

ABSTRACT

This article looks at the ways in which *Mama Jack*, a South African slapstick comedy, frames certain individuals and groups as *makwerekwere*. The term, which is popularly used in reference to African migrants in South Africa, appears in the film despite the absence of any African migrant in the literal sense. Nonetheless, Leon Schuster, who plays the lead roles in the film, provides the conditions of the term's use by performing blackness and exhibiting a stock of images associated with black foreignness. *Makwerekwere* therefore signifies a phony presence and serves to visualize violence against black foreigners. The article develops from the understanding that all texts, film included, communicate specific ways of seeing the world and therefore participates in the construction and circulation of normalized and misrecognized forms of violence. Film's signifying potential need not be understated. By focusing on the various ways in which *makwerekwere* are deployed in *Mama Jack*, it will be noted that the pursuit of the comic tends to obfuscate and validate the negative portrayal of black foreigners.