Hou my vas, Korporaal: Protesting masculinity in Héniel Fourie's *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*

Juan M. Terblanche

History of Art, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa.

55247296@mynwu.ac.za (ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8467-2717)

ABSTRACT

Idealised notions of heteronormative militaristic masculinity, particularly during the so-called Border War in Southern Africa (1968-1990), were disseminated through South African Defence Force (SADF) publications like *Paratus* (1970-1994). Artist Héniel Fourie, in collaboration with Paula Kruger and Armand Aucamp, ostensibly problematises this heteronormative militaristic masculine idealisation in the short film *Toekoms Spoke*[sic]/*Future Ghosts* (2023) by reflecting on the narrative of an imagined conscript travelling on a train to join the SADF. In *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*, Fourie creatively examines the "burden" of mandatory military conscription and the idealisations of heteronormative militaristic masculinity espoused by the SADF. To analyse Fourie's interpretation of the conscript's defiant masculinity in the short film, I reference Michel Foucault's *The archaeology of knowledge* (1972), where he provides a theoretical framework to analyse discourses. In this article, I argue that the conscript in Fourie's Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts exhibits defiant masculinity in contrast to the heteronormative militaristic masculinity portrayed in the SADF magazine *Paratus*, by juxtaposing stills from Fourie's short film with selected front covers of *Paratus*.

Keywords: Héniel Fourie, (heteronormative/militaristic) masculinity, Michel Foucault, military conscription, *Paratus*, Southern African Border War, South African Defence Force, *Toekoms Spoke*.

Dates:
Received: 2024-11-30
Accepted: 2025-04-24
Published: 2025-07-29

Published by

SCHOOL OF THE ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2617-3255/2025/n39a10

Introduction

In this article, I explore how defiant masculinity is illustrated through the character of the "army" conscript in artist Héniel Fourie's[1] short film (in collaboration with Paula Kruger and Armand Aucamp), *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*[2] (2023). The short film problematises (and also ridicules) heteronormative, militarised masculinity discourses promoted in visual communications such as news broadcasts and magazines, which depict the heteronormative, militaristic masculinity upheld by the SADF during the Southern African Border War.[3] I demonstrate how a select number of cover pages[4] from the SADF magazine *Paratus*, published from 1970-1994, promoted heteronormative, militaristic masculinity during the South African Border War. Additionally, I contrast these cover pages of *Paratus* with video stills from Fourie's short film to indicate how Fourie challenges this heteronormative, militaristic masculinity in *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*. Specific reference is made to the badges *moffie* (translated as faggot), *Die Uwe, Moffie* (Yours Truly, the faggot [my translation]), that appear in the film, and the final frame of Fourie's film, which depicts the army conscript wearing his full military uniform along with women's shoes and effeminate sunglasses to create a gender-transgressive image (see Figure 10). The Afrikaans word *moffie* is a derogatory term used by Afrikaans speakers to refer to men perceived as effeminate or gay (see Pieterse 2013). I argue that this word, depicted on a badge inside the last frames of the short film, becomes 'central to changing representation of abnormal [and] deviant' heteronormative, militaristic masculinity (see Pieterse 2013:610 and both *Moffie* [2019] and *Kanarie* [2018] films).

The publication *Paratus* provides a contextual framework for critically reflecting on the ideals of heteronormative militaristic masculinity during the Southern African Border War, as it depicts a homogeneous heteronormative militaristic masculine ideal through visuals and text. In *Paratus*, idealised heteronormative masculinity was specifically promoted through articles and cover pages featuring white male combatants in the SADF (see Figure 1). *Paratus* fostered a discourse that encouraged fit, white, able-bodied men to fight in the South African Border War, promoting heteronormative militaristic masculine ideals for white South African men to aspire to. In this manner, *Paratus* positioned itself as an important military publication that valorised white militarism in South Africa. By contrasting selected video stills from *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* with the cover pages of *Paratus*, I highlight how the discourses disseminated through *Paratus* are problematised through *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*. Fourie's short film displaces and ridicules the dominant heteronormative militaristic masculine discourse promoted by *Paratus*.

FIGURE **Nº 1**

Front cover of *Paratus*, February 1987. Photo taken by the author. Courtesy National Museum of Military History.

Therefore, I argue that Fourie's film provides a creative reflection on Border War masculine ideals and the prevailing reverence for these ideals that shaped the identities of military conscripts. The conscript in Fourie's short film, when compared to *Paratus*, challenges the idealised heteronormative masculine ideals promoted by *Paratus*, as it underscores a defiant non-heteronormative masculinity absent from dominant SADF discourses (see Figures 2 & 10). This reflection resonates in post-Border War South Africa as it illuminates the historical discontinuities in the discourse on masculinity promoted by the SADF in *Paratus* – mainly since multiple expressions of masculinity can be observed emerging in life and discourses after the South African Border War (see Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger 2012).

FIGURE Nº 2

Video still from chapter three of *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* depicting the word *moffie*. YouTube. Screenshot by author.

Michel Foucault's concept of discontinuity in discourses, as formulated in *The archaeology of knowledge* (1972), serves as a theoretical point of departure for analysing the discursive formations contrasted in this article, namely *Paratus* and Fourie's short film, because this notion of discontinuity in discourses also sheds light on the discontinuities of discursive formations surrounding masculine identities in the context of the South African Border War and its representation by Fourie in the post-Border War period (see Connell 2016; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Foucault's conceptualisation of discursive formations should not be seen as a structuralist method, but rather as a theoretical approach that 'uncovers the principles and consequences of an autochthonous transformation taking place in the field of historical analysis' (Foucault 1972:15). Thus, Foucault does not impose a structured order on historical analysis; instead, he questions history's 'teleologies and totalisations' (Foucault 1972:15). In this regard, the SADF's promotion of discourses of masculinity during the 1980s are examined to understand how a "general history" was 'concealed' during this period, primarily focusing on the "total history" as presented by the SADF (see Figures 1,3,7 & 9). Total history refers to a historical framework defining a specific period – its characteristic unity that establishes 'a system of homogeneous relations' (Foucault 1972:9). In contrast, a general history problematises total history, because it identifies its discontinuities; 'this is not because it is trying to obtain a plurality of histories juxtaposed and independent of each other' (Foucault 1972:9). Foucault (1972) emphasises the tension between dominant discourses and those that disrupt historical knowledge, noting that conventionally, history offered 'the sovereignty of consciousness

with a safer, less exposed shelter than myths, kinship systems, languages, sexuality or desire' (Foucault 1972:14). Consequently, Foucault (1972:14) highlights the epistemic breaks observable in different historical periods, as they operate under distinctly varying regimes of knowledge. In this context, the dominant discourse propagated through Paratus during the Southern African Border War has influenced and maintained continuity in the discursive formations that upheld heteronormative masculine ideals during the time of its publication and dissemination.

In the following sections of this article, I focus on (i) contextualising Fourie's short film, (ii) discussing the issues related to defining masculinity, (iii) elaborating on the discourse of heteronormative militaristic masculinity during the Border War and how it can be framed within Foucauldian discourse analysis, and (iv) contrasting selected cover pages of *Paratus* with stills from *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*.

FIGURE Nº 3

Front cover of *Paratus*, April 1988. Photo taken by the author. Courtesy National Museum of Military History.

Contextualising Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts

The central theme of *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* is the Southern African Border War, featuring the army conscript (Figure 4) and his reflections on the past, present, and future through video montages of news broadcasts and popular Afrikaans songs, and how this affects *his* masculinity. In their artists' statement,[5] Fourie, in collaboration with Paula Kruger and Armand Aucamp, notes that the conscript is travelling on a train to join the army due to the mandatory military service for young men. Contextually, Fourie's (see footnote 1) film primarily focuses on the final phases of the Border War in South Africa during the 1980s, reflecting on the conscript's memories, thoughts, and uncertainties during this period.

FIGURE **Nº 4**

Video still from *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* depicting a close-up of the main character of the conscript. YouTube. Screenshot by author.

In the first chapter of the film, Fourie montages a clip of Prime Minister HF Verwoerd (1901-1966),[6] showing him delivering a speech to the (white) nation, assuring them that the '[South African] republic is the only sure and stable flow that the western nations have in Africa' (Fourie quoting Verwoerd's words 2023). This speech by Verwoerd establishes the tone for the conscript's past reflections and future understanding of *his* masculinity as the viewer observes his journey to the army. As the film progresses, the

viewer and the conscript contemplate his experiences through video montages and iconographic badges created by Fourie and Kruger, accompanied by songs from the Alternative Afrikaans movement *Voëlvry* (translated as "free bird").[7] It should be noted that *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* offers a plethora of, sometimes tongue-in-cheek, memorabilia and objects related to Afrikaner culture in the iconographies of shots. These items are visible in the conscript's train compartment, alongside badges worn on clothing that are relevant to Afrikaner culture of the time, and which become part of Fourie's reflections on this culture.

FIGURE **Nº 5**

Video still from *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* depicting iconographic badges pinned to the conscript's army jacket. YouTube. Screenshot by author.

These iconographic badges (see Figure 5 for some of these badges), created by Fourie and Kruger, are continually transformed throughout each cinematographic chapter. At the film's beginning, the conscript is shown wearing civilian clothing (Figure 6). Only towards the end of the film does the viewer see the conscript in his military uniform, however, rather provocatively accompanied by women's shoes and sunglasses that appear to be those of a woman, along with the badges depicted in the various chapters of the short film (see Figure 10).

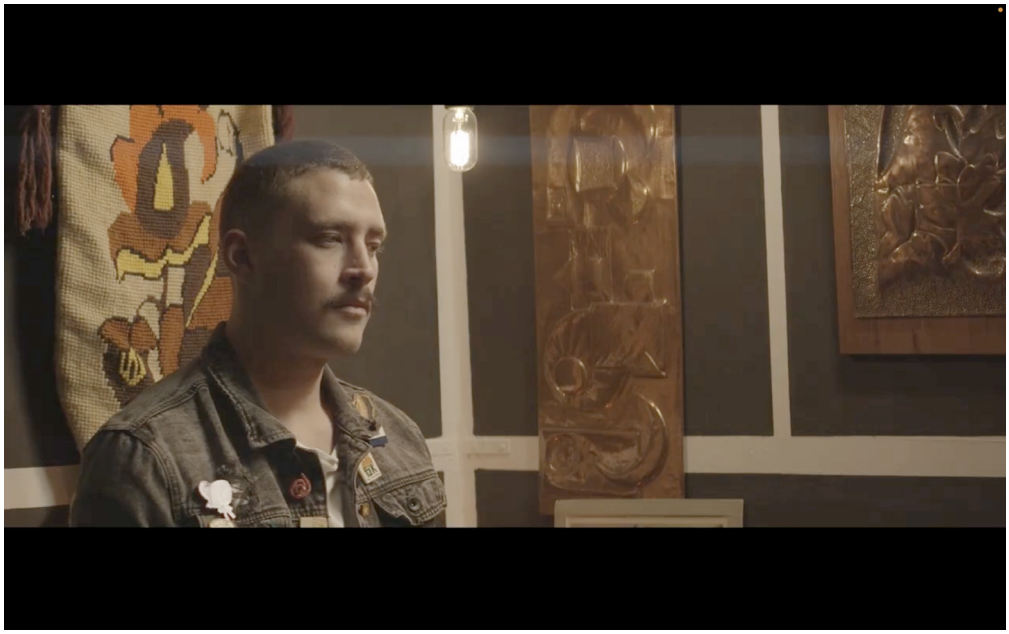

FIGURE Nº 6

Video still from *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* depicting the main character of the conscript. YouTube. Screenshot by author.

Fourie montages daily life in South Africa (chapter one), offers a type of news broadcast on the South African Border War (chapter two), depicts army conscripts tending their barracks (chapter two), shows video footage of the Border War (chapter two), captures marching cadets (chapter one), and features conscripts standing at attention (chapter three). These video montages of the South African Border War, army conscripts, and marching cadets serve as military discourses creatively utilised by Fourie as a reflective tool for the conscript. In the film, these video montages are contrasted with popular Afrikaans songs, which include a well-known song by Jim Reeves, *Ver in die ou Kalahari* (Far in the old Kalahari), a song by Die Briels, *Die trein na Pretoria* (Train to Pretoria), as well as two popular songs by Bernoldus Niemand, *Hou my vas, Korporaal* (Embrace me, Corporal), and *Boksburg Bommer* (Boksburg Bomber). *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* thus explores and problematises notions of idealised militaristic masculinity as promoted during the South African Border War, presenting Fourie's perspective on an army conscript's dreams, aspirations, and future within the context of the Border War, ultimately expressing the conscript's masculinity in a way that challenges militaristic discourses centred around the war, as promoted through the SADF magazine *Paratus*.

Framing Afrikaner masculinity in relation to nationalism and the commando

From the outset, it should be noted that a clear and precise definition of masculinity is challenging to establish (Connell 2016; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). The understanding of hegemonic masculinity has been significantly contested as a conceptual subject, as it can be argued that multiple masculinities exist (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005:830). This article demonstrates that such a masculine expression exists by contrasting video stills from *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* with cover pages from *Paratus*. Raewyn Connell (2016:304) questions whether the Gramscian term "hegemony" can be applied to understanding how masculinity functions, especially within a post-colonial context. Indeed, Connell (2016:304) proposes that our understanding of masculinity should be decolonised, because masculinity is performed in various contexts of the globalised world. Within a South African paradigm, masculinity is often linked to various cultural groups with different masculine characteristics and expressions. For this article, I focus solely on white (Afrikaans) masculine expressions within the context of the Border War, given the film's content, which plays on white Afrikaans masculine ideals promoted during this war.

White Afrikaans masculine ideals, particularly during the historical period of the Southern African Border War, can be linked to the construction of a "rebel" (but militarised characteristic) masculinity idealised by the image of the commando (Morrell *et al* 2012:21). Indeed, Megan Hillman (2023:58-59) emphasises that the white, primarily Afrikaner militaristic masculine identity was mainly framed around the notion of the commando. The commando and the identity of the military fighter promoted 'heterosexuality, Christianity, [and] muscular masculinity', which defined an Afrikaner identity profoundly associated with militarism – as also perceived in the cover pages of *Paratus* referenced in this article. In addition to the commando, the masculine ideals propagated to mainly white Afrikaner men were also constructed based on Puritanical views that favoured the patriarchal and hierarchical dissemination of masculinity according to the Christian teachings of the Dutch Reformed Church (Hillman 2023:53). While existing literature[8] has examined the construction of an Afrikaner identity and how masculinity was shaped by historical events related to Afrikaner males and their identity, it is important to note that Afrikaner identity traces its origins to, *inter alia*, the Great Trek of 1838 onwards, and the South African Wars of 1880-1881 and 1899-1902 – known in the Afrikaans culture as the first and second Boer Wars, in which Afrikaners fought against British Imperialism. Furthermore, the "conceptualisation" of an Afrikaner identity was activated through the Voortrekker centenary celebrations, which retrospectively helped to formulate this identity (Hillman 2023:70-71). Leswin Laubscher (2005:309) observes that these historical events played a significant role in shaping the understanding of the Afrikaner and adds that the rise of the National Party

(NP), established in 1914, also contributed to this identity formation. Although not the central theme during the Southern African Border War, Afrikaner masculinity has its roots in Afrikaner Nationalism and the construction of an identity that was not influenced by British rule[9] (Hillman 2023:59-60).

As noted, then, Afrikaner Nationalism is a complex ideological discourse predominantly rooted in the two South African Wars, 1880-1881 and 1899-1902 (Giliomee 2003:6-7). According to Kobus du Pisani (2004:81) and Arthur Keppel-Jones (1979:50), the Afrikaans language was developed with a sense of "urgency" as a common language with concomitant national identity during these two crucial South African Wars. It became part of a relatively homogeneous identity among the Afrikaners at the time, contributing to the emergence and, indeed, the idealisation of a peculiar Afrikaner masculinity based on the commando.[10] In relation to the Afrikaans language and nationalism, Du Pisani (2004:584) notes that the ideal of Afrikaner Nationalistic masculinity emerged around the Afrikaans language and the strong masculine figures of Boers, hunters, and warriors depicted in historical accounts of Afrikaner men. Furthermore, Du Pisani (2001:57) explains that Afrikaner Nationalism was a racist, militaristic, and authoritarian ideology centred on expectations of male behaviour; these ideologies were interwoven into the social fabric through hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity represented by historical masculine figures (see Verwey & Quayle 2012:553).

Military discourse during the South African Border War and mandatory army conscription

The fit, able-body of the white conscript became the foundation of the heteronormative militaristic ideals that framed masculinity, believed to transform young soldiers into "responsible" men (Mankayi 2010:23-24; see *Paratus* August 1971:32-33; see *Paratus* February 1985:20-21; see Figures 1 & 3). In this context, military service was viewed as a 'rite of passage' of becoming and performing heteronormative masculinity and an honour-bound duty (Hillman 2023:96). Because conscription was mandatory, an average white, eighteen-year-old male began his two years of compulsory military service after completing school, which included at least one six-month tour of duty in an Operational Area (the South African border, northern Namibia, or Southern Angola). In this regard, 'military national service was the only acceptable and legitimate performance of masculinity and citizenship for white men to undertake' (Conway 2013: 34, 56). White national servicemen in South Africa were celebrated as heroes and guardians of the nation. Through conscription, white South African men earned recognition as "real" men and patriots of South Africa (see *Paratus* August 1971:32-33; *Paratus* February 1985:20-21,

see Figure 1). The state consequently romanticised heteronormative militarised masculinity as a vital role for men to fulfil. This propagandised ideology reinforced the notion that conscription was a "rite of passage" through which men developed and discovered their masculine identity (Crous 2006:52; Drewett 2008:94; Conway 2013:57). An article published by *Paratus* in August 1971 (32-33) further emphasises this masculine identity with a piece titled *Van 'n skoolseun na 'n MAN* (From a schoolboy to a MAN [my translation]), noting that when the schoolboy enters military training, he ceases to be an immature young man and instead becomes a soldier and, importantly, a man. After a year of national service in the army, their parents 'would not recognise them anymore' (Paratus 1971:32-33).

Thus, militarisation had a profound impact on the lives and identities of young white males, because great significance was attached to being a good soldier, defined as the "true man" who fought communism in the Border War. These men were seen as elite and formed part of the masculine ideal embraced by the SADF (Baines 2020) or, as Marius Crous (2006:53) notes, the 'glorified phallus'. This notion of being a good soldier was justified by referencing previous military campaigns in Afrikaner history, particularly the South African wars (Du Pisani 2001:165; Crous 2006:52).

PW Botha, who became Prime Minister of South Africa in 1978 (until 1984), transformed Afrikaner Nationalist ideology into a dominant discourse focused on militarisation (Baines 2020:277). Indeed, Botha's primary interest was expanding and modernising the SADF (Baines 2020:275). However, for Botha to justify the complete militarisation of South Africa, militaristic discourses were employed to generate esteem surrounding conscription and being part of the SADF. Propaganda promoting heteronormative masculine identities in the SADF began in schools and was advanced through *Die Voortrekkers*, established in 1931 (equivalent in some ways to the Boy Scouts), and cadets (see Drewett 2008:95, 108; see *Paratus* October 1984:20). It is important to note that the inculcation of white men with Afrikaner, nationalist, and racist ideology predates the Border War, as Du Pisani (2001:165) above indicates. Early indoctrination began with schoolboys' tours of and participation in army training camps (see *Paratus* January 1985:55). As part of the school curriculum, Christian National Education (CNE), instituted in 1948, taught young white boys to show respect for authoritative figures and national symbols (Baines 2020:280).

Additionally, boys were educated about the threat of communism to the Afrikaner nation. Some of these threats included rock music and media promoted through capitalism (Baines 2020:280). It is important to note that the *Voëlvry* movement of the 1980s, referenced by Fourie in *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* (see Hopkins 2006; Suriano & Lewis 2015:405), became another threat to masculine ideals propagated through militarisation as artists from the movement employed parody and satire in their lyrics to challenge hegemonic masculine ideals disseminated by the government.

In *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*, references are made to various *Voëlvry* songs and lyrics, as depicted by Fourie's iconographic badges. The most satirical of these songs, in the context of masculinity in *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*, is the informal leader of Voëlvry, Bernoldus Niemand's *Hou my vas, Korporaal* (Embrace me, Corporal), which tells the story of a soldier who, instead of turning to prayer, asks his Corporal to embrace him (a homosexual suggestion, indeed) and help him through his experience in the army, understanding that he is serving in the military not by choice, but out of duty (Drewett 2008:115). Later in the article, I reflect on this satirical song within the context of *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*.

Contextualising heteronormative militaristic masculinity within Foucauldian discourse analysis

Although a homogeneous understanding of heteronormative militaristic masculinity informs the discursive underpinning of this article and how an "ideal" masculinity was constructed during the Border War, alternative discourses presented through Fourie's film create different discursive possibilities regarding a masculine expression that problematises that of the SADF (Crous 2006; Drewett 2008; Conway 2012; Sonnekus 2013). To comprehend these alternative discourses that inform a subjugated masculinity within *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*, I reference Michel Foucault's *The archaeology of knowledge* (1972), where he examines the articulation of discourses (the unities of the discourse and the discursive field), the object the discourse focuses on, and how these discursive formations are established. The rules of discourse formation within the context of the article are influenced by images disseminated by *Paratus* (see Figures 1, 3, 7 & 9) and employed as rhetoric by the SADF to create an idealised masculinity. Foucault (1972:31-39) also examines which topics should be included or excluded from a discourse, along with the conceptual and strategic formation of a given discourse. Foucault (1972:45) posits what an object of study (in this instance, heteronormative militaristic masculinity) is to be rather than what it is in itself (Elden 2023:164). In the context of this article, a central concern is how heteronormative militaristic masculinity was conceptualised during the Border War, and how a publication such as *Paratus* played a crucial role in promoting this militarised, as well as idealised masculinity.

Secondly, Foucault (1972:50-55) discusses the enunciative modalities of discourse, highlighting the numerous questions that must be considered concerning these discourses. Here, the promotion of a homogeneous heteronormative militaristic masculinity occupied a hierarchically favoured position compared to all other gender expressions, along with the various masculine expressions that were not aligned with heteronormative militaristic

masculinity (see Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Connell 2016). Thirdly, Foucault addresses the authority of the speaking subject, the institutional site it draws from, and the relevance of the speaking subject to the object (Foucault 1972:50; Elden 2023:164). In the context of the present article, the authority of the subject is the SADF magazine *Paratus*, which served as an extension of the government and its perspective on promoting a hierarchical structure of gender expression. In this sense, the homogeneous understanding of heteronormative militaristic masculinity, as formulated before and during the Border War, constitutes a homogeneity of the discourse concerning masculine expression at the time. The difference in the discourse, as found in *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*, becomes the visual discourse problematised in Fourie's film through juxtaposing video stills of the film with cover pages of *Paratus*.

Regarding the idealisation of hegemonic militaristic masculinity that was romanticised during the Border War, militaristic masculinity can be framed in Foucauldian terms as a discursive formation. However, this discursive formation should not be viewed as bound by time, but rather as a dynamic field that can change, as it is not compelled by 'temporal processes' (Elden 2023:165). Based on this notion, the formation of objects and their enunciative modalities highlight the current concern of heteronormative militarised masculinity and subjugated masculinity, as presented in this article. In this sense, objects within discourse formations establish a group that focuses on a specific subject, as noted previously. However, this does not alter the understanding of the object (see Foucault 1972:44). Given the romanticisation of military masculinity, the government that promoted compulsory military conscription focused on young, impressionable men who could be shaped into obedient soldiers prepared to fulfil their military duties (see Foucault 2020:136).

The propagandist machine did not change the object it focused on; instead, it altered the rhetoric surrounding the idealisation of the soldier. As explained below, each issue of *Paratus* shifted its focus on how to justify the Border War. However, *Paratus* concentrated on upholding a masculine ideal that each soldier should aspire to. In this context, the object of heteronormative militaristic masculinity existed under 'positive conditions of a complex group of relations' that were connected to institutions (SADF), behavioural patterns (how men were expected to behave), and normative systems (see Foucault 1972:45). Still, while this type of masculinity was promoted, it did not 'define its internal constitution, but what enables it to appear, to juxtapose itself with other objects to situate itself in relation to them, to define its difference […] even perhaps its heterogeneity' (see Foucault 1972:45). In this sense, heteronormative militaristic masculinity was promoted as a goal for men to aspire to. Still, it positioned gendered roles within a hierarchical order; female roles were not "unconsidered" but instead placed within this hierarchical system in relation to the masculine ideal. Heteronormative militaristic masculinity became a homogeneous ideal, and in this context, diverse masculine expressions were not

tolerated (see Du Pisani 2001; Drewett 2008; Boshoff & Conradie 2023; Conway 2012; Pieterse 2013; Baines 2020).

FIGURE **Nº 7**

Front cover of *Paratus*, October 1984. Photo taken by the author. Courtesy National Museum of Military History.

Secondly, the enunciative[11] modality discerns the discursive field and indicates how objects should be viewed. In this context, a hierarchical structure manifests as particular behavioural traits and characteristics are promoted over others; '[t]hus conceived, discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined' (Foucault 1972: 55). In light of this argument, the obedience required of military men contributes to the dispersion of their self-identity and how this identity is shaped by external factors, to which they may contribute knowingly or unknowingly (Figure 7). The SADF soldier thus becomes a constant object that can be persistently reinvented to reshape the understanding of heteronormative militaristic masculinity. Furthermore, regarding the Foucauldian discursive formation of heteronormative

militaristic masculinity within the context of SADF propagandist rhetoric, heteronormative militaristic masculinity then becomes a 'total history' (see Figures 1, 3, 7 & 9); 'the face of the period from which a system of homogenous relations was created since these relations seek to preserve the sovereignty of the subject' (Foucault 1972:10- 12).

In contrast, subjugated masculinities, or masculinities that diverge from the ideal, represent a 'general history' as they attempt to indicate how different discursive formations are created and how they transform historical knowledge (Foucault 1972:10-12; see Figures 5, 6 &10). Thus, history and historical documents examine what documents say, and how they are assembled to formulate an understanding of a historical period, considering what is included or excluded – as well as the reasons behind these choices (Foucault 1972:10). History is no longer unified, particularly regarding the authoritative figure and the relevance of historical knowledge. A division emerges that integrates with other fields (Foucault 1972:11). In this context, the historical authority of heteronormative militaristic masculinity is problematised through the field of creative expression in Fourie's *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*.

Framing subversive masculinity in *Toekoms Spoke/ Future Ghosts* in contrast with *Paratus*

The SADF magazine *Paratus* became an essential publication for disseminating and justifying the South African Border War and the accompanying compulsory military service, as illustrated by the various cover pages referenced in this article. It reinforced clear binary gender norms, depicting men as warriors who not only defended the nation, but also protected women and children at home, who were vulnerable to the threats facing the country (Drewett 2008:102-103). The October 1984 cover of *Paratus* displays an instance where SADF soldiers were portrayed defending and protecting South African citizens. A headline from this edition states, *Waar die leeus brul, hou hulle ons land veilig* (Where the lions roar, they [SADF soldiers] keep our country safe [my translation]), indicating that the SADF soldier is valorised as the sole protector of the nation. Importantly, the soldier featured on this cover appears "ready" to defeat the "enemy".

Anneke Nel (2019) conducted a systematic analysis of *Paratus* for her Master's degree in publishing, noting that the magazine was initially published as *Kommando* (Commando) from 1949-1970, before changing its name to *Paratus* in 1970. The name *Paratus* is etymologically rooted in the Afrikaans word *paraat*, which roughly translates to a state of readiness or being prepared. This theme of 'preparedness' resonates throughout the magazine's content, which features information on ranks, armaments, and military

strategies (Nel 2019:13), highlighting the importance of military readiness against the so-called threat of communism. Furthermore, upon closer inspection, the cover pages highlighted in this article represent the SADF soldier as a ready combatant. In contrast, the military conscript in *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* appears uneasy, not "masculine" in the conventional sense, and ridiculously unprepared for his military responsibilities. Specifically, in Figure 8, the conscript looks "uneasy" while travelling by train, acutely aware of his impending military duty and the masculine role he is "obligated" to fulfil.

FIGURE **Nº 8**

Video still from *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* depicting the main character of the conscript. YouTube. Screenshot by author.

Paratus aimed to highlight and report on events and ideas central to the SADF. It was one of the few magazines permitted to publish content and images related to the SADF (Nel 2019:14). Additionally, Nel (2019:57-59) suggests that *Paratus* can be seen as an autobiography of the SADF, promoting bias and underscoring its primary focus: promoting the Border War among Afrikaans citizens. Indeed, the covers discussed in this article highlight *Paratus*'s objectives (see Figures 1, 3, 7 & 9). Thus, *Paratus* became the primary propaganda "tool" of the SADF. This is reinforced by two slogans featured in the magazine: from 1975-1978, the slogan was *South African Defence Force*, which was subsequently changed to the *Official periodical of the South African Defence Force* from 1979-1985. Moreover, white male SADF soldiers were the preferred representation on the covers of

Paratus, alongside advertisements for alcohol and cigarettes that appealed to their masculinity – an important aspect of military life in the SADF (Nel 2019:138, 145, 217).

FIGURE Nº 9

Front cover of *Paratus*, October 1986. Photo taken by the author. Courtesy National Museum of Military History.

Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts creatively (and critically) reflects on the heteronormative, militaristic masculinity portrayed by magazines such as *Paratus*. Considering the cover pages of *Paratus* referenced in this article (see Figures 1, 3, 7 & 9), *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* depicts a defiant masculinity, as the short film opposes these heteronormative masculine ideals, evident in Fourie's iconographic badges, specifically those depicting *moffie* and *Die Uwe, Moffie* (see Figures 2 & 5).

Fourie explores both the definition and redefinition of these terms, while problematising and ridiculing heteronormative militaristic masculinities as framed within SADF propaganda (see Crous 2006:50). He does so by creatively transforming a masculine expression understood to be "deviant" into one that challenges heteronormative militaristic masculinity – especially when this iconographic badge is placed on the uniform of the conscript.

Further contributing to this ridiculing of heteronormative militaristic masculinity, the short film concludes with the army conscript dressed in women's shoes and effeminate sunglasses alongside his military uniform (see Figure 10). In this context, Fourie's creative agency in the film critiques the homogeneous discourses propagated through propaganda aimed at promoting heteronormative masculine ideals during the Border War. This is particularly evident when Figures 3 and 10 are juxtaposed: Figure 3 depicts SADF soldiers wearing army boots, while Fourie, in Figure 10, defies this heteronormative image by placing women's shoes on the conscript alongside his military uniform. The conscript becomes, rather ridiculously in the context of how masculinity was viewed and promoted, a "drag queen" of sorts. Indeed, the cover pages of *Paratus*, referred to in this article, interpret the Southern Africa Border War as a type of heterosexual (and heteronormative) conflict in which 'propaganda was used to suppress any questioning of the necessity of the war and the macho world of killing and fighting' (Crous 2006:52).

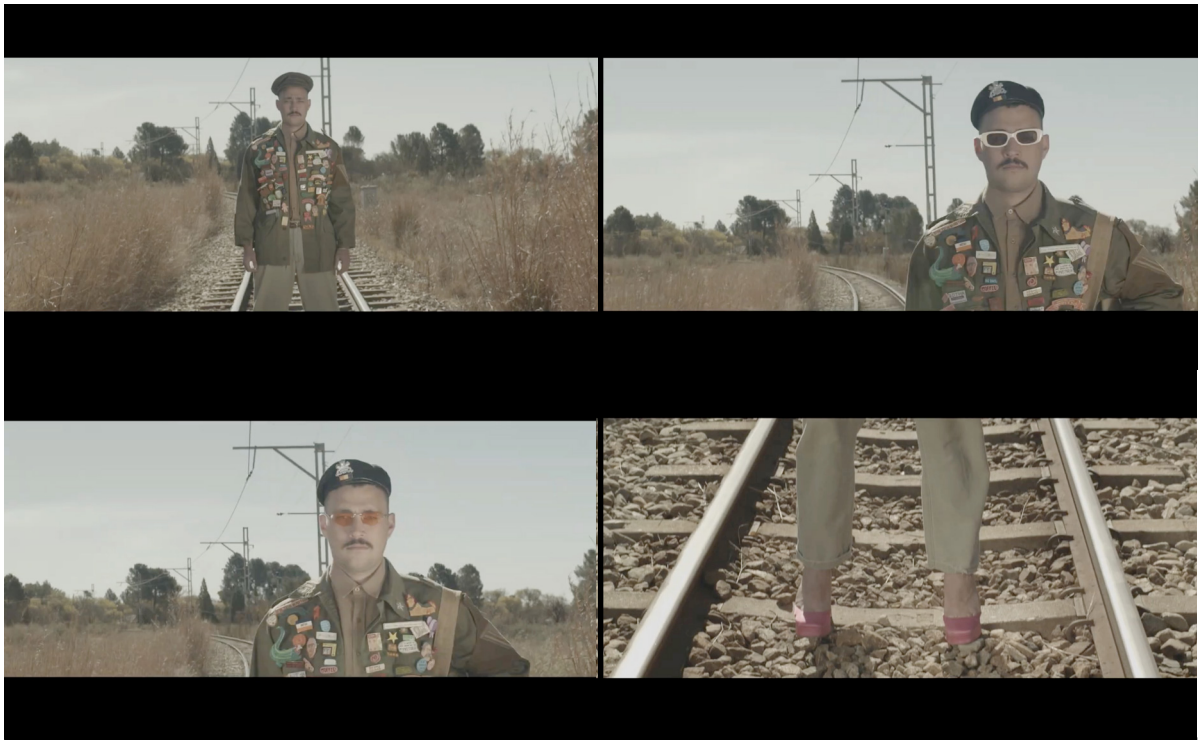

FIGURE **Nº 10**

Composite image from *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* of the army conscript in military uniform wearing women's shoes. YouTube. Screenshot by author.

Consequently, *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* serves as a post Border War creative reimagining and critique of heteronormative militaristic masculinity following the Border War (illustrated in Figure 10 and the term *moffie* in Figures 2 & 5). It explores the intricate

dynamics of conforming to and resisting such masculinity in the film, contrasting it with *Paratus*. In this framework, *Paratus* idealises heteronormative militaristic masculinity, establishing a dominant discourse on expected male behaviour and revealing how these ideals contribute to a "slippery definition" of masculinity, which, to a certain extent, continues to do so (see Sonnekus 2013:23-24; see Figures 1, 7, & 8). Fourie investigates and ridicules these "slippery definitions" within the context of *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*, reflecting on the "future" of multiple masculine expressions.

In this context, a critical reflection on the main character of the conscript positions masculinity discourses within a field that invites possibilities that are not necessarily aligned with the ideological framework that has marginalised masculinities beyond the hegemony of Afrikaner Nationalism (see Pieterse 2013). Du Pisani (2001:171-172) observes that many Afrikaans men have since, and are still, striving to liberate themselves from obsolete militarised nationalistic ideologies, aiming to create diverse representations and expressions of Afrikaner masculinity that can coexist within the wider Afrikaner community. These white Afrikaans men strive to cultivate individualistic identities that reject the conservative ideals of Afrikaner masculinity. Consequently, 'Afrikaner masculinity no longer prescribes ideals of masculinity to South African society at large' (Du Pisani 2001:172). This is particularly true in conceptual spaces like *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*.

In response to the cover pages of *Paratus* that endorse heteronormative militaristic masculinity, Fourie constructs a defiant type of masculinity in the context of *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* that does not align with those promoted by *Paratus*. This is achieved through the iconographies developed by Fourie and Kruger, including the badges attached to the conscript's jacket(s), as well as through songs like *Hou my vas, Korporaal* and *Boksburg Bommer* referenced in the film. These elements re-contextualise each montage in the film, critiquing the notion of heteronormative militaristic masculinity.

The songs referenced in the film become significant satirical anecdotes that criticise not only mandatory military service, but also heteronormative militaristic masculinity. Moreover, these elements of the film contribute to a layered satirical reflection on masculinity as promoted by the SADF, as well as the moustache that the conscript dons in the film. Only "truly masculine men" earned the right to 'possess particular body parts' which was demonstrated by the "right" to grow a moustache, since the moustache was associated with notions of the 'masculinised and militarised body', through which men conformed to military ideals (Drewett 2008: 112; see Figure 10). The alternative masculinity portrayed by Fourie in *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* is thus understood as subverting heteronormative militaristic ideals by placing the conscript in women's shoes alongside a moustache, satirising heteronormative militaristic masculinity since this is not typically linked to the heteronormative military attire, which is expected to evoke a sense of certainty reflecting

external power relations (see Tynan & Godson 2019:1). The military uniform is designed to convey uniformity and homogeneity rather than individuality (see Tynan & Godson 2019:1). In this regard, it should embody the masculinity it represents rather than being reappropriated to express individuality and masculinity that extend beyond the heteronormative militaristic masculine ideal promoted by the SADF (see Figures 5, 6, & 8).

The ghosts of the future in Fourie's short film critique subjugated, silenced or alternative masculinities, contrasting them with the dominant heteronormative militaristic masculinity as portrayed in *Paratus*, envisioning a future where the SADFs hegemony does not primarily define masculine identity. Set against the backdrop of the Border War, the film invites viewers to contemplate the absurdity of heteronormative militaristic masculine ideals propagated through sources like *Paratus*, highlighting the futility of maintaining these standards. Notably, some men who did not conform to these ideals still failed to experience a positive transformation in their masculinity from mandatory military service. As a result, *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* confronts patriarchal values. Nevertheless, Du Pisani (2001:172) notes that these heteronormative masculine identities persist and may re-emerge.

Conclusion

The SADF used publications like *Paratus* to promote a form of militaristic masculinity based on heteronormative ideals. These publications shaped clear expectations for how men should behave, what they should believe, and how they should look. According to the Foucauldian analysis provided in this article, this form of masculinity became central to these publications, existing under 'positive conditions of complex relations' (Foucault 1972:45) linked to the SADF, further reinforcing traditional gender expressions. In this context, Fourie's work, *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*, thoughtfully examines the influences that shaped this militaristic masculine identity through the use of iconographic badges and a reappropriation of military uniforms. Fourie satirically critiques the norms promoted by *Paratus*, positioning *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts* as a challenge to conventional militaristic masculinity by questioning the portrayal of the soldier as the ultimate embodiment of SADF ideals, suggesting that it is not the only valid expression of masculinity.

Acknowledgements

I want to express my gratitude to Ditsong Museums of South Africa: National Museum of Military History, and Mr David Riley-Harris for allowing me access to their archive to conduct research for this article.

Notes

1. I speak of Fourie as the main artist, although the others' contributions are acknowledged.
2. Héniel Fourie (2023), *Toekoms Spoke/Future Ghosts*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAcNcRj1QQA. Exhibited as part of the *Stairways and Ruins* exhibition at North-West University Gallery in 2023
3. The so-called Southern Africa Border War of the 1970s and 1980s was a series of conflicts that was justified as resistance to communism to protect South Africa against this imminent danger (Baines 2020:276). Still, fundamentally, the war was used as a justification for waging war with Southern African countries to fight the Russian threat and liberation movements "believed" to act on behalf of Russia (Baines 2020:276; Drewett 2008:94).
4. For the current article, I refer to four cover pages of *Paratus*: October, 1984; October, 1986; February, 1987; and April 1988.
5. The artists' artist statement (22-23), https://online.fliphtml5.com/cpsgh/rwpm/.
6. HF Verwoerd was Prime Mininster of South African from 1958 until he was assassinated in 1966.
7. *Voëlvry* was a South African genre of music that emerged during the apartheid era, created by young Afrikaans-speaking South Africans who rebelled against the hegemony promoted by the apartheid government (Suriano & Lewis 2015). Through tours, lyrics, musicians' lifestyles, dress code and so on, *Voëlvry* became a subversive social movement that challenged apartheid ideals (see Suriano & Lewis 2015:405). It can thus be argued that the understanding of *Voëlvry* carried a more complex meaning, which can be understood as a movement that was "outlawed" or "outside of the law".
8. See Russouw (2024); Lätti (2024); Boshoff & Conradie (2023:43); Laubscher (2005:309); Giliomee (2003).
9. As fought against during the South African Wars of 1880-1881 and 1899-1902.
10. See Giliomee (2003) for a comprehensive analysis of the Afrikaner nation, the South African Wars, the development of the Afrikaans language and how these informed an Afrikaner identity.
11. Stuart Elden (2023:164) explains that enunciative modalities describe the numerous questions that should be asked regarding the specific discourse which include who is speaking and the institutional site from which the authoritative figure draws from as well as the relevance of the speaking subject to the object (see parrhesia).

References

Baines, G. 2020. Visual narrative of the Border War in 1980s South African print culture, in *Troubling images: Visual culture and the politics of Afrikaner Nationalism*, edited by F Freschi, B Schmahmann & L von Robbroeck. Johannesburg: Wits University Press:273-298.

Boshoff, D & Conradie, A. 2023. “It’s easy just to be normal”: Performative masculinities in *Die Stropers.* *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* 60(1):42-56. http://doi.org/10.17159/tl.v60i1.14099

Connell, R. 2016. Masculinities in global perspective: Hegemony, contestation, and changing structures of power. *Theory and Society: Renewal and Critique in Social Theory* 45(4):303-218. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-016-9275-x

Connell, R & Messerschmidt, JW. 2005. Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society* 19(6):829-859.

Conway, D. 2012. *Masculinities, militarisation and the End Conscription Campaign: War resistance in apartheid South Africa.* Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Crous, M. 2006. ‘En ek sê dis ‘n trassie’: Perspectives on Afrikaner homosexual identity. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 2(3):48-56.

Drewett, M. 2008. The construction and subversion of gender stereotypes in popular cultural representations of the Border War, in *Beyond the Border War: New perspectives on Southern Africa’s late-Cold War conflicts*, edited by G Baines & P Vale. Pretoria: University of South Africa Press: 94-119.

Du Pisani, K. 2001. Puritanism transformed Afrikaner masculinities in the apartheid and post-apartheid period, in *Changing men in Southern Africa*, edited by R Morrell. Scottsville: University of Natal Press.

Du Pisani, K. 2004. ‘Ek hou van ‘n man wat sy man kan staan’: Puriteinse manlikheidsbeelde in die Afrikaanse kultuur tot 1935. *SA Tydskrif vir Kultuurgeskiedenis* 18(1):80-93.

Elden, S. 2023. *The archaeology of Foucault*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Foucault, M. 1972. *The archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language*. Translated by AM Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. 2020. *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Translated by A Sheridan. London: Penguin Random House.

Fourie, H (dir). 2023. *Toekoms Spoke/Futuer Ghosts*. [Film]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAcNcRj1QQA.

Freschi, F, Schmahmann, B & van Robbroeck, L (eds). 2020. *Troubling images: Visual culture and the politics of Afrikaner Nationalism*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Giliomee, H. 2003. *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people*. Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers.

Hermanus, O (dir). 2019. *Moffie*. [Film].

Hillman, M. 2023. “We fumbled with buttons, we slung down our guns”: Queer masculinity in South African war literature. Doctoral thesis, York University, Toronto, Canada [O]. Available: https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/items/cdafad6f-ba85-4e6b-9bd7-9e983ea7ff0a Accessed 14 March 2025.

Hopkins, P. 2006. *Voëlvry: The movement that rocked South Africa*. Cape Town: Zebra Press.

Keppel-Jones, A. 1979. History, Calvinism, and the dilemma of Afrikaner Nationalism. *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 13(1):49-58.

Lätti, R. 2024. *Afrikaner, wie is jy?* [O]. Available: https://www.litnet.co.za/afrikaner-wie-is-jy/ Accessed 4 September 2024.

Laubscher, L. 2005. Afrikaner identity and the music of Johannes Kerkorrel. *South African Journal of Psychology* 35(2):308-330.

Mankayi, N. 2010. Race and masculinities in the South African military. *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies* 38(2):22-43. http://doi.org/10.5787/38-2-88

Morrell, R (ed). 2001. *Changing men in Southern Africa.* Scottsville: University of Natal Press.

Morrell, R, Jewkes, R & Lindegger, G. 2012. Hegemonic masculinity/masculinities in South Africa: culture, power, and gender politics. *Men and Masculinities* 12(1):11-30. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X12438001

Nel, A. 2019. Propaganda as used in the official South African Defence Force magazine – *Paratus*, 1970-1988. MA dissertation, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

Olwagen, C (dir). 2018. *Kanarie*. [Film].

Paratus. 1971. August.

Paratus. 1979. August.

Paratus. 1984. October 35(10).

Paratus. 1985. January.

Paratus. 1985. February.

Paratus. 1985. June 36(6).

Paratus. 1986. October 37(10).

Paratus. 1987. February 38(2).

Paratus. 1988. April 39(4).

Pieterse, J. 2013. Dictionaries and discourses of deviance: changing lexical representations of 'Moffie' and the reorganisation of sexual categories among Afrikaans speakers during the second half of the twentieth century. *South African Historical Journal* 65(4):618-637. https://doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2013.776096

Russouw, J. 2024. *Die Johann Russouw-gespreksreeks: Oor die Afrikaner verklaring*. [O]. Available: https://www.litnet.co.za/oor-die-afrikaner-verklaring/
Accessed 4 September 2024.

Scholtz, L. 2013. *The SADF in the Border War 1966-1989.* Cape Town: Tafelberg.

Sonnekus, T. 2013. 'We're not faggots!'Masculinity, homosexuality, and the representation of Afrikaner men who have sex with men in the film *Skoonheid* and online. *South African Review of Sociology* 44(1):22-39. https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2013.784446

Suriano, M & Lewis, C. 2015. Afrikaners is Plesierig! Voëlvry music, anti-apartheid identities and Rockey Street nightclubs in Yeoville (Johannesburg), 1980s-90s. *African Studies* 74(3):404-428. https://doi.org/10.1080/00020184.2015.1004850

Tynan, J & Godson, L (eds). 2019. *Uniform: Clothing and discipline in the modern world*. London & New York: Bloomsbury.

Verwye, C & Quayle, M. 2012. Whiteness, racism, and Afrikaner identity in post-apartheid South Africa. *African Affairs* 111(145):551-575. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/ads056

Van Niekerk, C. 2008. Fathoming the musical identity/identities of James Phillips aka Bernoldus Niemand. *Suid Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Kultuurgeskiedenis* (22)1:1-28.