describe dancing – the urge that remained present in the itch in Mr. Spies’s feet – as an “abominable sin” rooted in “sinful lust” and “waltzes, polkas, mazurkas, Jazz music and the Fox-trott” as “degenerate” (De Klerk and Venter 1926, 6–7). By 1938, the newspapers would be filled with ecstatic denouncements of the Cape Malay song *Suikerbossie* which had gained a particularly strong hold on the “lower half” of the body of its white Afrikaans audience, as one correspondent put it: “As boeremusiek klink, dan smoor die gees dan roer die vlees.” [When boeremusiek sounds, the flesh is bothered, the spirit is smothered” (see Froneman 2014). By 1949 or 1950, Al Debbo and Nico Carstens’s extraordinary rendition of *Alibama* – another Cape Malay song – would have touched Mr. Spies’s ears through the as yet unclassified airwaves of the early apartheid period, a contemporaneous response to the call of the newly rediscovered primal tune in his fingers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAdMvOq41LA>.

As white South Africa's own "anthropological Other," the corpus of boeremusiek spreads itself out over time and across a disjointed economy of taste. In the mouth of Al Debbo and the hands of Nico Carstens, boeremusiek is a confusion of language and sense that, while directed at white audiences, has crossed its own limits. It is a body Cartesian and a body Protestant, affected by the essential soteriological anxiety of the settler making a home in Africa. Codified in this body is the history of race. Its corpus pushes as hard against the threshold of sin as the threshold of savagery and pleasure. Indeed, in this white settler logic of "salvation," these boundaries have become one and the same thing. The corpus of boeremusiek is characterized by an underbelly attached to an overdetermined pair of feet, poised in a hypothetical, preparatory dance-state of ambivalent affective arousal: an itch to dance. Its "cogito" is a haptology of self-judgment, its libido the pull of the sinful. It is auto-erotic: embarrassment is its natural state. Inside the body of boeremusiek beats a heart touched and deformed by racism. The same beat thrums in its equally deformed ear. The black face of boeremusiek is a mask for the whiteness in its veins. As Al Debbo's singing voice pushes past its own tune, and past any sense of a mother tongue, disintegrating into a holler (<https://youtu.be/fAdMvOq41LA?t=128>), the corpus of boeremusiek disavows the black body by perversely pulling it off as its own savagery.

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