

**A CRITIQUE OF THE SURVIVAL ANXIETIES THAT INFORM
SOUTH AFRICAN DISCOURSES ABOUT WESTERN ART MUSIC**

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Declaration

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Abstract

This study investigates how survival anxieties have influenced the often unacknowledged ideology of Western art music in South Africa. The approach taken in this thesis to understand the articulations of survival that inform local musical/musicological discourse, is structured according to three compound parts.

First, this study provides an overview of how positivism and formalism shaped the knowledge horizon of South African musicology, and how critical insights gathered from the “new musicology” gradually challenged the philological purgatory that meant to secure the endurance of Western art music (and by extension “Western civilisation”) in South Africa. This discussion leads into a comprehensive analysis of the J.M. Coetzee essay “What Is A Classic?”, which uses T.S. Eliot’s eponymous essay about the ideologically disinterested survival of Virgil’s poetry to argue for an equivalent phenomenon in J.S. Bach’s music. In opposition to Coetzee, I then contend that stripping the canon of Western art music from problematic ideological interpretations – i.e. deliberately placing these works inside the philological purgatory – denotes a hegemonic practice-based tactic aimed at safeguarding musical “classics” and civilisation from the anticipated onslaught of a destructive “barbarism”.

Secondly, this study examines how Oswald Spengler’s and Arnold Toynbee’s foundational international discourses about civilisation’s decline and survival were adopted in South Africa, up to the point where they significantly impacted on apartheid’s ideology, through the construction of intellectual paradigms like the Afrikaner poet C.M. van den Heever’s *Die Afrikaanse Gedagte*. Spengler’s and Toynbee’s discourses are furthermore compared with the Afrikaner discourse about “survival in justice” (*voortbestaan in geregtigheid*) formulated by N.P. van Wyk Louw, and subsequently responded to by prominent resistance figures such as Breyten Breytenbach and André P. Brink. In determining how these crucial international and local survival discourses filtered through into musicology, the focus shifts onto the Marxist sociological critiques published by the South African musicologist Klaus Heimes during the mid-1980s, and the politically sensitive critiques of the Western art music establishment published by Stephanus Muller in the period immediately after apartheid’s abolishment. This is followed by an investigation into how Afrikaners used teleological concepts like *Die Pad van Suid-Afrika* to subvert Spengler’s pessimistic prediction that Western civilisation was doomed to an inevitable cyclical decline. It is demonstrated how anxieties about this eventuality triggered a national obsession, during the 1930s, with maintaining racial purity through psychological construction of the “laager mentality”. Emphasis is given to understanding how the anthem

“Die Stem van Suid-Afrika”, due to its exploitation during the Great Trek centenary celebrations, and due to its luminescent encapsulation inside the Voortrekker Monument, universalised Afrikaner nationalism into an utopian worldview, where the self-preservation of a few hundred pioneer migrants at the 1838 Battle of Bloodrivier was interpreted as a providential guarantee for Afrikanerdom’s South African hegemony and survival in perpetuity.

Thirdly, this study discusses two post-apartheid examples where musical/musicological discourse remains chained to pre-democratic ideals about cultural survival. Both of these examples are relevant to Stellenbosch in particular. The first example concerns the vehement reception discourse generated after the world premiere performance of Hendrik Hofmeyr’s *Sinfonia africana* on 19 August 2004. This work, which was commissioned by the Stellenbosch-based group *Vriende van Afrikaans*, set the poetry of three historical Afrikaans poets to music within a teleological narrative that moves from despair to hope, and claims to be applicable to the entire African continent’s humanity. Examination takes place of the exhaustive newspaper discourse of audience members who defended Hofmeyr and his symphony against an ideological critique that Stephanus Muller published in a review of the premiere performance. It is revealed how this Stellenbosch-driven discourse centres largely around heated political arguments about the survival of Afrikaans. Consequently, it is also pointed out as deeply problematic that *Sinfonia africana*’s final movement pays tribute to the Spengler-inspired “white” supremacist philosophy contained in C.M. van den Heever’s *Die Afrikaanse Gedagte*, by setting to climactic music his poem “Afrika”. The thesis then concludes with a second musical example of post-apartheid survival anxiety that is relevant to Stellenbosch in particular. Winfried Lüdemann’s professorial inaugural lecture is subjected to a thorough critique that scrutinises the complicated evolutionary theoretical framework he uses to advocate for the institutional safekeeping of “Western” and “South African” art music at the Stellenbosch University Music Department. In contrast to Lüdemann’s petition, this thesis finally argues for the deliberate miscegenation (*versmelting*) of diverse musics in order to undermine the essentialised identities forced on the South African cultural landscape by apartheid’s Kuyperian fetish for segregation.

Opsomming

Hierdie studie stel ondersoek in na hoe oorlewingsangs die dikwels onerkende ideologie van Westerse kunsmusiek in Suid-Afrika beïnvloed het. Die metode wat in hierdie tesis gevolg word om die artikulasies van oorlewing (voortbestaan) wat plaaslike musikale/musikologiese diskoerse gestalte gee beter te verstaan, is volgens drie saamgestelde dele gestruktureer.

Eerstens bied hierdie studie 'n oorsig van hoe positivisme en formalisme die kennishorison van Suid-Afrikaanse musikologie gevorm het, en hoe kritiese insigte vanaf die “nuwe musikologie” geleidelik die filologiese vaevuur uitgedaag het wat bedoel was om die voortbestaan van Westerse kunsmusiek (en by implikasie die “Westerse beskawing”) in Suid-Afrika te verseker. Hierdie bespreking lei na 'n omvattende analise van die J.M. Coetzee opstel “What Is A Classic?”, wat gebruik maak van T.S. Eliot se gelyknamige opstel oor die ideologies-neutrale oorlewing van Virgilius se poësie, om te betoog vir 'n gelykstaande verskynsel in die musiek van J.S. Bach. In teenstelling met Coetzee, voer ek dan aan dat die ontkenning van problematiese ideologiese interpretasies wat gekoppel is aan die kanon van Westerse kunsmusiek – d.w.s. die doelbewuste posisionering van hierdie werke binne die filologiese vaevuur – dui op 'n hegemoniese, praktyk-gedrewe taktiek wat gemik is op die beveiliging van die musikale “klassieke” en uiteindelik ten doel het om die beskawing te beskerm teen die verwagte stormloop van “barbarisme”.

Tweedens, handel dit in hierdie studie oor hoe Oswald Spengler en Arnold Toynbee se grondleggende internasionale diskoerse oor die beskawing se verval en oorlewing in Suid-Afrika opgeneem is, tot op die punt waar dit betekenisvolle invloed uitgeoefen het op apartheidsideologie deur die konstruksie van intellektuele paradigmas soos dié van die Afrikaner digter C.M. van den Heever in sy *Die Afrikaanse Gedagte*. Spengler en Toynbee se diskoerse word verder vergelyk met die Afrikanerdiskoers oor “voortbestaan in geregtigheid” soos deur N.P. van Wyk Louw geformuleer, en op die reaksies op hierdie diskoers deur vooraanstaande weerstandsfigure soos Breyten Breytenbach en André P. Brink. In die vasstelling van hoe hierdie deurslaggewende internasionale en plaaslike oorlewingsdiskoerse tot musikologie deurgesyfer het, verskuif die fokus na die Marxistiese sosiologiese kritieklewerings wat deur die Suid-Afrikaanse musikoloog Klaus Heimes in die middel-1980s gepubliseer is, en die polities-sensitiewe kritieklewerings van die Westerse kunsmusiek establishment wat deur Stephanus Muller in die tydperk direk ná apartheid se afskaffing gepubliseer is. Hierdie beskouings word gevolg met 'n ondersoek na hoe Afrikaners teleologiese konsepte soos *Die Pad van Suid-Afrika* gebruik het om Spengler se pessimistiese voorspelling dat die Westerse beskawing tot 'n onafwendbare sikliese ondergang verdoem is, omver te

probeer werp. Daar word gedemonstreer hoe angs hieroor uiteindelik 'n nasionale obsessie met die handhawing van rasse-suiwerhied gedurende die 1930s veroorsaak het. Nadruk word gelê op die verstaan van hoe die volkslied “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika”, weens die uitbuiting daarvan tydens die Groot Trek se eeuefeesvieringe, en weens die letterlike beligte ingrafeer daarvan binne die Voortrekker Monument, Afrikanernasionalisme geuniversaliseer het in 'n utopiese wêreldblik, waarin die selfbehoud van 'n paar honderd pioniertrekkers by die 1838 Slag van Bloedrivier geïnterpreteer is as 'n voorsienige waarborg vir Afrikanerdom se Suid-Afrikaanse hegemonie en ewigdurende oorlewing.

Derdens bespreek hierdie studie twee post-apartheid voorbeelde waar musikale/musikologiese diskoerse vasgeketting bly aan voor-demokratiese ideale van kulturele oorlewing. Albei hierdie voorbeelde is besonder relevant tot Stellenbosch. Die eerste voorbeeld is gemoeid met die onstuimige resepsiediskoers ná die eerste uitvoering van Hendrik Hofmeyr se *Sinfonia africana* op 19 Augustus 2004. Hierdie werk, wat in opdrag van die Stellenbosch-gevestigde *Vriende van Afrikaans* geskep is, toonset die poësie van drie historiese Afrikaanse digters in 'n teleologiese narratief wat vanuit wanhoop na hoop beweeg, en aanspraak daarop maak om van toepassing op die ganse Afrika-kontinent se mense te wees. Onderzoek word ingestel op die breedvoerige koerantdiskoers van gehoorlede wat Hofmeyr en sy simfonie verdedig het teen 'n ideologiese kritieklewering wat Stephanus Muller in 'n resensie van die première-uitvoering gepubliseer het. Dit word duidelik gemaak hoe hierdie Stellenbosch-aangedrewe diskoers grootliks gekonsentreer het op hewige politieke argumente omtrent die oorlewing van Afrikaans. Gevolglik word dit ook as diep problematies uitgewys dat *Sinfonia africana* se laaste beweging hulde bring aan die Spengler-besielde “wit” heerssugtige filosofie wat in C.M. van den Heever se *Die Afrikaanse Gedagte* bevat is, deurdat sy gedig “Afrika” tot klimaktiese musiek getoonset is. Daarná sluit die tesis af met 'n tweede musikale voorbeeld van post-apartheid oorlewingsangs wat in die besonder tot Stellenbosch relevant is. Winfried Lüdemann se professorale intreerede word aan 'n ingrypende kritieklewering onderwerp wat die gekompliseerde evolusionêre teoretiese grondlegging ondersoek wat hy gebruik om vir die institutionele beveiliging van “Westerse” en “Suid-Afrikaanse” kunsmusiek by die Universiteit Stellenbosch se Musiekdepartement te argumenteer. In teenstelling met Lüdemann se betoog, argumenteer hierdie tesis uiteindelik vir die doelbewuste versmelting van diverse musieksoorte, met die doel op omverwerping van die essensialistiese identiteite wat deur apartheid se Kuyperiaanse afsonderings-fetisj op die Suid-Afrikaanse kulturele landskap afgedwing is.

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Prof. Chris Walton convinced me, just over ten years ago, finally to do the brave and empowering thing that *real* (as opposed to music) students must do: read – as much and as widely as possible. His continued encouragement has helped sustain a long and happy intellectual awakening. With Chris's monetary assistance, I attended a conference at UNISA which professed falteringly to stake a claim for the freedoms of speech afforded to South African musicologists, as well as a SASRIM conference at the University of the Witwatersrand.

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Unfortunately my grandfather passed away before witnessing the completion of this thesis.

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CAO XX/13 gewidmet, in Dankbarkeit

Die gewone grense werk nie meer nie

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Gobbet 1: A Blind Alley to be Avoided

Preliminary Observation:

A Blind Alley to be Avoided: Isolation.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1959:237)

The Phenomenon of Man; Book Four: Survival

Gobbet 2: This is the way of the survivor

Myself, myself, always and only myself. This is the way of the survivor.

Salman Rushdie (2008:362)

The Enchantress of Florence

Gobbet 3: Let us drink to the one who survives his dreams

Ons survive met 'n helse lot pyn in hierdie land, ja.
Kom ons drink op die een wat sy drome oorleef;
Op die een wat kry wat hy vra, ja.

Johannes Kerkorrel (1989)

“Hillbrow”, *Eet Kreef*

Translation:

We survive with helluva lot of pain in this country, yes.
Let us drink to the one who survives his dreams;
To the one who gets what he asks for, yes.

Gobbet 4: They could not have survived without their dream

We live today under a new world order,
The web which weaves together all things envelops our bodies,
Bathes our limbs,
In a halo of joy.
A state of old to which men acceded only through music,
Greets us each morning as a commonplace.
What men considered a dream: perfect but remote,
We take for granted as the simplest of things.
But we are not contemptuous of these men;
We know how much we owe to their dreaming,
We know that without the web of suffering and joy which was
 their history we would be nothing,
We know that they kept within them an image of us, through
 their fear and in their pain, as they hurtled into darkness,
As little by little they wrote their history.
We know that they would not have survived, that they could
 not have survived, without that hope somewhere deep
 within
They could not have survived without their dream.
Now that we who live in the light,
We who live in the presence of the light,
Which bathes our bodies,
Envelops our bodies,
In a halo of joy
Now that we have settled by the water's edge,
And here live in perpetual afternoon

Now that the light which surrounds our bodies is palpable,
Now that we have come at last to our destination
Leaving behind a world of division,
The way of thinking which divided us,
Immersed in a serene fertile delight
Of a new Law
Now,
For the first time,
We can retrace the end of the old order.

Michel Houellebecq (2007:7-8)

Atomised

Gobbet 5: We are attempting to survive our time so we may live into yours

This is a present from a small distant world, a token of our sounds, our science, our images, our music, our thoughts, and our feelings. We are attempting to survive our time so we may live into yours. We hope someday, having solved the problems we face, to join a community of galactic civilisations. This record represents our hope and our determination, and our goodwill in a vast and awesome universe.

U.S. President James Earl Carter (in Barendse 2015; footnote 17)

Message on the “Golden Record” aboard the Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 space probes

Referenced in “ ’n Kritiese ondersoek na die funksie van biomusikologiese gegewens in Wilken Calitz se 2092: *God van Klank*”

LitNet Akademies 12 (2)

Gobbet 6: The ANC insists “Kill the Boer” is a metaphor



Zapiro

“AWB leader Eugene Terreblanche hacked to death with a panga on his farm near Ventersdorp”

Published in *The Times* on 6 April 2010

<www.zapiro.com>

Explanatory Note:

Eugene Terreblanche was a right-wing politician and leader of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB). At the time of his murder, the anti-apartheid song “Dubul’ ibhunu” (Kill the Boer) featured prominently in public discourse, up to the point where singing it was declared hate speech and unconstitutional.

INTRODUCTION

Personal motivation

Stap, stap my perdjie,
 met jou korte stertjie,
 stap, stap my perdjie,
 die wye wêreld in.
 Stap, stap, my perdjie klein,
 met jou pootjies trippelfyn.
 Stap, stap, stap, stap,
 die wye wêreld in.

The first time I sang solo in public was in 1991 at an eisteddfod, when I was eight years old. Some bizarre ditty about a horse that had a short tail. The adjudicator who prescribed this song was probably unfamiliar with Freud. (My thoughts now, many years later: Why not hung like a horse? And: According to Robin Williams, Freud did enough blow to kill a small horse.) I recall an old gray-haired thoroughbred, an Afrikaner lady no doubt long dead by now, who awarded me with an A+ symbol and the trophy for the section. It was all so unexpected and special. My singing didn't sound like that of the other boys': it was much louder, and with much more vibrato; a disturbing impersonation of a womanly dramatic soprano. Everyone seemed to think that this gender bend was wonderful and good. My operatic voice was discovered in the third grade of my primary school education. More than two decades later, the mothers of random classmates still remind me of my beautiful singing when they recognise me out and about in town.

Music was a significant part of our primary school education. Every day began with group singing, either in a class setup, or else in the school hall during assembly. We mostly sang Christian songs, or otherwise wholesome children's songs from *The Anthology of Unintended Freudian Slips*, otherwise known as the *FAK Sangbundel*. Our entire school presented a musical review in the year preceding my first eisteddfod triumph. Each grade performed a medley of songs according to a specific theme: Broadway for the grade sevens, Toreador for another grade, while we second graders enacted a Jewish wedding feast. Even though I have never understood their meaning, I can still remember all the Hebrew words to "Hava Nagila".

My third grade teacher made an enormous impact on me. Her husband's hobby was sound engineering and he made the first professional recordings of my voice. She was a competent pianist and also an extremely devout woman. Because of her example, music became interwoven with the Abrahamic God

in my impressionable mind. The song I associate most definitively with this youthful piety is a hymn called “Ek Sien ’n Nuwe Hemel Kom” (I See A New Heaven Coming).

GESANG 177 177



Ek sien 'n nu - we he - mel kom,
'n aar - de nuut en vry.
Die see en al wat skei, ver - dwyn.
God self kom by ons bly.

Ek sien 'n nuwe hemel kom,
'n aarde nuut en vry.
Die see en al wat skei, verdwyn.
God self kom by ons bly.

I see the coming of a new heaven,
an earth new and free.
The sea and all that parts, recedes.
God himself comes to live with us.

Die nuwe stad, Jerusalem,
daal uit die hemel neer:
skoon soos 'n bruid in heerlijkheid –
geliefde van die Heer.

The new city, Jerusalem,
descends from out of heaven:
pure as a bride in glory –
beloved of the Lord.

Die Heer droog al die tranes af,
verby is droefheid, dood.
Ja, pyn en smart wyk uit die hart –
ons moeite, angs en nood.

The Lord wipes away all the tears,
gone is sorrow, death.
Yes, pain and grief withdraw from the heart –
our effort, anxiety and need.

“Kyk, Ek maak alles nuut,” sê God.
“Laat hom wat dors het, kom.
En hy sal vind, hy is my kind
Ek is 'n Gód vir hom!”

“Look, I make everything new,” says God.
“Let him that thirsts, come.
And he will find, he is my child
I am a God for him!”

Oorwinnaars, sal ons alles erf
en drink uit die fontein
van lewenswater, heerlik, rein.
En God sal oor ons skyn.

Conquerors, we will inherit everything
and drink from the fountain
of the water of life, delightful, pure.
And God will look upon us.

Psalms en Gesange, N.G. Kerk Uitgewers (1976:177).

Singing this beautiful hymn with consistent frequency was intended to indoctrinate me to yearn for Christ's imminent return. I remember sitting in our school hall, together in rows and columns with hundreds of other singing children, visualising and ultimately questioning the establishment of a *new* heaven. To begin with: What was wrong with the old one? To me the anticipated City of God appeared about as petrified and petrifying as a dead Christmas village suspended in a glass globe.

This imagined picture derives from the way the hymn's elastic melody stretches itself out horizontally (admittedly something that happens with the singing of most pious hymns), while also floating quite hauntingly in an octave range between the lower and upper fifth notes of the scale. This impression of a delicately hovering place has been unexpectedly, absurdly, confirmed by my subsequent knowledge that Izak L. de Villiers, a prominent church man and later secular magazine and newspaper editor, composed this hymn's text mid-air on a flight from Cape Town to Johannesburg. Nevertheless, my young and wordless idea of the New Jerusalem was that a terrifying rupture would occur in the fabric of history, and that the predictable activity of my reality would eventually be exchanged for an eternally static Sunday. I now think that this anxious impression is what Walter Benjamin referred to when he invented the Angel of History, whose hysterical messianic interventions want to bring about *homogeneous empty time*.

Many people I know find an expression of hope in De Villiers's song text: the consolation of a biblical point of arrival when Christ will wipe away human tears, eliminating sorrow and death. God's chosen people will inherit the earth; they will drink from the fountain of the water of life, and thereafter everything will be delightful and pure. The innocence of this rapturous worldview becomes suspect when one remembers how long Afrikaners struggled to engineer a paradisiacal landscape this side of the apocalypse. They transformed South Africa into a pseudo-Christian El Dorado where Christian values of indiscriminate brotherhood and charity were largely absent. My obsessive awareness of this oddity stems from having emulated Afrikaner pieties as an impressionable child in the years immediately succeeding Nelson Mandela's release from political imprisonment. Adults in my community reacted hysterically to this watershed moment in history, so that Mandela entered my consciousness as if he were an anti-Christ who was hell-bent on destroying the equilibrium of my known world.

Because my third grade teacher was pregnant, a teaching assistant came to help out with our education as part of her university training. For a while their supervision of us overlapped, but my teacher eventually left and never returned, meaning that the assistant took her place. This young woman's presence in our classroom may even have coincided with our school's internal referendum, in the onslaught of newer, democratic legislation, on whether or not to allow children who were classified different racially

from enrolling at our all-“white” school.¹ Unsurprisingly, as children we were not given a say in this important decision. I nevertheless remember how interested some of my schoolmates and I were in the details of this unfamiliar upcoming event. We must have asked the trainee teacher to explain the referendum to us, and also to give her own opinion of what its outcome should be. I distinctly remember her telling us that continued segregation was an imperative, seeing that we “white” children would not want little “black” children sitting next to us in class, stinking, and touching our books and stationery “with their dirty, fatty hands” (Afrikaans: *met hulle vuil, vetterige hande*).² This distancing in an educational environment was underpinned by the indentured status of most “blacks” who entered into my worldview: touching the people whose purposes in life were understood as making tea, cleaning dirty rooms, carrying heavy things and working in gardens was not required; was mostly, in fact, forbidden.

By the following year there had been a number of protest marches in the city where I grew up, and Mandela was already criss-crossing the country in anticipation of his implementing a “black”-majority government. There was a national “whites”-only referendum on whether or not F.W. de Klerk should continue negotiations for the dismantling of apartheid and the transition to a representative and democratic form of governance. I remember being terrified of the vast crowds of “black” people who, seemingly out of nowhere, suddenly came streaming into our city to march, collectively voicing their protest at some unknown and not-understood thing: the assassination of Chris Hani? the slow pace of government’s transition? the fact that they were not allowed to vote in the referendum?

My most distinct musical memory from 1992, though, is celebrating in group song, together with a hundred other ecstatic children, the 340th anniversary of Jan van Riebeeck’s disembarking and settlement at the Cape of Good Hope. It is only in looking back that I understand the anxieties that could have prompted such an Afrikaner nationalistic festival. In commemorating the introduction of “white civilisation” to Africa, we were also celebrating the subsequent glorious history of our country and culture, where the initial establishment of an Afrikaner civilisation flourished triumphantly in the onslaught of British oppression and

¹ As far as I know, all “white” government schools conducted similar referendums. My school opted for the “model C” option, which enabled the adoption of a semi-privatised business model, essentially giving the governing body stronger autonomy from the anticipated “black” government, but more significantly also driving school fees up drastically, to the point where parents from economically disadvantaged racial groupings would simply not be able to afford enrolling their children at our school.

² This classroom racism would not be an isolated incident. Subsequently, throughout my primary and high school career, many teachers advocated viewpoints that dehumanised “blacks”. The most confusing was a vehement biology teacher who could not support Darwinism, on the grounds that it went against her faith, but who nevertheless simultaneously insisted that “blacks” were less evolved than “whites” and therefore like monkeys.

“black barbarism”. Simultaneously, though, our adult caregivers were preparing for the anarchy that might come with the emancipation of the country’s “black” population.

When a gang of thieves robbed a liquor store nearby and initiated a shootout with police on our school premises during school time, teachers and parents reacted in ways that made a large amorphous collective of “the blacks” responsible for the violence their children had witnessed. Overnight, an enormous fence was erected around our school, an alarm system was installed that could warn the entire school of an attack, and consequently we underwent, on an almost daily basis, the most terrifying drills in *paraatheid* (readiness), to prepare for some worst case scenario by cowering under our school desks or against classroom walls. This continued right through until April 1994, when our school closed its doors for almost two weeks, to ride out the uncertainty of the country’s first democratic elections.

In 1992 I joined the school’s senior choir. Through this contact with the head music teacher, I eventually became one of my school’s regularly featured little songbirds. The most exciting project we tackled was a vast Christmas Play towards the end of 1994. Preparations were thorough, and entailed rehearsing carols in March already; but that was no problem bearing in mind that Christian songs were an integral part of the school’s daily curriculum. When I think back on my prominent role as chorister and soloist in this Christmas extravaganza, I picture my own overbearing Wagnerian screaming: as if my orgasmic “Hojotohos” were ringing out above a digitally created soundtrack orchestra, and above the other hundreds of schoolchildren singing generally plaintive songs like “O, Holy Night”.

Something significant happened in this same time period. At the beginning of 1993 I began taking extramural piano lessons. My teacher was both capable and formidable – quite unlike anyone I’d ever met. She had eyebrows that were painted on, drank strong black coffee, smoked long thin cigarettes, and she had perfect pitch. Under her supervision I made rapid progress through the required syllabus of children’s primers (“Mini Steps to Music” and “A Dozen A Day”), meaning that before long it became necessary to purchase a more advanced book called “My Very First Classics”. Playing from this anthology, I participated in our district eisteddfod’s instrumental category for the first time, presenting two short pieces that were both in C major, and doing reasonably well. But in that same year I also belted out an Afrikaans landscape song called “Ou Karooland” (Old Karoo Land), in the same eisteddfod’s vocal category, and a different adjudicator to the horsey one from the two preceding years convinced my grandmother that I should take extramural singing lessons with her. This singing teacher had a patrician air about her, and to this day she remains one of the most culturally sophisticated people I have ever met. Because she used a wheelchair I was also very frightened of her at first.

These formative musical experiences were situated on the East Rand, surrounding Johannesburg's airport, the area where I grew up. My idea of culture within this industrial centre was crude and unrefined compared to the gentrified life I discovered much later in places like Stellenbosch. Perhaps the best way to describe my own cultural sensibility and aesthetics is to relate what has probably been the most profound musical experience of my life. Between the ages of around eight and twelve, I was a passionate fan of motor racing – particularly Grand Prix, but also drag racing and stock car racing. I stopped being a racing fan when Ayrton Senna died due to a crash, an event that took place in the same week as South Africa's first democratic election. But somewhere during this boyhood fascination, I attended a stock car race in Boksburg's industrial centre. Roughly midway through that evening's races a lone driver came onto the track. The announcer explained that the purpose of the following race was to hear just how much noise one Silhouette racing car could make. It was going to be an epic battle of man against machine, as there would be a simultaneous broadcast of the world's greatest singer over the stadium's loudspeakers.

Almost everyone present that night must have been familiar with a well-known South African Airways television advertisement, which showcased the roar of a jumbo jet engine on an airport runway, while Luciano Pavarotti's stentorian voice filled in the rest of the soundtrack with the climactic finale of Puccini's haunting aria "Nessun Dorma". The stock car on the Boksburg racing oval re-enacted this scenario, although the noise levels at the live track event far exceeded that which any television broadcast could hope to achieve. The other difference was that the entire aria was played that evening, so that I heard its complete version for probably the first time in my life. As "Nessun Dorma" contains the gamut of expressive dynamics, the driver in the stock car duly adapted his engine output according to the progressing musical atmosphere. He managed a masterful build-up to the aria's final sustained high B (on the second syllable of the word "vincero"), when he suddenly hit his breaks and acceleration pedal at the same time as turning his steering wheel as far as it could go. As a result, the car spun rapidly on an axis in a circular shape that I think was called a "doughnut". That meant, of course, that the additional ear-splitting noise of burning tires was added to the noise of the car's engine, which was itself competing with Pavarotti's singing. The audience went mad for this demonstration, and my love affair with Pavarotti's voice began on that night; which is to say that my musical career began in earnest on that night as well.

On the evening of 13 January 1996, I finally heard Pavarotti singing live in a mega-recital, presented along with Kathleen Cassello, at the Loftus Versfeld rugby stadium. I don't recall any specific arias and duets that they performed in that concert, probably because back then I didn't know operatic repertoire all too well. "Nessun Dorma" was the one song I was waiting for all night, and to my

disappointment it never featured. I remember, though, how the audience of more than sixty thousand people, almost all of them “white”, went absolutely bananas when president Mandela entered the stadium moments before the concert began. We were acknowledging his astonishing gesture towards South Africa’s “white” population, made six months before at the 1995 Rugby World Cup’s final match, when he walked onto the field at Ellis Park stadium wearing a Springbok jersey in support of the national team.³

Who needs Pavarotti to sing “Nessun Dorma” when Madiba is in the building?

Two or three days after the Pavarotti concert, I began with the next phase of my until then extremely happy formalised school education.

High school was horrendous.

Like entering a war zone: every – single – day –.

For five years –.

It began with a dehumanising regime of *ontgroening* (un-greening/initiation). Every day for probably two weeks we were obliged to stand in formation, heads permanently downcast and not allowed to make eye contact with anyone. Our prefects and even a teacher screamed at us about everything and nothing. This teacher struck me on an occasion that I broke formation while marching to the school’s assembly. There was a disturbing scenario where onlookers crowded around junior boys and coerced them into simulating masturbation; and another one where junior boys who happened to be fat were forced to jive about shirtless to the amusement of older schoolchildren.

I gladly performed drag roles in both *groentjiekonserte* (green concerts), because somehow this new thuggish environment seemed like it could be safer if I were a girl. That childish hope was shattered on a “Lord of the Flies” island camp in the middle of the Vaal Dam. After our school choir’s *groentjiekonsert*, junior choristers were taken to the boys’ dormitory and beaten by their seniors. I remember reporting this initiation activity to a teacher. He said it was normal and necessary.

My soprano voice began its change soon after I joined my high school’s choir. Only two years later did my voice settle into a passable baritone, leaving me frustrated in the interim at not being able to sing properly. I withdrew from the choir because of my inability to sing, but someone nevertheless convinced me to participate in the school’s 1997 musical production of *Grease*. They obviously needed bodies on the

³ John Carlin’s (2008) book *Playing The Enemy*, adapted by Clint Eastwood into a Hollywood movie called *Invictus*, argues that Mandela’s support of the Springboks during the 1995 Rugby World Cup was instrumental in winning unconditional approval from “white” South Africans (specifically conservative Afrikaners). This is largely because rugby was, until that time in the country’s history, an exclusive symbol of Afrikaner hegemony.

stage, and I excelled as an awkward and fumbling extra. I remember being confused and intimidated by this very popular musical's sexual narratives; partly because the show's rehearsal and performance gave a widely objectified prominence to girls who competed against me when we sang in primary school; and then also because I was, for once, stuck way in the background, failing to portray a slick and sexy dancer in commonplace songs like "Greased Lightning". Something remarkable I noticed, though, was how the *Grease* characters lampooned the lyrics of their school anthem by altering them slightly. This fictional rebellion inspired a similar subversion among our real high school's learners:

[English translation]
 "There is work for Kleptomaniacs,"
 that's our motto, more or less.
 We will strive for disobedience,
 to our School's honour and fame.
 When the fruit trees all go rancid,
 then we feel once more the soul;
 of the yuck here in our hearts,
 we will all be unemployed.
 This is our own alma blunder
 that unfaithfully we'll serve:
 In our heart and soul and life,
 on the fore ne'er want to see.

Compared to my primary school anthem, which celebrated in heroic imagery our school's patronymic connection with a type of military fighter jet, the "authentic" version of my high school anthem was mundane and dispiriting. The school's motto says it all: "There's Work". Lampooning the school anthem's lyrics taught me, probably for the first time in my life, that Afrikaner nationalism's musical symbols did not have to be sacrosanct.⁴

Unfortunately my education, musical and general, was patchy, and this meant that I didn't always notice symbols of Afrikaner nationalism for what they were. I rejoined the high school's choir in 1998, after my voice had settled sufficiently, and there I became exposed to a much more complex range of musical literature than I'd ever encountered before. Among these songs were some bearing the traces of apartheid's worldview, but it is also important to stress that the choir's repertoire was relatively cosmopolitan. Choir recitals would typically begin with many religious Christian hymns and psalms (always sung in Afrikaans), move on to a section comprised of Afrikaans folk songs (including, perhaps, a song performed in an

⁴ The school's anthem was a musical symbol of Afrikaner nationalism because, like almost all former "model C" schools, our Afrikaner schoolteachers operated the school along educational tenets set out in the apartheid-era philosophy of Christian national education.

exaggerated “Cape coloured” accent, *cringe*), then present a grouping of popular American songs like “The Banana Boat Song”, and finally conclude with a medley of “black” South African traditional songs (the lyrics of which nobody in the all-“white” choir understood, but which were danced to with jubilant enthusiasm, regardless).

I now wonder to what extent we happy choristers were portraying youthful nationalist virtue through our singing, and I also wonder to what extent such a portrayal could have been true. Our conductor had an eccentric personality, which included constantly praying for the devil to be driven from our midst, constantly telling us about her stellar opera career (The Queen of the Night in Roodepoort, and extraordinary lessons with one of the country’s foremost voice pedagogues), furthermore recounting her rewarding work in the rehabilitation of others through music therapy, paranoid intrigues with fellow teachers and undeserving students, migraines/blackouts, and a near delusional competitiveness with anyone who was somehow involved with music. By then I was already anticipating my own fabulous singing career, and because hers was the first full-blown irrational diva personality I’d ever encountered, it made a significant impact on me.⁵

My extramural lessons in piano and voice continued throughout high school, and were critical to my musical education since my school didn’t offer subject music.⁶ The repertoire I learned from my piano teacher was dictated, mostly, by the UNISA music grades examination syllabus, while the repertoire I learned from my voice teacher was dictated, mostly, by the eisteddfod syllabus. Western art music (including Afrikaans and English folk songs arranged for piano and voice) was the only musical tradition that informed this education. But it didn’t seem to matter, because both my teachers were doing excellent work, and I was incrementally earning all the requisite qualifications that would prove my mastering of the minimum “standards” needed for a BMus university enrolment.

Because this study concerns itself deeply with culture, and with the identification and understanding of music and metaphor in a very particular culturally constituted discourse, I feel compelled to situate myself: I am a “white” South African who grew up inside an English-speaking family, but whose education (including university) was conducted almost entirely in Afrikaans, up to the point that I now speak English with a subtle Afrikaans accent. Apart from not having had the formative experience of a nuclear family who identified as Afrikaners, I also didn’t attend an Afrikaans church. This makes my cultural identity

⁵ My previous diva worship had been limited to dead singers like Maria Callas. Pavarotti fell by the wayside.

⁶ My attempt at learning to play violin was disastrous, and never advanced beyond first position and open strings.

ambiguous, or even miscegenetic. Even though my schooling was shaped by the Afrikaner cultural beliefs and activities that came with Christian national education, my family life and religious life differed noticeably from those of my peers. Additionally, unlike the rest of my family, I've never consciously identified as an English-speaking South African.

To an extent, then, I seem to have become the beneficiary of having an outsider's perspective on both Afrikaners and English-speaking South African "whites". However, I've gradually come to realise the myriad possible ways in which I may very well be an "Afrikaner"; although, admittedly, one of miscegenetic cultural origins. There also remain crucial ways in which I appear not to be an "Afrikaner"; and in this regard, I've come to suspect that there are individual ways in which all Afrikaners evade the limitations of their tribal identity.

The myriad ways in which I am in fact an "Afrikaner":

my French Huguenot ancestors (Viviers and Du Toit),
 my Hattingh ancestors,
 my Visser ancestors,
 my Pretorius ancestors,
 during the Anglo Boer War my Pretorius great-grand-father and his father were interred
 in a prisoner-of-war camp that is now a golf course in Simons Town,
 thereafter they were deported and exiled to Portugal,
 for me there is something Israelitic and biblical about the Great Trek,
 the Voortrekker Monument is a valuable and integral part of my heritage,
 I know the words to "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika" (but only the first verse),
 I constantly anticipate a "new" South African apocalypse,
 consequently I've wanted to emigrate to Canada,
 but I don't have a foreign passport,
 I met Steve Hofmeyr at a wedding,
 "white" farm murders distress me,
 I enjoy listening to country music,
 pre-1994 my family frequently holidayed in Warmbaths,
 I grew up watching *Orkney Snork Nie* on television,
 most of my friends are Afrikaans-speaking "whites",
 my primary and high school education happened in Afrikaans,
 there is an apparent cultural mandate for me to call older unrelated women "Tannie" ("Aunty"),
 the "black" woman who cleaned our house when I was young has an enduring maternal influence over me

Crucial ways in which I appear not to be an "Afrikaner":

my Khoikhoi ancestor Eva van Meerhof,
 my Jewish ancestors,
 I'm agnostic in matters of faith,
 when I do go to church I'm a Methodist,
 my brain is androgynous,
 this document is written in English,

my spoken and written Afrikaans is overwhelmed by an ingrained Anglicised syntax,
 I read *The Guardian* and *The London Review of Books*,
 my knowledge of Afrikaans literature was non-existent until my doctoral studies began,
 making a point of attending the Edinburgh Festival while never once feeling compelled to attend
 one of the many national Afrikaans art festivals,
 I don't know any Afrikaans nursery rhymes,
 I don't know the words to songs like the "Vlaglied", "Die Lied van Jong Suid-Afrika", "Pampoen"
 and "De la Rey",
 name changes of streets, airports and cities don't make me angry,
 I support race quotas on national performative platforms like sport and culture,
 rugby? *Yawn*,
 instead of *pap* I eat *polenta* with my *braaivleis*,
 wine is so much nicer than beer,
 I can't *sokkie/langarm*,
 I've never watched an episode of *Dallas*,
 at this point in my life, my admiration for Ayrton Senna notwithstanding, I know almost nothing
 about cars, monster trucks, tanks, aeroplanes, guns/rifles and knives,
 miscegenation doesn't frighten me,
 except for two loaves of bread, my mother stockpiled nothing that could see us through the 1994
 election's anticipated and not-yet-arrived apocalypse

Hovering between cultures in a country where every person's racial (and cultural) identity continues to be categorised obsessively, my interpretations of cultural objects lean toward interrogating authenticities and undermining essentialism. It is perhaps also fortunate that an important part of my cultural and artistic upbringing mirrored my unsophisticated first encounter of Pavarotti's singing at a motor racing track in Boksburg, allowing me to question accepted Afrikaner thinking about Western art music in ways that might not occur to more conventionally initiated observers.

At university I selected voice as my first instrument and piano as my second. Whereas learning everything there was to know about singing was my biggest determination, I didn't care much for improving my keyboard skills.

For a long time I was engulfed by the alien intellectual demands made by my degree. In my singing lessons, this meant mastering a near obsolete song literature. When I brought mainstream musical theatre hits into a lesson, the teacher informed me that Western art music was my new metier. The art songs I learned from then on were almost all the product of nineteenth century musical nationalisms, and they therefore had to be sung in foreign European languages that neither I nor most of my audience could understand or speak with any fluency. Furthermore, the body language of *acceptable* concert practice included almost no movement. This post-Second World War vocal aesthetic served a reactionary ideal where corporeality should not detract anything from *the music itself*. In pursuit of this *pure* vocal aesthetic,

our different teachers each advocated their own diverse and supposedly incompatible technical approaches to singing. These singing methods, or “singing schools” (the “French school”, the “German school”, the “Italian school”, but no “South African school”), were inevitably punted as sacred traditions that had been handed down through a privileged lineage of initiates, stretching back hundreds of years to infallible authorities like Giulio Caccini, Nicola Porpora and Manuel García.

This irrational paradigm of master and apprentice hoodwinked me for far too long, and I did everything possible to become a “beautiful” singer (the holy grail of singing called *bel canto*). My efforts included a peculiarly transgendered obsession to rediscover and perform the florid song literatures most commonly associated with the castrati. I was convinced that this almost-impossible-to-perform music represented the ultimate *healthy* expression of vocalised musicality. It is deeply disturbing to me now that the organic mythology associated with the castrato sound entered into my imagination as the supreme vocal aesthetic. Owing to the numerical decline of castrato singers during the nineteenth century, their species was almost extinct when recordings of Western art music started being made. The Vatican chorister Alessandro Moreschi is the only castrato known to have recorded solo musical numbers (in 1902 and 1904). Accordingly, the castrato sound is mostly unknowable, even despite the best efforts of Cecilia Bartoli’s marketing team to convince the listening public otherwise.

My own aesthetic ideal as a voice student was therefore disjointed from the actual voice training that teachers could impart. Within the paradigm of their conservative pedagogy, there was simply no conceivable way in which I could attempt to perform the castrato repertoire: I had not been castrated as a boy soprano; I was not a female singer, and therefore couldn’t pitch my sound in the same *tessitura* as was notated; and lastly I was also dissuaded from choosing the stereotypically “gay” countertenor methodologies that could pitch my voice with absolute faithfulness to the original musical scores.

Instead, I had to learn what was on offer, which resulted in an almost monocultural overexposure to German *Lieder* ranging from Schubert to Brahms (apparently Wolf was on the next level, and his music would probably always be too difficult). Teachers furthermore professed the instructive value of Parisotti’s *arie antiche* anthologies, because these composers’ music supposedly harkened back to the first principles of Italian composition and therefore also to vocal fundamentals.⁷ Excluding these “indispensible” German and pseudo-Italian vocal literatures, our singing syllabus put a premium on English art songs by the likes of Vaughan Williams and Quilter, as well as on the proudly South African tradition of *die Afrikaanse kunslied*

⁷ Never mind that some of these “ancient arias” had actually been composed in Paris during the 1830s, and never mind that they were all published in updated arrangements that resembled Romantic parlour songs.

(the Afrikaans art song). Our choice of opera arias and ensembles was limited exclusively to Mozart, unless someone sang in a way that made them sound twenty years older than they were, in which case they were summarily deemed ready for Wagner.

My university music theory education concentrated for the most part on four-part harmony and formalistic analyses of Mozart's and Beethoven's piano sonatas. In our third year we were supposed to learn counterpoint and fugues, but our lecturer was more interested in discussing food recipes. Studying music history involved semester modules progressing from a general overview of Western classical music's history (Leonard Ratner's 1957 book, *Music: The Listener's Art*); through the four style periods of Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Modern, each contained within their own semester module (taught exclusively from Grout and Palisca's *A History of Western Music*); and concluding in a module on South African art music, which focussed exclusively on the compositions of "white" Afrikaner men. In my fourth year I selected music history as one of three electives, and therefore also studied a module on English music between 1900 and 1939, and another fascinating and difficult module on Wagner.⁸ In retrospect I understand that this choice made me a musicology major; although, as unbelievable as this now seems, throughout our entire undergraduate course, we were never once taught or even told about *musicology* the discipline. The majority of our *music history* lecturers cared very deeply about punctuation and referencing, up to the point where this aspect of writing and publishing became the predominant positivistic focus of most lectures. When our department hosted the country's first conference on music, gender and sexuality in 2003, one of the lecturers was so incensed by this progressive discourse that he boycotted the conference and also encouraged students not to attend. However, his absence didn't stop him from discussing the conference endlessly during our lectures:

"Honestly! Do homosexual composers hold their pencils differently to heterosexual ones?"

"Personal matters should stay in the bedroom where they belong."

"A colleague in the Afrikaans Department tells me that this sensationalist fashion of so-called scholarship has long already been discredited in the field of literary studies."

During my second year of BMus studies (2002), we became our university's first group of music undergraduates who were obligated to complete a module on indigenous African music as a requirement for obtaining our degrees. Our year group was otherwise noteworthy for including the first "black" student to

⁸ My three electives were singing performance, the methodology of singing and music history.

enrol for a BMus at our university. Unfortunately, having only been subjected to a Westernised musical education until then, the inherent value of compulsory lectures in ethnomusicology was lost on me and most of my classmates (the “black” student included). Our lecturer incorporated a considerable amount of practical drumming into the lectures, leaving instrumentalists to grumble about how detrimental this “uncivilised” form of musicianship was to their precious hands. Many conservative Christian students furthermore complained, to one another and no doubt to the Head of Department as well, about how incompatible the African philosophy component of ethnomusicology was with their religious beliefs. Regrettably, our cultural and educational backgrounds created an atmosphere of self-censorship, barricading us from music that wasn’t “white”, “Western” and “classical”.

Only in the fourth year of my BMus degree did I realise how my musical and academic training had isolated me from the everyday South African world that surrounded me. It transpired that my entire degree had entailed a disconnected and in most ways unachievable attempt to climb the steps towards an imaginary Parnassus. Many local Western art music performers recognise this intellectual isolation, and surprisingly many of them consider it to be an important survival mechanism that protects them against an otherwise meaningless society. I rejected this isolationist worldview, and started searching for the kinds of music and musicianship that don’t privilege utopian removal in an ivory tower. Deliberately choosing music history as specialisation in my fourth year, instead of music theory, seemed an appropriate way to become better aware of the bigger world through reading and writing. Both the music theory and aural training lecturers approached me about this career choice and tried to convince me that it was a dire mistake. Working as a music librarian was another important step towards undoing the shallow and inhibiting positivism of my BMus education. The simple act of fielding other researchers’ queries made me aware of contrasting disciplinary perspectives and methodologies. I also studied jazz singing, to the disapproval of my classical voice teacher. It turned out to be an extremely positive experience that taught me to think about music and composers in a much more creative and unencumbered manner.

For my MMus thesis, I chose a topic that could add multiple new layers of musical, intellectual and social awareness to my existing education: a problematic musical theatre adaptation, by Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill, of Alan Paton’s iconic South African novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Focussing in depth on the biographies and work of all three these personalities contributed enormously to my intellectual and emotional awakening, albeit in an autodidactic manner that unfortunately continued to seclude me.

Nevertheless, I believe that my PhD activities wouldn't have been possible without this difficult and rebellious period of self-driven academic discovery.

In my acknowledgements I mention my good friend Irene Engelbrecht, who told me about her work transcribing Niël Barnard's prison negotiations with Nelson Mandela.⁹ Specifically, Irene spoke about a Damascus experience in her own accepted wisdom about Mandela's political ambitions (she called him "Meneer Mandela"). I have an image in my mind of her sitting at a typewriter long into the night, listening on headphones to recordings of Mandela's soft, slow and monotonous voice – at a time when anything he thought or said was officially proclaimed undesirable and illegal. The romantic image I have is of her forgetting to transcribe his words at the precise moment when the unacceptable eventuality of his presidency became a logical and desirable prospect, simply because, against all indoctrinated expectations, this peaceful man was speaking about all the wonderful things he envisioned for South Africa.

This sparked my interest in political ideologies that were anathema to my view of life. My previous research interests had been directed towards the world of South African "white liberalism" associated with anti-apartheid figures like Alan Paton. I now began to study the ways in which Afrikaner nationalism, British imperialism, and other utopian ideologies of European origin underpinned South Africa's long history of social engineering. The fact that Irene was herself an Afrikaner of German extraction, one of many whom I came to know in Stellenbosch and its surrounds, may also have prompted me to begin thinking in less universalising terms of the ethnic group who call themselves "Afrikaners". In a country where racial classification is a depersonalising norm, the paradigm shift to reject such an absolute classification proved unsettling: the embrace of more ambiguous and less exclusive ways of thinking about the intersection between the constructs of ethnicity, race and culture, disavowed more than a century's worth of accepted dogma into which I had been raised.

Working as an adjudicator at the Cape Malay Choir Board's choral competition, during my doctoral studies in Stellenbosch, contributed to my own cognitive dissolution of racial, ethnic and cultural essences. Attending Malay concerts meant encountering Afrikaans-speaking Muslims for the first time in my life: people who, except for their religion and skin pigmentation, are actually quite similar to the Christian, "white" Afrikaners whom I have known all my life. One difference, though, is that I finally learnt words that had been banished from the Afrikaans lexicon ever since "white" dictionary writers began compiling and

⁹ Niël Barnard was the head of apartheid South Africa's National Intelligence Service during the years leading up to Nelson Mandela's release from political imprisonment.

purifying a standardised version of the language. As examples, the Malay words for “please” and “thank you” are *kanalla* and *trammakassie*; and these sound completely foreign to my “white” ear, since my normative and puristic worldview has taught me to use *asseblief* and *dankie*. Unfortunately, the lion’s share of my formalised musical education inculcated a similar worldview in which “whiteness” and its colonial heritage was the only variety of culture deemed worth pursuing. This conservative pedagogical tradition links the Afrikaans language almost exclusively to “white” Christians, thus attempting to formulate a uniquely “white” African simulacrum of European cultural forms. One is therefore conditioned to expect that other cultures are getting it wrong musically, and that they need uplifting to achieve one’s own musical “standards”.

My initial astonishment at discovering how abundantly rich the Malay choral tradition is, embarrasses me now. I was twenty-seven years old, and had resided in South Africa for my entire life; I had studied art music in one form or another for most of my life; and yet I had no inkling that “Coloureds” perform a deep-rooted tradition of Dutch/Afrikaans song literature, or that they have long already established a national variant of Western art music that is more thoroughly indigenised than any of the so-called “South African” art music taught in university music departments. I was thrilled to see that the audiences attending Cape Malay choir competitions outnumber the mostly “white” concertgoers at mostly “white” classical music venues and institutions ten-fold. Additionally, the people in attendance at these concerts also don’t seem to share the same economic profile – as happens when bourgeois “whites” attend concerts of Western art music – but they rather range along a spectrum from conditions of extreme wealth to extreme poverty. And unlike “white” concerts, the ticket prices and food prices are such as would accommodate a large and impoverished family.

On a personal level, this thesis examines how an ideology of cultural survival insulated me from ever encountering and participating in musical and musicological activities that are foreign to the identities of “whiteness” and “Afrikanerdom”. Academically, it strives to achieve something similar for a larger constituency than just myself: First, by questioning the protective ways in which Western art music discourses have been structured historically, and then also by addressing specific situations in which they should no longer be structured in this manner. It has been a painful and sometimes frightening process, since much of what I write about in this document is heresy to my conservative background. Nonetheless, my research contributes to the ongoing decolonisation of music in South Africa.

Gobbet 7: This music has proved itself for ages and it will always exist

As head of a university music department, concerned parents often pose the following problem to me: The matriculant daughter (or worse yet – son) has been tested, can follow in virtually any profession (because of intelligence and ambition), but of all things now only wants to study music. Is it sensible? Is there a future? Will music continue existing in our country? After all, posts are frequently done away with...

I politely ask the parents and the scholar what they think my department deals in. I airily suggest soap powder, matches, filing cabinets... I see them thinking – this is a strange man, this professor. No! I then say, with all the drama I can muster: *I deal in Western Art Music!* We make it, we create and re-create it, we eat and drink it, we live it. Western Art Music. No rubbish music, no nonsense, no cheap drivel, but Western Art Music. Of course, we do study and practice world musics, we do have a course in ethnomusicology. Especially in our country and in our times, it would be foolish not to do so. But basically and fundamentally we occupy ourselves with the great music of Western Civilisation.

And we do this, because this music has proved itself to be of very great value to mankind. It has proved itself for ages and it will always exist. Always (and please remember) *and everywhere in the world* people will want to listen to this music. They will want to play it themselves and they will want to study it. It is too great to be ignored, it is too valuable to be set aside. It has an utterly rich tradition and it is delightfully complicated.

I interrupt my little sermon to worried parents to assure you that Western Art Music will also flourish in South Africa, independently of how our country is going to develop. We may (and probably will, because of an understandable, yet ultimately misplaced reaction to “Eurocentricity”) experience anticlimaxes, but true quality can never be stifled. Eventually good music will prevail.

Henk Temmingh (1995:9)

“The President’s Message / Boodskap van ons President”

South African Music Teacher 1995 (126)

Explanatory note:

The above extract was written in Afrikaans and English. The original Afrikaans text for paragraphs one and four is as follows:

Par. 1: “As hoof van ’n universitêre musiekdepartement, stel besorgde ouers dikwels hierdie probleem aan my: Die matriekdogter (of erger nog – seun) is getoets, kan feitlik enige beroep gaan volg (want is intelligent en ambisieus), maar wil nou wragtig net musiek gaan studeer. Is dit verstandig? Is daar ’n toekoms? Gaan musiek in ons land bly bestaan? Poste word dan so kort-kort afgeskaf...”

Par. 4: “Ek onderbreek my prekie aan bekommerde ouers om u te verseker dat Westerse Kunsmusiek ook in Suid-Afrika sal floreer, onafhanklik daarvan hoe ons land gaan ontwikkel. Ons mag (en sal waarsynlik, as gevolg van begryplike, dog uiteindelik misplaaste reaksie op “eurosentrisme”) laagtepunte beleef, maar ware kwaliteit kan nooit onderdruk word nie. Uiteindelik sal goeie musiek seëvier.”

Overview of the thesis

This thesis examines a body of music-related discourse pertaining to the survival of “white civilisation” within the South African cultural landscape. Included in this discourse are various petitions for the survival of Western art music, along with the concomitant survival of the musicological discipline. My outlook on music in South Africa accepts that culture helps shape the receptive environments within which politicians articulate their ideologies and policies. This then means that seemingly mundane (and, to some, seemingly unrelated) cultural activities such as musical practice and discourse have played an integral part in directing South Africa’s colonial and apartheid history. The perceived historical mission that “whites” had to function as caretakers of Western civilisation in Africa was propagated through a myriad of cultural utterances. One of the arenas where this article of faith about Western civilisation remains in place is in the practice and discourse of so-called Western art music.

In this thesis multiple readings show how “whites” isolated themselves inside enclaves – both physical and psychological – whose borders are/were intended to function like *cordons sanitaire*. These attempts at survival have always been inherently political, and have also been accompanied by an overwhelming urge to subject the country’s landscape and people to social engineering. In Chapter One, I show how musicology in South Africa was, and to some extent still is, subjected to an ethos of positivism and formalism that cordoned the discipline off from sociological concerns. The best way to ensure the survival of Western art music and musicology, within this academic approach, was evidently to make it autonomous and thereby divest it from other cultural concerns in the country. Subsequently, Chapter Two – which is interrelated with Chapter One – deconstructs J.M. Coetzee’s writing on J.S. Bach, and considers in some depth the notion of the musical “classic”, which survives because of an ideologically innocent repeated “testing” (daily practice) by musical professionals. This chapter thus brings one closer to an understanding of the utopian appeal of Western art music as a non-political space in South Africa, but simultaneously also an art form whose function it is to ward off “barbarism” and advance “civilisation”.

Chapters Three and Four are interrelated as well, and follow on the previous two chapters by focussing respectively on how ideologues (cultural critics and musicologists) and Afrikanerdom in general (the people under guidance from influential politicians) constructed and deconstructed philosophies about “white” survival that were informed by European and South African history. Chapter Three examines how Afrikaner thinkers like C.M. van den Heever, N.P. van Wyk Louw and Breyten Breytenbach developed their own ideas about survival from the threads of European apocalyptic visions about the downfall of

“Western civilisation”, as articulated by Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee. It then also considers the ways in which two specific South African musicologists have reacted to the survival ideas of either Spengler/Toynbee or Louw/Breytenbach, while also formulating their own ideas about the transplantation of Western art music into an African context which are similar to Van den Heever’s colonial formulation of *Die Afrikaanse Gedagte*.

Chapter Four discusses the links between the apartheid-era national anthem, “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika”, the Battle of Blood River fought in Natal on 16 December 1838, and the construction of the Voortrekker Monument – which uses the apartheid anthem to memorialise and corrupt the meaning of the Battle of Blood River. This chapter shows how, at the heart of Afrikaner survivalist discourses, sounds the melody of the apartheid anthem: politicised, symbolically enacted, entombed. Survival is not only about existence (*voortbestaan*), but also about a direction leading away from the very narrative of war and suffering so influential in shaping Afrikaner dominance of South Africa. The specific perspectives presented here show that cultural expressions of survival anxiety are not always nuanced. Within nationalistic contexts they continue to be crude masks for an historical obsession with biological endurance, and can therefore help greatly to create the sequestered spaces needed for refuge. There was indeed a grand retreat for “white” South Africans behind a metaphorical fortress wall, and this withdrawal was achieved through a cataclysmic utopian ideology whose central aim was to stop, quite literally, the barbarians at the gate.

Chapter Five and Chapter Six are the third and final interrelated pair of chapters in this thesis, and together they examine how concerns over Western art music’s survival (and Afrikanerdom’s attendant survival) still inform public discourse, concert practice and institutional policy. Chapter Five discusses the reception history of composer Hendrik Hofmeyr’s 2004 *Sinfonia africana*. It shows how Western art music has accumulated meanings and complicities in its South African context that intimately connect it with historical narratives of survival – even during a time-period when formalised apartheid had already been abolished. One of the most interesting features of this symphony’s reception, I maintain, is how the survivalist (and “white supremacist”) ideas of C.M. van den Heever – discussed in Chapter Three – were expected to function in the twenty first century as neutral: a poetic text with reconciliatory and transformative appeal. Western art music, *Sinfonia africana* suggests, is pivotal in shaping this vastly altered expectation through its claims of autonomy, universality and ahistoricity. Moreover, the Anglo Boer War is seen still to inform anxieties over cultural survival more than a century after its conclusion.

Chapter Six, which deconstructs the professorial inaugural lecture of one of the foremost and most senior members of the South African musicological community, Winfried Lüdemann, provides further

context within which to understand the vehement Afrikaner survival anxieties that are pointed out and interpreted in Chapter Five. I regard Lüdemann's lecture as a singularly important text to this thesis, and consequently devote concerted energy to understanding what it means in the context of the survivalist discourses that concern my work. Chapter Six demonstrates how, despite lessened infrastructural support from government, there are advocates who want Western art music to remain as pure and unblemished as possible in the "new" South Africa. To this end, I examine the theoretical blueprint that Lüdemann constructs to ensure the survival of not only Western art music, but also the overall survival of diverse yet autonomous musical cultures. Because of his Apollonian ethical outlook, I show that his suggested framework runs the risk of confusing value judgements about the "beautiful" and the "good" – something which inevitably happens when aesthetic musical choices are rendered into moral or ethical ones. It is a utopian discursive slide that is difficult to navigate responsibly, and is therefore instructive in the way it functions to advocate for the survival value of art music in South Africa and at Stellenbosch.

The spirit in which I base my reading in Chapter Six specifically, but also throughout the rest of this thesis, is one of self-criticism – a concept that is borrowed from Lüdemann's inaugural address itself. As Lüdemann (2009a:11) so aptly puts it: "[T]he adherent of every kind of music should look critically at his/her own music in order to ascertain what its values are, whether it actually conforms to those values and whether and where it deviates from them." As I explained in my Personal Motivation, the biggest part of my musical education consisted of training to be an opera and *Lied* singer. The critique presented in this document is therefore to also a critique directed at myself – my cultural identity, my specific practical and academic skills, my musical preferences, my value system or ethos, my musical networks, my choices of concert attendance, etc. This is a critique conducted from inside the art music garrison, and especially from inside the cultural environment at Stellenbosch University's Music Department, with a view better to understand how my home cultural environment interacts with South Africa's broader cultural ecology.

My chapters negotiate some of the disciplinary divides between musicology, history and literature. In spite of being concerned with art music's discourse, this thesis aims to embrace knowledge (sometimes propaganda) that ranges in quality from the sublime to the ridiculous. There is a firm endeavour to ground critique with various anti-utopian practical hooks (cf. Taruskin 2009), so that my criticism does not succumb to the same utopian characteristics that I critique. Whereas my enquiry is orientated foremost towards what has been written about Western art music in South African academic contexts, it therefore deliberately also includes citations from novels, political speeches, newspaper letters, an obligatory nod to Noam Chomsky, Canadian literary theory and ecumenical theology.

I am also concerned with an exploration of how survival has been an overriding “white” concern throughout South Africa’s history, as well as how historians, armchair philosophers, pamphleteers, prophets and poets have reacted to this cultural obsession. General anxieties about survival are transplanted, I argue, from a practical domain (politics and performed music) into a theoretical one (musicology), generally for the sake of some kind of analogical description. As a result, South African musicology – especially art music’s discourse – is replete with discursive anxieties over survival. My various chapters show that this overriding cultural concern (i.e. the obsessive concern over survival) is contained in discourses that purport to be about the “classic” and “barbarism”, well-being and disease, autonomy, transplantation, universalism and specificity, purity and miscegenation, translation, uniformity, war and victory, and dystopia and utopia. Although some of these discursive placeholders are innocuous, they are nevertheless vulnerable to exploitation when linked with survival, and are used to encourage the intolerable kinds of cultural mobilisation that fossilised apartheid’s racial identities.

In order better to understand the progress of the “survival” idea, which has been transmitted from a wider political and historical discussion into the more reserved intellectual environment of a particular cultural practice such as Western art music, one might want to consider “survival” as a pocket of information that has been replicated into a newer and more refined context. This would mean that “survival” be thought of as one of Richard Dawkins’s so-called memes: an ideological, cultural or political chunk of information that operates like a virus or gene, with the view of reproducing itself from one receptive environment into another (Dyens 2001:23). A meme may alter its meaning subtly as it finds receptive ground in which to thrive, but it nevertheless still endures. Quite literally, the idea of “survival” then also needs to survive – to find niches (ironically, what meme theorists call “survival vehicles”) in order for it to disseminate and flourish (Dyens 2001:7-16).

While my overall critique may offend those defending entrenched conservative positions, it nevertheless also opens up new scope for the realignment or re-identification of ingrained attitudes within the South African musicological landscape. This is because protagonists who have come to be considered oppositional to one another are shown to have entirely sympathetic views when it comes to the *survival* of Western art music. One possible outcome of this project, which would delight me, could be an upending of South African musicology’s conventional political associations. The other important aim is to deconstruct apartheid’s continuing influence, and create the necessary intellectual capacity and space for meaningful and ethically responsible transformation.

Gobbet 8: And the unanimous answer was “survival”

Now to our Society, the SASMT. We (i.e. EXCO) asked each other what our main aim is, in this final decade of the twentieth century, and the unanimous answer was “survival”. We are sure that the Society will continue to exist, maybe even for another seventy years, but will it be relevant and make an impact on the music life of the country? This is what we mean by “survival”.

Our aims and objectives as set out in our Memorandum and in the second chapter of our supposedly disposed-of “Red Book” are all very praiseworthy, and certainly not in any way in need of changing. Yet the fact remains that the SASMT is seen by many to be an outdated, irrelevant Society catering mainly for middle-aged and elderly, mostly female, white private teachers.

[...]

As part of our proposed aim – namely to survive into the 21st century as a vital, prominent Society – we need to actively canvas for new members. The time is ripe for us to broaden our base of membership by including qualified (or successful, experienced) teachers of “other” musical idioms. Nothing in our Constitution says so, but our membership is almost exclusively teachers of Western “classical” music. Why is this? Largely, I think, because that is where the SASMT started, and we have never really tried to change this image. Our attitude needs adjustment.

[...]

Whatever happens we must all work together to do everything in our power to stop music education, as we know it, from disappearing from our schools.

Rosalie Conrad (1992:25-7)

“Presidential Address at the 70th Annual General Conference, Durban-Westville, 13 April 1992”

The South African Music Teacher 120

Gobbet 9: What matters is the creation of ways, means and tools for survival

Finally also, does the whole thing matter? The world is in a many-pronged crisis of such proportions that what matters is the creation of ways, means and tools for survival, and is an ebb in the arts not an expected and tolerable price to pay in historical periods of this kind?

Klaus Heimes (1985:141)

“Towards a South African sociology of music”

Gobbet 10: Rearranging the deck-chairs on the Titanic

We find ourselves today in South Africa in a situation which is decidedly menacing from almost all directions, and music has not escaped from this threat. A few years ago, a similar congress posed as its central theme the question, “Where are we going?” with specific regard to music and its plight in the country. Whether you like to admit it or not, we are presently faced with an artistic crisis which not only threatens our jobs, but even the survival of music as we know it.

[...]

In a nutshell, if our only concern at this crucial time is to find implied non-resolving dominant minor ninths in the pan-tonal works of, for example, Schönberg, then I want to submit that all we’re really doing is “rearranging the deck-chairs on the Titanic”, to borrow a phrase from the famous ambassadress.

Carl van Wyk (1989:91)

“Why Analysis?: A Composer’s View”

SAMUS 8/9

Gobbet 11: A professional can only survive if he/she specialises

In a highly competitive world, a professional can only survive if he/she specialises. It is only human, then, to lose perspective on the field as a whole. However, specialisation is one of the causes of the reduction of music to a collection of rigid packages. When boundaries are hardened, it is not easy to navigate between sub-disciplines.

Bertha Spies (2006:35)

“Dualities in current musicology: More questions than answers”

The transformation of musical arts education: Local and global perspectives from South Africa

Gobbet 12: To survive within a university milieu driven by government subsidies

The problem [of South Africa's essentially conservative tertiary music departments] deepens when one considers that within the South African academic context, tertiary departments of music need to maintain a consistent academic research output (both in terms of postgraduate students and accredited academic publications) to survive within a university milieu driven by government subsidies, and where even sizeable music departments are cross-subsidised by other academic divisions and departments within a given institution due to the costly individualised instruction so characteristic of music tuition.

Martina Viljoen (2014:117)

“A critique of the music school as a conservative system of music production”

Muziki: Journal of Music Research in Africa, 11 (2)

CHAPTER ONE

Surviving in a philological purgatory

Western art music traces its South African provenance to two shameful periods in the country's history: those of colonialism and apartheid. This links with Nietzsche's philosophical concept of the *pudenda origo* (shameful origin). It concerns a form of genealogical thinking where the origins of an idea or tradition are considered somehow bad or shameful, thus convincing intellectuals that it should rather be abandoned (Srinivasan 2011:17). Put in another way, critics can routinely assume that a belief, value or practice with a debased origin is necessarily false and illegitimate. In the context of Western art music's colonial and apartheid historical origins in South Africa, such thinking can arguably commit a *genetic fallacy* by automatically ascribing shameful social, cultural and political characteristics to Western art music in democratic South Africa, based on grounds that the tradition accrued those very genetic markers during colonialism and apartheid. "[T]he relationship between origins on the one hand, and truth, justification and value on the other," Srinivasan (2011:17) writes, "is not nearly as straightforward as many proponents of [the shameful origin] seem to think".

Despite my cognisance of Srinivasan's warning, this thesis investigates various contexts that reveal criticisms of "dishonourableness" in the South African practice and study of Western art music. This criticism is based on how there are indeed genetic markers in the music and its discourse that underscore a perceived cultural value linked with apartheid ideology. My research thus constitutes the sometimes painful excoriation of a continued mythology of Western art music's automatic benevolence, and it reveals "dishonourable" alternatives to the conventional valorised South African narratives about this type of music.¹

The Scylla and Charybdis of writing about Western art music in colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid contexts nevertheless lies in locating a sophisticated criticism; as it were, making one's criticism more complicated than either the wholesale acceptance of causal historical complicity (i.e. routinely blaming everything on colonialism and apartheid) or the conventional and uncomplicated dismissal of historical legacies (i.e. insisting that still talking about colonialism and apartheid in the context of Western art music has long since become redundant).

Even though South Africa's musicians and audiences stand temporally removed from the time periods in which Western art music has its purported shameful local origins, my argument throughout this

¹ Grant Olwage's (2008) book *Composing Apartheid* (conference proceedings that include the work of various South African musicologists) gives a broad perspective on how music helped create apartheid ideology.

thesis is that an aesthetic paradigm linked with colonial and apartheid survival anxieties still persists. Not simply in the “DNA” of the music itself, but much more so in the cultural assumptions that accompany Western art music’s practice and study. More than anything else, the present research argues that a genealogy of hegemonic thought – or else, a veiled ideology of classical music – oftentimes remains unproblematised in the “new” South African democracy. This oversight has as much to do with narrow disciplinary concerns as with broader social problems that were sutured over in the name of reconciliation. In this sense, my research hinges on a recognition, first articulated by South African musicologists during the 1980s, that music and society are networked within a reciprocal relationship (e.g. Ballantine 1984; Heimes 1985).² As Christopher Ballantine explains in his book, *Music and Its Social Meanings*:

The reality we have to come to terms with is that our “un-reflected-upon” attitudes to music – those attitudes that we take for granted, and seem to us most obvious, with all their implicit assumptions – are very largely *ideology*. That is to say, they have come into being at a specific moment in history, as part and parcel of the way certain classes of people have come to see their world and their place and activities in it, all of which have been more or less a function of the way society has been organised at that time, and particularly of the way it has shared, or rather denied the sharing of, its benefits. Such views are the products of certain societies in certain social and historical conditions, and of the individuals in them: people who by virtue of their place in the social structure are to greater or lesser degree cut off from seeing it *as a whole*, as it really is. Ideology, then, in this sense is a kind of false consciousness (Ballantine 1984:7).

The false consciousness that unfortunately still persists in South Africa, within the music/musicology discipline, but also within society, is that a Western art music practice conceived of as being aesthetically autonomous is simultaneously thought to be virtuous and beneficial to everyone’s well-being. This false consciousness persists despite overwhelming observable evidence that Western art music has actually not been very successful in healing South Africa’s fractured society (Ridge 1995:111-2).

Ballantine’s and Heimes’s research rejects the convenient refuge that aesthetic autonomy grants Western art music, predominantly by subjecting to Marxist critique the entire bourgeois musical system that blinkers its participants so severely. My research embraces their diagnosis of a false consciousness, but adds furthermore that there is an uncomfortable awareness – discussed in Chapter Two, with reference to J.M Coetzee’s novel *Youth* – that pianos and violins, together with the “white” protagonists who play them, occupy South Africa’s cultural environment on the shakiest of pretexts. Therefore, an anxiety of survival

² Until academics like Ballantine and Heimes introduced arguments about the dynamic interplay between music and society into South Africa’s mainstream musicology during the 1980s, such a point of view had only been put forward by ethnomusicologists like John Blacking. As an example, Blacking’s *How Musical Is Man?* (1973) makes a strong case for the replication of societal macrocosms and musical microcosms within one another.

informs the ritualised displays of exceptionalism within the local Western art music scene. Any criticism that situates this musical tradition within colonial or apartheid contexts triggers this anxiety, since such criticism is perceived as a discursive threat – not only to this musical tradition’s continued survival, but also metonymically to the continued biological survival of the tradition’s adherents.

This links with an observation by musicologist Klaus Heimes (1989:16) that South Africa’s Western art music enclave has turned itself into a “caretaker culture”, where Adorno’s fetishisation applies “more convincingly than it ever did to Europe and America”. When local defenders of the Western art music tradition are pressed on their insistence that an essentially Germanic musical tradition has become autonomous and therefore unproblematic in South Africa’s socio-political context, they invariably react with an uncritical appeal to universality (e.g. Hofmeyr, in Bezuidenhout 2007:20-1; Melck 1993:45-6; Solomon 1997:15-8; Temmingh 1995:9-10).

Richard Taruskin (2009:73-5) explains that arguments about Western art music’s “universalism” became necessary in international discourses because of Germany’s troubled political history during the twentieth century. He writes this in specific reference to how Beethoven’s music has helped establish notions of the musical “classic”:³

Beethoven – that is, his ever-magnifying posthumous reputation – was the creator spirit of classical music as we know it. His example established the masterwork – the fixed and “timeless” musical text rather than the ephemeral performance – as the primary object in which “art” music trades. [...]

So it is to Beethoven (that is, to his smug commanding example) that we trace the ritualism of our smug, dull concert life; by celebrating and yet again repackaging the undeniably great and daring fountainhead of our undeniably narrow, pusillanimous performance rites, we ward off threats to our complacency.

These provocative words are no doubt meant to stimulate controversy, and they are a response to universalist narratives that attempt to normalise, exclude and shout down criticism and thereby allow German ethnocentric music to masquerade as something ecumenical (Taruskin 2009:75). In South Africa, the predominance of an Austro-Germanic art music tradition is problematic when one considers that apartheid was a totalitarian and racist form of government, adopted a mere three years after the cessation of the Second World War. Chapter Two presents a similar criticism to Taruskin’s denouncement of the intolerable “Beethoven myth”, but with reference instead to those who view Bach’s music as a “classic”.

³ In an echoing statement, Kerman (1985:36) writes that Beethoven’s music, more than that of any other figure, epitomises the music of the Western intellectual community.

When someone argues, for example, that Bach’s music is so extraordinary and profound that it has always been, and will always be, played and loved *everywhere*, then that person implies that universally valued musical “classics” cannot possibly perpetuate apartheid’s cultural worldview – since apartheid is temporally and geographically specific, and not *universal*.

The composer Hendrik Hofmeyr argued that Bach’s music is universal, while speaking at the 2011 Stellenbosch Chamber Music Festival in a lecture-interview about musicological scholarship that links Western art music with apartheid (De Roubaix, in Fuchs 2013:125). This statement is discussed in Chapter Five, which critiques a nostalgic post-apartheid Afrikaner nationalism in the context of Hofmeyr’s composition *Sinfonia africana*. A hegemonic ethos of *universalism* is identified in that chapter as this work’s fundamental aesthetic characteristic. In a published interview with Morné Bezuidenhout, Hofmeyr presents the same reasoning about Bach’s music in response to a question about Western art music’s cultural relevance in the “new” South Africa:

Members of the cultural police have seen fit to attack me for daring not to subscribe to their notion of what represents (depending on their own agendas) an Afrikaans, or South African, or African style. I suppose it is understandable that they should be irritated with my “failure” to neatly label myself for their convenience. [...]

Western classical music has become an easy political target in this country, not because it is a Western import (pop music and soccer, those darlings of political patronage, are that also), but because as an art form it requires time and effort. The practitioners of a simplistic “cultural critique” have no problem in connecting the dots from “requiring time and effort” to “elitist” to “anti-democratic” and thus “un-South African” (Hofmeyr, in Bezuidenhout 2007:20).

Having already described Western art music as a universal language that speaks “to every aspect – spiritual, emotional, physical, intellectual – of that which makes us human”, Hofmeyr again uses Bach as an example with which to explain Western art music’s local relevance:

But if one’s only concern is to be on the right bandwagon at the right time, now is a good time to trumpet the “irrelevance” of Western classical music. Of course, history has demonstrated that the fact that Bach was an eighteenth-century German writing in eighteenth-century Germany for eighteenth-century Germans has not limited his “relevance” to that time or place. The fashionistas of the time in any case considered him an old fogey, hopelessly out of touch with the times, or as our “new musicologists” would put it, “irrelevant”. There is nothing “novel” in Bach’s style, but there is the inimitable originality of an individual who has mastered his art and refined it to a point where what he has to say and how he says it are truly unique (Hofmeyr, in Bezuidenhout 2007:20-1).

These words seem to describe the “new musicology” as a bandwagon of political correctness. Chapter Two of this thesis does much to highlight the “irrelevance” of Bach’s music in South Africa, and

questions how branding Bach as a “classic” (i.e. “timeless” and “universal”) is an ideologically disinterested discursive manoeuvre that hopes to protect Western civilisation from the perceived onslaught of barbarism. As of yet, critical evaluations of the “white” elite’s allegiance to Bach’s music, and to Western art music in general, have not had much of an impact in deconstructing the delicate endurance of the Western musical “classic” in South Africa. As the Hofmeyr quotation above suggests, socially conscious criticism of Bach’s South African relevance is perceived as a nuisance, and therefore it might even be considered “blasphemy” – using McClary’s (1987) iconic phrasing – to “talk politics” where Bach is concerned. There are important figures working in the local Western art music scene – Hofmeyr included – who take strong issue with what they consider to be a fashionable trend in current research on music: The construction of a body of criticism that interrogates the Western art music industry, its canon of treasured compositions, and many of its most influential role-players, for apparent complicity in apartheid. One imagines that the disturbances caused by this critical “new musicology” vanguard would necessarily activate protective counter-measures. At this point in the chapter, I therefore turn to an overview of the difficult introduction into South African academe of scholarly perspectives associated with the “new musicology”.

Musicology has disciplinary roots in philology. This means that, for a very long time, mechanical drudgeries such as low-level problem-solving, textual-critical elimination, documentation, description and classification were the *definitive* activities with which musicologists were expected to occupy themselves. Philology offered influential conceptual models for the publication of critical score editions and other musicological texts, especially in Germany during the first half of the twentieth century (Parker 2000:11). From the 1930s onwards, German émigrés institutionalised this positivistic approach to musicology at the foremost universities in the United States, thus transforming the methodology and focus of what had been practiced as musicology in America up to that point in time (Kerman 1985:26, 41-6). Eager to replicate the rigorous foundations of a European *Gymnasium* education for their American students, immigrant teachers incorporated a spate of menial and crippling tasks into the core syllabus of what they thought would constitute a durable and sound training (Kerman 1985:45-6).

During the 1950s and 1960s, structuralism-oriented influences were borrowed from literary studies and incorporated into the musicological discipline – most notably semiotics, analytic models used in linguistics and narrative theory (Parker 2000:11). These perspectives quickly became part of the musicological mainstream, and especially shaped the sub-disciplines of musical analysis and ethnomusicology. Parker (2000:12) writes that the overhaul in musicology that was caused by structuralism

was nevertheless comforting, since it still involved positivistic “acts of musical description”, meaning that “the importation of a new formal vocabulary was more a paint-job than a sea-change”. Radically different approaches to the discipline only came about from the 1970s onwards, with the advent of the “new musicology”, as orthodox musical scholarship opened up to import methods and perspectives from feminism, deconstructionism, new historicism, cultural studies and Frankfurt School criticism (Parker 2000:12; McClary 1991:xiv). The primary objective in this development was to dismantle the self-containment in which previous ways of thought had shrouded music (Kramer 1994:1; McClary 1991:x).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Richard Salmon and Christopher Ballantine introduced scholarship of the “new musicology” type into South African musicology, predominantly through incisive Marxist critiques of musical practice and study in apartheid South Africa (Lucia 2005:xxxiv). Nonetheless, their research was rejected by the musicological mainstream, which “tended to foster a research ethos in which the writer could remain untouched by international disciplinary shifts in the humanities and especially in musicology” (Lucia 2005:xxxv). Furthermore, apartheid did tremendous damage in scattering music researchers according to racial and identity politics:

Throughout the 1980s and early '90s, when South African universities were already affected by the international boycott and were severed from each other internally by eleven apartheid education systems, intellectual divides were further underscored by the separation between [the Musicological Society of Southern Africa and the Ethnomusicology Symposia]. While both encouraged the presentation of work in progress, such work often avoided engagement with critical theory. [...] Local views in the 1980s polarised into two musicological camps: crudely put, musicology for conservatives who engaged with the hegemonic discourse of Western classical music regardless of the way it propped up the regime (indeed, as if it had nothing to do with politics); and ethnomusicology for liberals who engaged mainly with African music and with a discourse of resistance, or for new African scholars who engaged – problematically for them in terms of the apartheid ethos of separate development – with their “own” music (Lucia 2005:xxxv-xxxvi).

Anti-apartheid sanctions were further detrimental to the local musical/musicological enterprise: Reid (1995:114) and Geldenhuys (1991:42-3) write that by the mid-1980s there was tremendous difficulty in stimulating an exchange of music and ideas between South Africa and the rest of the world; especially since books, periodicals and television programmes were either too expensive (due to the economic consequences of the sanctions) or else simply withheld. While this isolation convinced musicologists like Bernard van der Linde to “make a lemonade out of one’s lemon” by publishing and reviewing more local

publications, it is nonetheless evident that South African musicology was disconnected from the “new musicology” at a critical moment in the discipline’s development.⁴

Even though there has subsequently been a considerable incorporation of critical “new musicology” into local music scholarship, this has nevertheless happened within institutions that remain heavily invested in the concept of music’s autonomy (Viljoen 2014:17). And even today, politically informed musicological critiques of Afrikaner identity are dismissed as “ideologically motivated obsessions”, which are grounded in the “fashionable currents within the so-called New Musicology of American origins” (Grové 2011:666). Local opponents of the “new musicology” voice frank reservations that this perspective focuses almost exclusively on sociological issues, at the expense of more traditional ways of knowing about music – such as music theory (e.g. Hofmeyr 2011:1). Social context may well be *one* of the aspects of music that deserves study, Hendrik Hofmeyr writes, but where it is done without – or at the cost of – a grounded understanding of what takes place *in the music itself*, it becomes a superficial chess game in which subjectivity and ideological positioning are the only criteria (Hofmeyr 2011:1). Bertha Spies (2006:16), one of the country’s foremost music theorists, writes similarly that there is a new postmodernist scholarly hegemony that replaced the previous hegemony of reason and fixed certainties, so that music scholarship is now “situated in the authority of personal taste, with the domination of subjective experience as the result”. Hofmeyr (2011:1) is concerned that postgraduate music students, who have no qualifications in sociology, are being forced at some of South Africa’s foremost universities to limit themselves to the sociological approach, with the general consequence that they not only publish research that is bad sociologically, but that they also do not further their knowledge of music theory (Hofmeyr 2011:1).

Contrary to these perceptions, Beverly Parker has conducted research that shows how postgraduate students are in fact still far more likely to conduct descriptive analyses of music (commenting on poietic structure and style) than they are to do research on sociological issues surrounding music (Lucia 2007:172). In these types of postgraduate study, music analysis is treated as “a taken-for-granted methodology” that automatically satisfies the needs of critical scholarship, rather than being a way in which to facilitate wider enquiry into a more socially relevant topic. The absence of critical enquiry within this “end-in itself” methodology resembles 1960s trends in literary New Criticism, in that musical analysis is regarded as a “self-evident [activity that requires] neither justification nor explanation” (Parker, in Lucia 2007:172). The ahistorical assumptions of this analytical tradition are furthermore confirmed when one considers the lacuna

⁴ Heimes (1989:16) writes that the 1988 UNISA International Piano Competition was another attempt to bust the crippling cultural effect of the sanctions, and even mentions that politicians made speeches there to this effect.

of documentation (textbooks, workbooks) that theorises Western art music and “other” musical practices indigenous to South Africa within a local – instead of a *universalised* – context (Lucia 2007:177). The fifth chapter of this thesis argues against a typical example of such normative postgraduate research, which utilises the “taken-for-granted” methodology of music analysis to create a “self-evident” *universalised* context and meaning for Hendrik Hofmeyr’s *Sinfonia africana*.

Music theory is the quintessential positivistic sub-discipline of musicology. Christine Lucia (2007:168, 179-83) points out how South Africa’s colonial history has imbued the education system with an entrenched universalising method for teaching and understanding music. There is an inherited and un-scrutinised genealogy of music theory that dates back to external grade examinations of the Victorian era. This has meant that music theory is almost always considered as a tool for description and validation. In the national musicology of academe, the positivistic and philological exercise of revealing and cataloguing the building blocks of a piece of music is even thought to contribute to the creation of a particularly South African canon of art music (Lucia 2007:172-3).

Lucia writes that the positivistic system of music education is so entrenched in South Africa that its adaptation or abolition would be regarded as a threat to the survival of Western art music:

For it is nothing less than abandoning, after 300 years, the traditional carrier of Western classical music conventions, dismantling an older system in which apprentices are perpetually initiated into the “basics”, or nuts and bolts, so that masters higher up in the hierarchy can continually control them as they move up until they become masters themselves (Lucia 2007:184).

This survival anxiety attaches to the continued moral and aesthetic value of Western art music. One could even venture that criticism that is not of a positivistic or purely descriptive kind endangers this Eurocentric musical tradition inside its postcolonial environment, where new sensitivities have driven critics to ask uncomfortable questions about the role of ideology in spreading and maintaining this tradition. These concerns, however, are not strictly limited to the local sphere: McClary (1991:x) writes that music analysis has for the past two centuries focused progressively more on “structural issues, appealing to the concept of autonomy to secure music’s exemption from cultural criticism”. It would thus appear that, within a social context as pressing as South Africa’s postcolonial and post-apartheid one, where grave questions are asked about Western art music’s “relevance”, deliberately shrouding this tradition in discourses of autonomy is a safety mechanism to avoid uncomfortable inquiries.

For Lucia (2007:184) the introduction of a more critical approach to music education (specifically music theory) is a necessity. She argues that music theory could become more like critical theory and thus

help deconstruct the ideology of autonomy that still informs this prevalent type of analytical music scholarship. In contrast, the many scholars who prefer to avoid cultural criticism limit musical performance and scholarship to the safe confines of a philological purgatory: With strict adherence to positivism, they create a discursive field wherein musicians and musicologists talk about, perform, and listen to art music with adolescent *innocence*, thereby implicitly accepting the Western art music tradition's unquestionable benevolence and value (Ballantine 1983:53). It is as if by some tacit agreement of collected self-censorship, a counter-Platonic republic is enacted where critics are banished, instead of musicians.⁵

Heimes (1989) uses the concept of *symbolic universes* – borrowed from the influential sociology book *The Social Construction of Reality* by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann – to explain how critical thinking was largely banished from local music scholarship. In introducing the sociology of knowledge into musicological discourse, his aim is to determine “the social reasons for the availability, acceptance or rejection of any kind of knowledge within a structured group” – i.e. structured groups like the musicological discipline, or tertiary music institutions (Heimes 1989:10). Heimes explains a *symbolic universe* as “a perceiver-supportive interpretation of reality”, which determines the “knowledge horizon of a particular society” in order to make “the universe knowable and manageable”:

What is observed is that some societies restrict the knowledge horizon in order to support a decreed symbolic universe. Symbolic universes can function as legitimization of ideologies, and where this function is endangered, some societies assume control over the direction of knowledge. Such control does not usually aim at one science, but at the entire psycho-socio-cultural content of a society's “mental space” – a near-synonym to “symbolic universe” used in philosophical anthropology – to maximise uniformity of the collective consciousness (Heimes 1989:10).

In the case of South Africa's symbolic universe, Heimes (1989:11) mentions two specific examples during the 1980s where Elizabeth Oerle and Christopher Ballantine tried to expand the knowledge horizon of South African music studies, and were immediately countered with questions about “separate development”, meaning that their intellectual enquiry was automatically prohibited by the normative logic of apartheid's *raison d'être*: cultural separation. Heimes maintains that when “separate development” becomes part of the academic discourse, it represents a mechanical rejection of Other-knowledge and

⁵ I borrow this idea from George Steiner (1989:4-7). *Real Presences: Is there anything in what we say?* opens with a rational fiction in which he imagines this kind of philological society: “In short, I am construing a society, a politics of the primary; of immediacies in respect of texts, works of art and musical compositions. The aim is a mode of education, a definition of values devoid, to the greatest possible extent, of ‘meta-texts’: this is to say, of texts about texts (paintings or music), of academic, journalistic and academic-journalistic – today, the dominant format – talk about the aesthetic. A city for painters, poets, composers, choreographers, rather than one for art, literary musical or ballet critics and reviewers, either in the market-place or in academe” (Steiner 1989:6).

information by a structured group of music scholars and institutions, “in whose symbolic universe musicological credo and political knowledge” are indistinguishable. Quoting Berger and Luckmann, Heimes explains the fundamental problem with *symbolic universes* as follows:

[T]hey can serve to effect self-legitimation, and to liquidate “the reality of whatever phenomena or interpretations of phenomena do not fit into that universe. [...] The threat from social definitions of reality is neutralised by assigning an inferior ontological status, and thereby a not-to-be-taken-seriously cognitive status, to all definitions existing outside the symbolic universe”. The result is a convergence of socio-political structures and knowledge horizons in a kind of “elective affinity” [this last term is explained in a footnote as: the possible dependence of developing cultural concepts on religious motives] (Heimes 1989:11 & 20).

This description is relevant to both Chapter Five (which responds to Hendrik Hofmeyr’s apparent ideal that music criticism should preferably not address ideological concerns) and Chapter Six (which extensively discusses Winfried Lüdemann’s blueprint for the maintenance of cultural separation in post-apartheid South Africa).

Despite the foothold gained by the “new musicology” in South Africa over the past two decades, there still exists a worrying musicological brand of interpretative silence – one that is based on positivistic description and is devoid of any meta-textual interpretations. This then necessarily depends on giving the term “culture” a very narrow definition, which is “the Great Masterpieces of Western art music”, instead of a much wider one, which is “all the distinctive spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional features characterising a society” (Brink 1983:223). In *Music and its Social Meanings*, Christopher Ballantine gives a striking indication of what my philological purgatory entails, when he points towards the positivistic paradigm’s intentional circumscription of musical discourse to technical matters:

We talk about wrong notes in performance, criticise parallel fifths in a student’s harmony exercise, discriminate between different musical styles, analyse the formal and technical aspects of a musical work, comment on the relationship between two conflicting editions of the same work, and so on. I do not want to deny that each of these things may, in its proper place, be valid and important; but I am worried that such concerns are for the most part *all* we talk about (Ballantine 1984:13).

This musical consciousness prohibits any discussion of music’s abundant connections with extra-musical content, and thereby also eliminates, to ruinous effect, the human and social contexts that give music its quiddity. In agreement with Ballantine, Heimes (1986:35) laments how focus on technical and descriptive matters has impaired generations of professional musicians and musicologists, by not equipping them with the necessary academic skills to understand and evaluate the sociological context of music in

South Africa. Heimes also describes it as a scandal that the overwhelming majority of this country's music graduates would not be able to even comprehend or coherently argue with his own or Ballantine's research. Instead, these musicians and musicologists have been reared within institutions where there has often been no interest in recognising, let alone teaching, the relationship between music and society; meaning that their schooling concentrated on discourse "about styles, skills and techniques", and also kept strictly to what responsible positivists can call "the facts" (Ballantine 1984:4).

Positivistic spadework is a vital component of musicological studies, in the sense that it helps secure the information necessary for undertakings such as complete editions and musical biographies.⁶ But at the same time, positivism can become a fossilising constraint on musical studies, thus curbing advancement of the critical intellect and unguarded questioning spirit that one would normally expect of a liberal arts education (Ballantine 1984:18). Musicologists like Jacques Malan (1983:27) viewed South Africa as a virginal paradise in which cultural ground could be cultivated and – unlike in Europe – a meaningful contribution to civilisation could still be made, by studying and thereby consolidating the establishment of a new national Western art music tradition, and by also cataloguing and maintaining black *otherness* in the field of ethnomusicology. This content and context meant that South African musicology of the 1970s and 1980s was thought of as a "new musicology", but however not one "to be confused with the new musicology that came out of the culture wars of North American and European scholarship in the 1980s" (Lucia 2005:xxxv). The knowledge horizon was severely circumscribed, to the extent that at least one university forced scholars to define academic freedom as "the search for truth within the limits of one's subject" – with the result that the study of music could not have religious, social, political or anthropological applications (Heimes 1989:15). Heimes is of the opinion that this restrictiveness was intended to arrest any possibility of liberal humanism within South Africa's educational structures.

In this regard, positivistic approaches to musicology and music education served apartheid's ideologues exceedingly well. Writing in the same decade as Ballantine and Heimes, Joseph Kerman (1985:46) bemoaned how students programmed to be "nothing-but-specialists" could ever develop "broad, original, human horizons". In South Africa, the entire system's endurance depended on ignoring the human responsibilities that citizens have towards one another. Unfortunately, much of that irresponsible thinking was normalised and remains operative within society and within the musicological discipline.

⁶ One could argue that intellectual restrictions so inhibited South African musicologists that even this necessary positivistic activity has not been carried out with sufficient responsibility. As a result of this oversight, scholars who have embraced the "new musicology" run the risk of hollow theorisation.

South African music research was officially amalgamated in 2006 with the founding of the South African Society for Research in Music (SASRIM). Two earlier societies for musicology and ethnomusicology were disbanded as separate entities and merged. These were the Musicological Society of Southern Africa and the Symposia on Ethnomusicology (Ballantine 2012:113). Integration was the main reasoning behind such a realignment: not only would researchers who normally rarely came into contact with one another have opportunities to discover one another's work, but the disciplines (or sub-disciplines) of musicology and ethnomusicology would also have the chance to intermingle with one another. Most importantly, academic barriers that had their origins – in significant ways – in apartheid intellectualisation could continue to be dismantled. Understandably, though, the discontinuation of separate societies could just as well have raised concerns over the endurance of separate sub-disciplines. If musicology were to become more like ethnomusicology (and vice versa), then it would surely lose something of its essence. This fear about disciplinary integrity is related to historical fears about cultural and “racial” integrity.

This thesis reads South African musicology and ethnomusicology as informed and constructed by apartheid. In this sense it reads against the grain of autonomy, which immunised musicology from the proper understanding of social mediation. My interpretation is that South African musicology (and to a large extent also ethnomusicology) was politicised from the moment of its inception. The subsequent domination by *apparatchiks* of the apartheid cultural elite inside the discipline also means that it was thoroughly discredited by the end of apartheid, and that tremendous intellectual work is necessary to unpack and understand the influence of politics on musicological discourses (Muller 2000:8). This is similar to understanding, from within the ambit of German culture, how discourses about its national art music tradition came to universalise this tradition through hegemonic political discourse.

As Celia Applegate explains:

The serious study of [German] music has, in other words, long neglected the role of nationalism in music because it has itself been profoundly shaped by nationalism, in ways that even now remain unexamined. Even the “new musicology”, which is now maturing at a critical distance from its parents, has been readier to point out the nationalist biases of positivistic and Dahlhausian musicology than to investigate the actual circumstances of their origins (Applegate 1992:26).

This is largely similar to Ballantine's mentioning of the “un-reflected-upon attitudes” or “false consciousness” that is subscribed to where Western art music features in South African academic and public discourse; although, my focus embraces Applegate's (1992:27-8) injunction to determine explicitly how the intersections between history and nationalist politics shaped local discourses about music and culture in

general. This is the reason why my thesis focuses on the articulations of survival that inform South African discourse about Western art music. My critique of Western art music and musicology in this country therefore relies on a thorough understanding of the various philosophical and utopian underpinnings of Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid. Inevitably, the present research also partakes in a criticism where explanations about Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid run the risk of searching for absolution.

In a position paper for a roundtable discussion convened by Christopher Ballantine at the 2010 SASRIM conference, Carina Venter described politics as the juggernaut that overwhelms musical research in South Africa. Too much politics displaces the musical object, while too much veneration of the musical object ignores the exigencies of social mediation. Venter seems to walk the tightrope between these two agendas when she asks the following two questions: “How can we retain aesthetic consciousness without buying into a personal or collective aesthetic innocence? How, on the other hand, do we write about music without being driven or crushed by apartheid?” (Venter, in Ballantine 2012:126).

There are those who argue for the importance of finding a musicology that has let go of apartheid as a meta-narrative. This at least seems to be the suggestion of Zelda Potgieter, made in her position paper for Ballantine’s roundtable discussion:

It is one thing to agree [that musicology is cultural politics], but it is another thing entirely for a community of scholars such as ourselves to agree to conspire towards the furtherance of any one particular political ideal. It is precisely this kind of imperative, for example, that gave impetus to the “ivory tower” syndrome now widely denounced as musical autonomy. [...] The last thing we need in the furtherance of liberal humanism in the new South Africa is to create a new “grand narrative” – to return to a condition wherein we can be accused of consciously mobilising all forms of South African musicological expression and suppressing all dissenting voices (Potgieter, in Ballantine 2012:124).

This, unfortunately, seems to be Potgieter’s impression of SASRIM (stated during a period when she was the society’s chairperson). She states that, during the four years of the society’s existence up to that time, a number of prominent South African musicologists distanced themselves from it. The apartheid narrative thus not only insulates local musicology from wider participation in international discourses, but it furthermore marginalises musicologists who do not subscribe to the continued thematic relevance of apartheid to form a comprehensive understanding of music and musicology. Is forgetting about or ignoring apartheid, however, not tantamount to withdrawing once again into the unquestioning innocence of apartheid-era musicology?

Even worse than estranging some scholars, the politicisation of musicology runs the risk of encouraging battle lines inside the discipline. As Winfried Lüdemann states in his position paper for the

abovementioned roundtable discussion: “We still find it extremely difficult to raise questions or discuss ideas on their merit, because we are always representing – or are seen to be representing – a particular social background” (Lüdemann, in Ballantine 2012:131). Thus Lüdemann advocates for the desirability of musicologists rather arguing disciplinary *ideas* instead of the political *positions* that they represent or are seen to represent (Lüdemann, in Ballantine 2012:132). But surely it is not always possible – or even desirable – to argue the ideas without also automatically arguing the positions? Positions come with whole sets of ideas. Ideas describe the interests of people who occupy said positions. Thinking about ideas as Lüdemann does, depends on what Ballantine (1983:55) – in another context – has called the classical liberal division of research into “pure” and “applied” branches. Intentionally avoiding the discussion of positions therefore constitutes an anodyne abstraction of the discipline and its discourses.

Is it not one of those moves similar to the championing of musical autonomy, which enables music scholars and performers to ensconce themselves in an ivory tower where intellectual pursuits remain elevated above quotidian events and concerns? Of course, in administrative scenarios, describing university departments as Ivory Towers is a bureaucratic ploy to undermine the fact that isolation is often needed for scholarship to be a conceptual possibility at all (Eagleton, in Higgins 2007). But in South African tertiary music studies contexts one also needs to ask *why else* academic isolation (restriction of the knowledge horizon) has been deemed necessary – i.e. *what* were the ideas/positions and who were the people being avoided while climbing the steps to Parnassus? Awareness of the Ivory Tower, and the necessity to abandon it, has been a long-standing disciplinary concern among local musicologists (e.g. Van der Linde 1971:ii; Geldenhuys 1990:12; Malan 1980:8; Heimes 1989:14). In a historically unjust society like South Africa, the humanities are confronted with a heavier burden of social relevance. Ideas are an indispensable commodity, but they can only work properly when they influence and alter entrenched positions.

Scholarship by Carina Venter and Annemie Stimie has already done much to rethink the neutrality of Western art music and the role it played in Afrikaner nationalism in twentieth century South Africa. Venter’s (2009) research makes clear that Afrikaner music historiography borrowed its most basic *positions* from the investment of apartheid’s intellectual and political *ideas* in Western primacy. Stimie’s (2010) research draws attention to how Western art music functioned as a pivot between the national and the international, embracing a cosmopolitanism not as readily accessed through the Afrikaans language. The thrust of both these projects was historical, and aimed less at South African musicology as a discipline than at Afrikaner nationalist writing about and on music.

In a paper delivered at the Fourth Symposium on Ethnomusicology, titled “Taking Sides: or, music, music departments and the deepening crisis in South Africa”, Ballantine (1983:52-5) identified a likely sea change inside the local musicological discipline from the mid-1980s onwards. Owing to the volatile political situation at that time, he anticipated the formation of positional *sides* within disciplines, universities, and individual departments. The politicisation of aesthetics, he argued, necessitated a choice from scholars as to where they located themselves socially and intellectually: i.e. “taking sides” (*positions*) in relation to the issues (*ideas*). Battles that were waged in English departments would migrate to music departments: advocates of critical theory would oppose themselves to empiricists who took the dominant status of their methods of criticism for granted; the introduction of so-called low culture into university curricula would spark heated debates between populists and elitists; and the formation by universities of various social responsibility agendas would polarise university senates into political factions (Ballantine 1983:53).

With regard to music, Ballantine understood the developing situation in a context where South African music departments were considered to be copies of European ones:

University music departments in South Africa are typical colonial institutions: the traditions, practices and objectives of European music departments – as well as their sense of what constitutes the proper study of music – all these have migrated practically unchanged to the African sub-continent; like their European parent institutions, music departments here take an important part of their function to be the preservation of a certain set of values, and indeed a certain way of life (Ballantine 1983:53).

Any challenge to this paradigm would play out in conflict between “those social groupings seeking some kind of conservation of the established order” and “those seeking the creation of a new social dispensation” (Ballantine 1983:54). Everything that was taught would therefore have political connotations:

Musicology, for instance, will lose its taken-for-granted character: urgent questions are likely to be raised about not only its scope – the objects it deems worthy of study – but also about its methodology: in other words about the extent to which it maintains its conservative, positivistic traditions, or engages with other, more critical, more self-reflexive, more sociological approaches. The practice of composition within our departments will also be interrogated, under a barrage of questions about the inherent Eurocentricity of most South African composition, its lack of any deep, structural engagement with our social, historical and geographical predicament, or with the indigenous music of our land. Not even musical performance will be exempt from such questions – questions asked for instance about the training of performers in the execution *only* of European instruments, and in the execution of an *exclusively* Eurocentric repertoire. And similarly for music education: every one of these questions is likely to be aimed at our music-education programmes, as we are called on to account for the particular set of biases that we require our prospective school-music teachers to impose on future generations of unsuspecting school-children (Ballantine 1983:54).

More than thirty years after Ballantine's critique, it is striking how much of this still resonates with the academic conditions in South Africa's music education system. The syllabi of conservatories remain biased towards Germanic and European Romantic repertoires; something which is unsurprising, considering that local music schools and conservatoires were modelled on German examples (Malan 1979; Paxinos 1985:41). In this regard, the most Germanophile university music departments would necessarily be the most conservative departments. And significantly, the three most conservative university music departments are also regarded as the most prestigious – the South African College of Music (SACM; University of Cape Town), the Music Department at Stellenbosch University, and the Music Department at the University of Pretoria (Viljoen 2014:127). Now that the intellectual bulwarks that propped up apartheid's ideology have become vulnerable to questions, South Africa's purveyors of Western art music are necessarily also under pressure to do away with their transplanted ethnocentric music tradition. It is an imperative felt at the systemic level – as revealed in various Gobbets throughout this thesis – but even more worryingly to many, it is also felt inside the disciplinary garrison.

The citation in this chapter of work by Heimes, Ballantine and Lucia makes clear that South African musicology became politically aware during the 1980s, but only through one fragment of sociologically conscious scholarship that embraced ethnomusicological paradigms. This thesis now proceeds to an investigation and critique of important discourses from other time periods that helped shape South Africa's "white" musical value system. Anxieties over survival always register within these discourses, but the relevant musical scholars and cultural critics respond in strikingly different ways. Apart from the refuge of *aesthetic autonomy*, ideologically restricted *knowledge horizons* and *symbolic universes* discussed throughout this chapter, the articulations of survival critiqued throughout the remainder of this thesis include: the ideologically disinterested protection of musical "classics"; the avoidance in Africa of Western civilisation's inevitable downfall; politically sensitive methodologies to ensure the endurance of "white" music and scholarship in a "black" social environment; the construction of the "laager mentality" through song; the protective *universalisation* of Afrikaner nationalism through Western art music; and anxieties over the continued endurance of Western art music in post-apartheid South Africa. It is fascinating that the intellectual output of these diverse musicians, teachers, scholars and critics – irrespective of their ideological positioning – is predominantly and intimately concerned with survival.

Gobbet 13: How might the troubled sensibility survive?

If there are legitimate concerns for the current state of music research in South Africa, as I believe the case to be, they are symptomatic of past divisions and the struggle for survival in what could be a brutal South African system, which specialises in draining intellectual and creative energy. And it is not made easier by the absence of many scholars who, after the merger [of the Musicological Society of South Africa and the Symposia on Ethnomusicology] four years ago, dismissively withdrew to yesterday.

[...]

For me, writing about the current state, the past, and the future prospects of music research in South Africa are incredibly difficult, precisely because it is, in many ways, deeply personal and inextricably tied to other South African questions. I am aware that my contribution asks many questions and offers few answers. In the present, and cast here in the role of student, how else can it be? I will conclude, then, with one more haunting personal question, to which the answer, I would hope, is a pertinent part of a South African paradigm for intellectual and social engagement with music: How might the troubled sensibility survive in South Africa without shedding its moral, social and political responsibility?

Carina Venter (in Ballantine 2012:126-7)

“Report: Looking back, looking ahead: the state of our discipline”

SAMUS 32

Gobbet 14: The critical examination of how creative work survives

A gentle and politically uninvolved man, Grové was neither an anti-apartheid campaigner nor an enthusiast. It was only in the United States where he realised the madness of pigmentation discrimination, but he was no activist either way. Because of its long chronological span, Grové’s creative output, especially between the years 1972 to the early 1990s, also provides a locus for the critical examination of how creative work survives and flourishes in politically restricted environments. Like Shostakovich, Grové might not emerge from such enquiries undamaged, even though he was never required (as was Shostakovich) to adopt embarrassing and compromising intellectual and artistic positions in public. History teaches that political pacifism in the face of suppression is easily equated with moral indifference and that this is not easily forgotten, even if the artist and his art become part of posterity.

Stephanus Muller (in Muller & Walton 2006:5)

“Place, Identity and a Station Platform”

A Composer in Africa: Essays on the Life and Works of Stefans Grové

Gobbet 15: Should Bach survive in a new South Africa?

Here is the problem. The survival of Western art music [...] is at stake in the new South Africa. Emerging from the Black Consciousness movement during the 1970s and 1980s, proponents of Black majority rule do not endorse Western art music as relevant in the new non-racial South Africa. This music, say many of these idealists, is foreign to the African heritage, is elitist and alienates people by race and by class. Music exposure and education in a new South Africa, they say, should be truly African. That is to say, training from primary school to university level should reflect the rich diversity of African art musics, vocal and instrumental styles and incorporate modern African-based popular music. One cannot blame such persons for holding this view, for they experienced Western art music as nearly half a century of apartheid legislation presented European culture to them. Mass media, educational and other institutions reinforced this notion partly in the interest of retaining what apartheid propagandists called “a cultural identity” and partly in the interest of retaining racial isolation. Value-judgements that European music was superior and African music primitive have remained strong elements advancing isolation. As politicians try to find a solution for national musical culture which will embrace this nation’s pluralism, so musicians have to find a solution for a national musical culture which will embrace this nation’s pluralism.

Johann Buis (1991:14)

“Should Bach Survive in a New South Africa?:
Redefining a Pluralistic Music Culture in Post-Apartheid South Africa”

Papers Presented at the Tenth Symposium on Ethnomusicology

Gobbet 16: The musical arts require human interaction and intervention to survive

It is easy to romanticise indigenous musical art knowledge systems and ban all Western music-making and education. We could argue that all “aliens” should be destroyed and indigenous knowledge systems should be re-installed as the only truly (South) African way(s) of learning. In arguing along such lines, we would have forgotten about the symbioses between humankind and maize. McCann points out that maize requires human intervention to survive. Similarly the musical arts require human interaction and intervention to survive. As with maize, the musical “cultivars” reflect the socio-cultural history of a nation.

Anri Herbst (2006:208)

“The dancing ‘mealie’: A realistic perspective on musical arts education”

The transformation of musical arts education: Local and global perspectives from South Africa

CHAPTER TWO

The “classic” is what survives the worst of barbarism

In *Summertime*, J.M. Coetzee presents a case for Afrikaners having appointed themselves as guardians, on a hostile African continent, of the flame of Western Christian civilisation.

Yet to say they had misread history was in itself misleading. For they read no history at all. On the contrary, they turned their backs on it, dismissing it as a mass of slanders put together by foreigners who held Afrikaners in contempt and would turn a blind eye if they were massacred by blacks, down to the last woman and child. Alone and friendless at the remote tip of a hostile continent, they erected their fortress state and retreated behind its walls: there they would keep the flame of Western Christian civilisation burning until finally the world came to its senses (Coetzee 2009:5).

One could argue that much of Coetzee’s writing contains references to the idea of “white” South Africans – not only Afrikaners – surrounded by the looming threat of “black Africans”. Consider, for example, the basic plot premise of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, where a frontier settlement in the surrounds of a garrison waits, like many other garrisons on the same frontier, for an impending war between the English empire and barbarian tribes (Coetzee 1980:8-9).

Although Coetzee only publishes in English, he is an Afrikaner by birth. Following the essentialist logic that underpinned the apartheid bureaucratic machine, this would give him an “authentic” understanding of Afrikaner culture. Then again, saying that Coetzee is an Afrikaner is a complex statement: among other forms of heritage, his includes Dutch and Polish ancestry; and in his autobiographical novel *Boyhood* he depicts both himself and his parents as Afrikaners who “prefer to be English” (Richards Cooper 1997:2). Perhaps one could argue that Coetzee’s understanding of his own race and culture is plural, and that any identity of “whiteness” that filters through in his writing was gained from the perspectives of having lived in both of South Africa’s predominant “white” cultures simultaneously – as many South Africans do.¹

Summertime is part of a fictionalised autobiographical series (like *Boyhood*), meaning that one could, with qualifications of course, attribute the novel’s subjective opinions about the content and character of the Afrikaner psyche to Coetzee himself, rather than dismiss it out of hand as the mere fictional opinions of an invented protagonist. His particular observation that Afrikaners are the crazed protectors of a sacred flame contains a one-sided truth: inasmuch as Coetzee is right about their shared desire to protect what they have

¹ This racial and cultural knowledge of Coetzee’s has productively informed his own extensive research and criticism; most notably observed in the essay anthologies *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988) and *Giving Offence: Essays on Censorship* (1996).

perceived as a nascent civilisation, he is also unfair in casting Afrikaners as an ethno-cultural monolith that worked alone in their role as torchbearers for Western cultural ideals. Surely, it would be more accurate to write of “white” South Africans in general (instead of writing about Afrikaners as exclusive torchbearers), and then also to make further allowance for the dissipation of this more inclusive grouping.

Ideally, one should grant that individual “white” South Africans would have participated in the protection of their “white” colonial heritage with varied levels of enthusiasm and deliberateness. I am arguing *for* the scare quotes that postcolonial sensitivities could proffer on “whiteness”, and would much rather see “whiteness” denoted as a constructed identity (a collection of diffuse individuals) than argue for it in terms of a tenebrous and mean-spirited pathology.² So, whereas the extract from *Summertime* creates the impression of an intractable “white” culture in South Africa, the following citation from Coetzee’s novel *Youth* is kinder, more yielding. It portrays its “white” characters in a more tender picture of being culturally assailable – their pianos and violins making them so strangely out of place in the physical and historical environment of the African continent:

Deeper than pity, deeper than honourable dealings, deeper even than goodwill, lies an awareness on both sides that people like Paul and himself, with their pianos and violins, are here on this earth, the earth of South Africa, on the shakiest of pretexts. This very milkman, who a year ago must have been just a boy herding cattle in the deepest Transkei, must know it. In fact, from Africans in general, even from Coloured people, he feels a curious, amused tenderness emanating: a sense that he must be a simpleton, in need of protection, if he imagines he can get by on the basis of straight looks and honourable dealings when the ground beneath his feet is soaked with blood and the vast backward depth of history rings with shouts of anger (Coetzee 2002:17).

Summertime presents a grand image of Afrikaners (“whites”) retreating behind a fortress wall in the interest of their own survival. *Youth* is more subtle in its characterisation, even to the point where “Africans” and “Coloureds” behave contrary to the historical stereotype of a destructive agenda, due to their tender impulse to *protect* “white” culture. They see through the façade of the hegemonic pretences attached to “white” culture and music: the self-evident civilised value, or Enlightenment ethos, with which cultural observers far too often still imbue Western culture. By virtue of being so delicate and out of place within South Africa’s reality, “white” musical culture is instead thought to need protection. Therefore, rather than stamping this culture out, Coetzee’s “Africans” and “Coloureds” actually allow it to survive. In spite of apparently criticising, in *Summertime*, the fanatical protection of Western Christian civilisation, Coetzee

² Unfortunately much of the present research contradicts such an aspiration, in that the foremost South African ideologues of “whiteness” invariably thought/think of it as an absolute and pure category.

nevertheless seems to value the Western cultural legacy (although, perhaps, not the “Christian” part). He may even be seen as one of the benevolent caretakers who argue for its qualified endurance. For example, Coetzee is an outspoken enthusiast of classical music, and he especially admires the works of J.S. Bach.

In a 2012 interview for the South African lifestyle magazine *Classic Feel*, Coetzee expressed an opinion that “Bach’s music is the greatest gift – unsolicited and unmerited – that mankind has ever received” (Watterson 2012/3:24). Similar words appear in Coetzee’s novel *Diary of a Bad Year*, when the character Señor C delivers the following paean of thanks for Bach’s life and music:

The best proof we have that life is good, and therefore that there may perhaps be a God after all, who has our welfare at heart, is that to each of us, on the day we are born, comes the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. It comes as a gift, unearned, unmerited, for free.

How would I like to speak just once to that man, dead now for these many years! “See how we in the twenty-first century still play your music, how we revere and love it, how we are absorbed and moved and fortified and made joyful by it,” I would say. “In the name of all mankind, please accept these words of tribute, inadequate though they are, and let all you endured in those bitter last years of yours, including the cruel surgical operations on your eyes, be forgotten” (Coetzee 2007:221-2).

Religious aficionados of Bach’s oeuvre might argue for the aesthetic primacy of his music on account of how comprehensively it glorifies God (McClary 1987:57-8). This opinion could be underscored through musicological insights that his music exhibits definitive standards of beauty and truth, such as are evident in its structural complexity, expressive sincerity and technical virtuosity. These perceived characteristics could then motivate metaphysical deductions about the moral value and ethical content of Bach’s music. Coetzee’s estimation that Bach’s output could amount to proof of God’s existence is perhaps more subtle, but it still registers in the category of the numinous. As an avowal of Bach’s cultural importance it stands alongside canonical evaluations of Shakespeare and the human condition.³

John Blacking, cited in Gobbet 33 and one of the most important music scholars ever to have worked in South Africa and on South African music, would probably disagree with Coetzee’s point of view. Blacking’s (quoted in Byron 1995:44, 81) activist ethnomusicological research was quick to make structural comparisons between Bach’s music and that of the Venda, to offset any impression of a fundamental and qualitative value difference between these two distinct types of music. As an example, he revealed parallels between the ways in which both styles utilise musical figures and patterns to make referential illustrations.

³ My reference here is to Harold Bloom’s (1998) *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. As a critic Bloom is widely recognised for his hagiographic “Bardolatry”.

In general, he campaigned for more equitable and culturally inclusive valuations of music, so that styles like Cantonese opera, Indian sitar playing and Venda songs would not necessarily be classed as inferior to Western art music when compared to Bach (Blacking 1973:116). He even promoted the idea that, in some cases, seemingly commonplace music is actually more valuable to humankind, or reveals more about being human, than the structural complexities in Bach's oeuvre.

According to this line of reasoning, viewing Bach as the epitome of human musical achievement (or as possible proof of God's existence) could be an overconfident value judgement. In nationalist cultural environments this exceptionalism could fan ethnocentric pride, by underpinning a particular group's transmission of Western art music with universalised notions of Western cultural supremacy.

In the text referenced by Gobbet 15, Johann Buis (1991:14), an exiled music scholar hailing from South Africa, indicates how, in apartheid South Africa, Bach's perceived exceptionalism served as a code that underscored "connotations of exclusivity and privilege, coming primarily from the Caucasian segment of the South African population". This formed part of a much broader cultural policy, where the government and national institutions promoted an idea "that European [Western art] music was superior and African music primitive" (Buis 1991:14). Buis put forward this negative reading of Bach's South African historical meaning at the Tenth Symposium on Ethnomusicology, in Grahamstown. In a paper titled "Should Bach Survive in the New South Africa?" (1991), he discussed the overriding reasons why the coming democracy's "black" majority would not want to sanction Western art music as a cultural activity germane to the broader South African society. To begin with, says Buis, essentialised cultural identities were demarcated by decades of legislation, and thereafter constantly reinforced by propaganda that estranged "non-whites" from Western art music. Ideological dictates that portrayed classical music as "European", "white" and "civilised" – i.e. as something "other" transcending the station of "black" South Africans – necessarily also promoted a widespread consciousness that classical music was elitist, alienating and completely foreign to African heritage.

Within this context it is understandable that the "black" majority, who were shaped among other things by the "black consciousness" movement, would be incredulous as to why Western art music should survive in a democratic South Africa.⁴ According to Buis's (1991:14) argument, critical voices from the "black" struggle would much rather institutionalise a cultural policy in which music education and practice were geared towards nurturing aboriginal African art and popular musics. This would then hopefully

⁴ Within the worldview of "black consciousness", the benign "Africans" and "Coloureds" in Coetzee's novel *Youth* would inevitably be Uncle Toms.

encourage the flourishing of an aboriginal African consciousness after centuries of oppression and erasure. On this last point, Buis seems to anticipate the Afrocentric cultural ideology now associated with Thabo Mbeki's "African renaissance". His anticipation of Mbeki's ideology resonates strongly with the discourses analysed in Chapters Five and Six, where it is demonstrated how the emergence of a strong Africanist paradigm threatens ideologues concerned with the survival of Western art music.

Although not articulated in terms that relate to "black" perspectives, Coetzee himself seems aware of possible doctrinal pitfalls in his admiration for Bach. It is best articulated in his essay "What Is A Classic? A Lecture" (anthologised in *Stranger Shores*), which to a large extent responds to the influential eponymous essay by T.S. Eliot (1944). In his essay, Coetzee writes that Bach's music first came to his attention on a lazy Sunday afternoon, in the summer of 1955 (when he was fifteen years old):

One Sunday afternoon in the summer of 1955, when I was fifteen years old, I was mooning around our back garden in the suburbs of Cape Town, wondering what to do, boredom being the main problem of existence in those days, when from the house next door I heard music. As long as the music lasted, I was frozen, I dared not breathe. I was being spoken to by the music as music had never spoken to me before (Coetzee 2001:9).

A neighbour was apparently playing a recording on harpsichord of *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier*. In much the same register as my own life-altering Pavarotti musical experience (recollected in the Introduction of this thesis), Coetzee explains why this seminal moment of contact with Bach's music forever changed his life:

I do not come from a musical family. There was no musical instruction offered at the schools I went to, nor would I have taken it if it had been offered: in the colonies classical music was sissy. I could identify Khatchaturian's "Sabre Dance", the overture to Rossini's *William Tell*, Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumble-Bee" – that was the level of my knowledge. At home we had no musical instrument, no record player. There was plenty of the blander American popular music on the radio (George Melachrino and his Silver Strings), but it made no great impact on me.

What I am describing is middle-class musical culture of the age of Eisenhower, as it was to be found in the ex-British colonies, colonies that were rapidly becoming cultural provinces of the United States. The so-called classical component of that musical culture may have been European in origin, but it was Europe mediated and in a sense orchestrated by the Boston Pops.

And then the afternoon in the garden, and the music of Bach, after which everything changed. A moment of revelation which I will not call Eliotic – that would insult the moments of revelation celebrated in Eliot's poetry – but of the greatest significance in my life nevertheless: for the first time I was undergoing the impact of *the classic* (Coetzee 2001:9-10).

The way in which he then describes Bach's music is quite similar to the language, already mentioned earlier in this chapter, that devoted cognoscenti might use to assign it aesthetic primacy:

In Bach nothing is obscure, no single step is so miraculous as to surpass imitation. Yet when the chain of sounds is realised in time, the building process ceases at a certain moment to be the mere linking of units; the units cohere as a higher-order object in a way that I can only describe by analogy as the incarnation of ideas of exposition, complication and resolution that are more general than music. Bach thinks in music. Music thinks itself in Bach (Coetzee 2001:10).

Coetzee's language, in likening Bach's music to a higher-order object, is not exactly in the same miraculous register as the systems vocabulary used, for example, by Jan Smuts in *Holism and Evolution* (Gobbet 42), and yet it postulates a *Gestalt*-idea that describes music as something numinous and greater than mere sounds or mere notes on a page. For Coetzee this idea effectively means that he feels himself communicated to by Bach's music, which has survived beyond its immediate historical and geographical situation. At its most mystical this impression can be one of receiving a direct axiological communiqué from the composer himself (i.e. the timeless Bach). Simultaneously experiencing and being sceptical of the aesthetic values transmitted across time and space, Coetzee introduces a mode of doubtful self-inquiry that subjects the felt immediacy of his Bach encounter to the rigours of cultural analysis:

The question I put to myself, somewhat crudely, is this: is there some non-vacuous sense in which I can say that the spirit of Bach was speaking to me across the ages, across the seas, putting before me certain ideals; or was what was really going on at that moment that I was symbolically electing high European culture, and command of the codes of that culture, as a route that would take me out of what I must have felt, in terms however obscure or mystified, as an historical dead end – a road that would culminate (again symbolically) with me on a platform in Europe addressing a cosmopolitan audience on Bach, T.S. Eliot and the question of the classic? In other words, was the experience what I understood it to be – a disinterested and in a sense impersonal aesthetic experience – or was it really the masked expression of a material interest? (Coetzee 2001:10-1).

Coetzee does not make any similar identification with South African music. His salvation comes from Bach, whose music is from elsewhere and has survived nearly four centuries of historical and cultural developments. In order to better understand his own allegiance to Bach's music, Coetzee constructs a comparison that recognises Eliot as an advocate for Virgil's status as the ultimate "classic" of European literature and himself as a similar advocate for Bach's status in (Western art) music. Eliot's own extensive writing in definition of "the classic" serves as an important theoretical grounding, but Coetzee also accentuates the biographical similarity that both Eliot's and his own cultural origins lay outside the imperial centre. Effectively, he views both Eliot (an American) and himself (a South African) as critics whose lives

originated in the provinces; intellectual outsiders who, perhaps because of *ennui* in their home territories, have come to identify intensely with mainstream European culture. Although Coetzee perceives that his boyhood memory of hearing Bach's music was an impartial and abrupt aesthetic experience, he nevertheless appreciates that boredom and the perceived vacuum of the colonial receptacle (context and individual) vis-à-vis Western art music, could have motivated him to learn an efficiency in the codes of high European culture as an escape mechanism.⁵ According to him it would not be possible to make these kinds of introspective assessments accurately, but it still remains necessary to ask the relevant questions. Strangely, though, in the approach that Coetzee (2001:11-9) chooses to keep on asking these important questions, he seems to prefer the first scenario where he would have a direct aesthetic experience of the musical "classic", instead of interpreting it through an ideological or "academic" reading.

In order better to illustrate what it means to feel oneself in communication with a "classic", Coetzee (2001:11) looks at the possible ways in which "Bach is a classic of music". Two criteria immediately satisfy this valuation: the first is that Bach's music is evidently not limited to his historical time, seeing as it has survived through subsequent time periods; the second is that much of his music belongs to "the classics", which is "the part of the European musical canon that is still widely played, [even] if not particularly often or before particularly large audiences". A third criterion works against this valuation: Bach's music does not belong to the neoclassical revival that informed European art during the eighteenth century.

In this last instance, Coetzee subscribes to a conservative musicological view that Bach's music was old-fashioned and therefore did not participate in the eighteenth century's neoclassical movement. If one insists on regarding Bach only as a Baroque composer, then Coetzee's third criterion would necessarily complicate the idea of his music as "classic". Conceptually, Bach's music could then not have participated in the eighteenth century neoclassical movement that defined music composed by "classical" composers like Gluck, C.P.E. Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Salieri, Boccherini and Clementi. Coetzee may be unaware of how music historiography and musicology have oddly transferred the term neoclassicism from its more conventional eighteenth century cultural setting to a twentieth century one. The term is now more properly associated with composers like Stravinsky, who were strictly speaking neo-neoclassicists.⁶ Neoclassicism looked back on music from the "Classical" era (already a neoclassicist era) and "Baroque" era (a term only popularised in music historiography during the 1940s). Contrary to Coetzee's impulse, this

⁵ This argument resonates very strongly with an interpretation presented in Mareli Stolp's (2012:84) reading of South African concert practice: "The unqualified support for Western European art music above all other forms of art music in the current South African performance practice suggests support not necessarily for the content or substance of the music, but perhaps rather for the ideology of cultural dominance of Western Europe over other cultures".

⁶ Stravinsky played an inordinate part in Western art music's *retour à Bach* during the 1920s (Taruskin 2009:371).

means that our looking back on Bach's music, instead of him looking back in his music on classical aesthetics associated with ancient Greece and Rome, has bizarrely infused Bach's music with a neoclassicist aesthetic, and therefore also contributed to his status as a "classic".

Bach's music itself nevertheless reveals remarkable instances where classicism informed his musical aesthetic, particularly in an Italianate form that is now associated with the Rococo.⁷ Coetzee, however, sees Bach progressively receding into a more and more conservative musical language. As proof he cites Johann Adolf Scheibe's attack on Bach's music, published in a leading music journal in 1737, which describes it as sombre, turgid and sophisticated, instead of lofty, simple and natural (Coetzee 2001:12). This criticism was all the more scathing in light of Scheibe having been a student of Bach's. The familiar narrative is consequently that Bach's music was out of touch with the times, and that it therefore became more and more obscure, eventually being abandoned altogether by the listening public until Mendelssohn led a spirited revival in Leipzig during the 1820s:

For several generations, in this popular account, Bach was hardly a classic at all: not only was he not neoclassical, but he spoke to no one across those generations. His music was not published, it was rarely played. He was part of music history, he was a name in a footnote in a book, that was all (Coetzee 2001:12).

Coetzee's emphasis is on "this unclassical history of misunderstanding, obscurity and silence", since it calls into question glib ideas that "classics" are timeless, and that they are unbounded by geography. If Bach's music counts among the pantheon of musical "classics", then why is there such a significant period of time when it did not really survive? This carefully formulated question intersects with South African ideas (discussed in Chapter One), themselves argued in a far more facile way, about the seeming "timeless" universal relevance of "the classics". Coetzee (2001:12) performs a much more considered reading, and does not seem at all sure that Bach "the classic" has universal relevance. Instead, he makes a point of first conceding the historical containment of this music, meaning that he first locates the music in a context "constituted by identifiable historical forces and within a specific historical [epoch]". Only after acknowledging Bach's specific history of abandonment (disregard) and rediscovery can one contemplate its

⁷ Robert L. Marshall has found such evidence in music that Bach composed when he was vying for a position at the Dresden court. Under the influence of J.A. Hasse ("Il Sassone") and his wife Faustina Bordoni (a famous prima donna), Dresden had become Germany's foremost hub for Italian opera (Kerman 1985:53). Consequently, works like Bach's sacred cantata for soprano and trumpet obbligato *Jauchzet Gott in allen Länden*, a number of further secular cantatas, and even some rococo flute sonatas give ample confirmation of his abilities to also compose modern Italianate (i.e. more "Classical") music.

purported universality: there is thus a legitimate ontological question over whether his music contains anything “which may still claim to speak across the ages” (Coetzee 2001:12).

If Bach was indeed a “classic” before the Bach revival, writes Coetzee (2001:13), then “he was not only an invisible classic but a dumb classic”. Bach survived on paper without any presence in society: “he was not only not canonical, he was not public”. The question then of course arises over how Bach did eventually become such an iconic composer. Interestingly, Coetzee writes that this esteem was not initially because of Bach’s extraordinary music per se, but rather formulated on the coattails of German nationalism (directed against Napoleon) and a coterminous revival in Protestantism.

The figure of Bach became one of the instruments through which German nationalism and Protestantism were promoted; reciprocally, in the name of Germany and Protestantism Bach was promoted as a classic; the whole enterprise being aided by the Romantic swing against rationalism, and by enthusiasm for music as the one art privileged to speak directly from soul to soul (Coetzee 2001:13).

Coetzee (2001:14) writes that Bach’s person and music even became part of a Nordic-themed nationalist discourse that constructed both Germany and the so-called “German race”. In doing this, it has a similar ideological meaning to Weber’s opera *Der Freischütz*, whose Romantic nationalism was received enthusiastically by Berlin audiences. It is therefore unsurprising that Mendelssohn re-orchestrated Bach’s *Matthäus-Passion* with much larger orchestral and choral forces, effectively adapting it into a Romantic work. Even though Bach once again survived, it did not endure in any “authentic” way.

I am not criticising Mendelssohn’s performances for not being “the real Bach”. The point I make is a simple and limited one: the Berlin performances, and indeed the whole Bach revival, were powerfully historical in ways that were largely invisible to the moving spirits behind them. Furthermore, one thing we can be certain about of our own understanding and performance of Bach, even – and perhaps even particularly – when our intentions are of the purest, the most puristic, is that they are historically conditioned in ways invisible to us. And the same holds for the opinions about history and historical conditioning that I am expressing at this moment (Coetzee 2001:14).

Coetzee means that the romantic Bach served a particular historical audience who reacted in much the same way as he did in 1955, when during his South African boyhood he experienced Bach as a “classic” for the first time in a garden in Cape Town. The Romantic Bach, writes Coetzee, had a particular “aesthetic emotionalism” and “nationalistic fervour” that have since been abandoned in performance.⁸ My own South

⁸ According to Coetzee (2001:15), Bach scholarship has since revealed different aspects of Bach, such as the Lutheran scholasticism that informed his immediate working environment. This necessarily means that Bach now has a different meaning than he had in Mendelssohn’s day.

African perspective on Bach performances prompts me to disagree that such performances have abandoned a Romantic nationalist aesthetic. Particularly in the Western Cape, performances of Bach's music (often rendered on period instruments) celebrate a Romantic and Germanocentric worldview. This impression is gathered, partly, from witnessing the strong German expatriate contingent that attends such concerts. Nevertheless, Coetzee's insights are remarkable, keeping in mind that they come from someone who has not been active as a musicologist during the last three decades, meaning that he is not expected to have been sensitised by many of the sceptical discourses associated with Anglo-American "new musicology".

Unlike conservative musicologists and musicians, Coetzee understands that, even though Bach's music has survived through centuries of study and performance, there is no rational way in which it can be understood to have a "universal" value. When Coetzee explains that the purest and most puristic contemporary approaches of understanding and performing Bach are the socially mediated ones, and therefore also the approaches most coloured by a historical context generally invisible to its performers, he inadvertently touches on the modernist debate that Richard Taruskin (2009:448), among others, introduced into historically informed performance practice (HIP) during the 1980s and onwards. For a non-musician like Coetzee (2001:15) this interplay between purism and modernism is a simple fact, underscored by reasoning that it would be impossible to understand our own part in history, since such interpretation would involve understanding "ourselves not only as objects of historical forces but as subjects of our own historical self-understanding".

It is on the strength of this last observation that he wonders whether he is himself now far enough removed in time and identity from 1955 in order properly to understand his first reaction to Bach:

And what does it mean to say that I was being spoken to by a classic in 1955 when the self which is asking the questions acknowledges that the classic – to say nothing of the self – is historically constituted? As Bach for Mendelssohn's 1829 Berlin audience was an occasion to embody and, in memory and reperformance, to express aspirations, feelings, self-validations which we can identify, diagnose, give names to, place, even foresee the consequences of, what was Bach in South Africa in 1955, and in particular what was the nomination of Bach as the classic, the occasion for? If the notion of the classic as the timeless is undermined by a fully historical account of Bach-reception, then is the moment in the garden – the kind of moment that Eliot experienced, no doubt more mystically and more intensely, and turned into some of his greatest poetry – undermined as well? Is being spoken to across the ages a notion that we can entertain today only in bad faith? (Coetzee 2001:15-6).

Bach signified, in Coetzee's South African boyhood, the apotheosis of Western civilisation – what Coetzee calls the "codes of high European culture". His music has had a particular meaning for "white" South Africans, which has ironically been "universalised" (from an ethnocentric perspective) and

transmitted, through performance especially, to anyone who listened to this music. In his already cited paper on Bach's survival in the new South Africa, Johann Buis indicates clearly how this performed meaning was perceived as an acclamation of "white" cultural superiority. It is onto that credo that my research adds the following existential issue: If Bach survives in South Africa, then "whites" will survive. To best determine how Bach's music became infused with an aesthetic of survival, one more strand of Coetzee's argument merits discussion: Why Bach survived in Germany.

Having just about dismissed the possibility of an ideologically disinterested aesthetic experience, Coetzee now follows a somewhat contradictory and musically conservative approach that attempts to salvage the idea of *being spoken to by the "classic"*. He begins with a question about Bach's initial posthumous obscurity: If Bach was indeed so unheard of, then how did Mendelssohn know his (choral) music well enough to decide that it merited revival? Coetzee points out how the conventional narrative of Bach's revival often fails to mention that his music remained alive among a coterie of specialists, at first only in Berlin and then later, through the relocation of the Austrian ambassador to Prussia, also in Vienna, where Haydn and Mozart encountered Bach's music. His choral music was also known at the Berlin Singakademie, to figures like C.F. Zelter (who thought they were unperformable), which is where the young Mendelssohn first encountered works like the *Matthäus-Passion*. What Coetzee strives to create here is an unbroken and arcane performance tradition of Bach's music among constantly practicing specialists:

This is the point where parallels between literature and music, the literary classics and the musical classic, begin to break down, and where the institutions and practice of music emerge as perhaps healthier than the institutions and practice of literature. For the musical profession has ways of keeping what it values alive that are qualitatively different from the ways in which the institutions of literature keep submerged but valued writers alive (Coetzee 2001:17).

Thus he now invokes a praxis-based methodology for keeping musical "classics" alive:⁹

Because becoming a musician, whether executant or creative, not only in the Western tradition but in other major traditions of the world, entails long training and apprenticeship, because the nature of the training entails repeated performance for the ears of others and minute listening and practical criticism, together with memorisation, because a range of kinds of performance has become institutionalised, from playing for one's teacher to playing for one's class to varieties of public performance – for all these reasons, it is possible to keep music alive and indeed vital within professional circles while it is not part of public awareness, even among educated people (Coetzee 2001:17).

⁹ The highly valued performance aspect in Coetzee's subsequent reasoning perhaps informs his decision to give his name to a practice-based music research facility in Adelaide, called The J.M. Coetzee Centre for Creative Practice.

Coetzee finds solace in the notion that Bach's music has undergone centuries' worth of practical (performative) analysis and investigation within professional music circles. He calls it a continued "testing process" which affirms Bach's status as a "classic" more than anything else.

Much of this thesis is written against the ideologically disinterested praxis-based approach to musical scholarship that Coetzee outlines in the paragraph above. It entails an outlook in which Western art music sits ensconced within the ivory tower of academia, or the Conservatory or Hochschule, its practitioners never confronting (in their music) everyday social existence and its problems (McClary 1987:14).

Unfortunately, this system functions with circular logic: music is performed because it is a "classic"; and it becomes a "classic" only by already having been performed. More disturbing, and also plainly utopian, is that Coetzee specifically uses *Bach's music* as the conduit through which to articulate this esoteric mode of musicianship. He presents memorising, practicing and performing it as ideologically disinterested acts, modes of concentrated listening and criticism that entail nothing beyond an intense aesthetic experience. Within this paradigm, the boy Coetzee (who simply heard Bach's music drifting out from a neighbouring house into his parents' garden) is subjected to a more critical historically contextualised enquiry than the musical apprentice (who was so moved by Bach's music that she devoted her life to memorising, practicing and performing it). Is the latter individual not more liable for having elected to become fluent in the codes of high European culture?¹⁰ With unproblematic simplicity, Coetzee envisions a romantic craftsmanship – or "professionalism" – in which performance practice (his "testing process") is involved not only in affirming Bach as a musical "classic", but also in the longstanding survival of his music:

Not only did this provincial religious mystic outlast the Enlightenment turn toward rationality and the metropolis, but he also survived what turned out to have been a kiss of death, namely, being promoted during the nineteenth-century revival as a great son of the German soil. And today, every time a beginner stumbles through the first prelude of the "Forty-Eight", Bach is being tested again, within the profession. Dare I suggest that the classic in music is what emerges intact from this process of day-by-day testing?

The criterion of testing and survival is not just a minimal, pragmatic, Horatian standard (Horace says, in effect, that if a work is still around a hundred years after it was written, it must be a classic). It is a criterion that expresses a certain confidence in the tradition of testing, and a confidence that professionals will not devote labour and attention, generation after generation, to sustaining pieces of music whose life-functions have terminated (Coetzee 2001:17-8).

¹⁰ "What Is A Classic? A Lecture" was delivered in Zürich, meaning that although Coetzee identifies as a South African who resonates with Bach's music and other forms of European high culture, he most likely has a European musical environment in mind when writing about the apprenticeship involved in learning to play Bach's music.

Something rings false in Coetzee's example of a beginner struggling with Bach's famous Prelude No. 1 in C major from *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier*, instead of working through a succession of John Thompson piano primers. Whereas the former approach would have been the way people learned music for centuries, the latter method of separating concepts from practice was the nineteenth century conservatory approach that shaped musical apprenticeship in colonies like South Africa. More relevant to my discussion, though, is Coetzee's perception of musical *performance* as a "criterion of testing and survival" that is ontologically different in affirming musical compositions as a "classics". He seems deceived by music's performative dimension, regarding it as a form of assessment quite unlike merely reading a literary work, or any other work of art.¹¹ The Western art music canon exists – to a large extent – because works have been performed (survived) for more than a century; and having apparently met with Horace's pragmatic and arbitrary standard, Coetzee explains that these works have now been granted the status of "classics". Circular logic defines and maintains this kind of argument, and indeed the whole system of musical training: there is blind confidence in a long tradition of "testing" (critical doing, as opposed to critical thinking), with the assurance that hundreds of thousands of practicing professionals could not have been wrong, generation after generation, in devoting themselves to Bach's music.

My reasoning here is not about the value or otherwise of Bach's music, but instead that it is problematic to use this music's remarkable survival as part of a practice-based argument that *universalises* its aesthetic value. Coetzee frames practice and performance as a form of criticism and analysis, instead of acknowledging practice and performance as the sonic reconstruction and re-enactment of revered compositions. As part of practicing Bach's music, an apprentice pianist first memorises and thereafter performs it in front of teachers, classmates and others in the music profession. Coetzee regards these activities as a collective exercise of *critical* faculties that require "minute listening". However, the practice of Western art music rarely directs this *critical impulse* at the musical work being performed – especially where composers as remarkable and iconic as Bach are concerned. Instead, the *critical* listening faculties of performers are much rather geared towards technique, or aspects of interpretation that are problematic. The concern is therefore not with listening to *the music* in any *critical* way that might interrogate its cultural meaning, but rather with the apprentice's structural and motoric grasp of that music, and with their ability

¹¹Music's performative aspect is sometimes used to invoke a status that privileges music above other supposedly unperformable art forms. This argument forgets, though, that works in the literary canon (like Shakespeare's plays) can also be performed instead of only being read. The idea that performance is a form of academic criticism then also informs contemporary approaches to institutionalise practice-based research in South African universities. As an example, Lüdemann (2012) argues that musical performance remains an invaluable type of scholarly analysis, on grounds that musicology can never hope to accurately "translate" a musical work's full meaning.

to realise an acceptable or successful performance of a composition whose “classic” status has already been predetermined in other ways.

Whereas Coetzee’s introspective analysis of his own identification with Bach is historically situated, his analysis of Bach’s so-called “testing” through an unbroken lineage of musical professionals effectively subverts any ideological critique of that practice. The first part of Coetzee’s analysis consequently recognises that Romantic German nationalism and Protestantism facilitated Bach’s canonisation, and the second unexpectedly tries to invert that reading, by explaining that uninterrupted “testing” has helped Bach’s music survive its exploitation for nationalistic purposes (which Coetzee calls “a kiss of death”). Whereas the first ideologically interested part of Coetzee’s analysis presents German nationalism and Protestantism as forces that ensured Bach’s survival, the second ideologically disinterested part of his analysis presents these same forces as something that would have destroyed Bach, were it not for the sustained critical “testing process” of daily musical practice. Admittedly, musical practice does take place in secluded and protective environments, but that does not mean that practice should automatically be exempt from historically contextualised cultural analysis.

As Taruskin (2005:388) writes, German nationalism, nascent and triumphant throughout the nineteenth century, was predominantly culturally driven, because Germany could not flaunt great commerce and industry as other countries (especially England) could. This necessarily means that culturally active individuals, performing musicians among them, were the vanguard of an ethnocentric nationalism. Performers of Bach’s music, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards (most prominent among whom were Mendelssohn and Schumann, initially), generally propagated the profundity and complexity of his music as proof of German superiority, and the abstractions in his later works became particularly influential in shaping the jingoism that claimed romantic “absolute music” as the supreme German art form. Taruskin (2005:389) also uses the first biography about Bach (written in 1802 by Johann Nikolaus Forkel) as a vehicle to link the musicological discipline with the German nationalism of the early nineteenth century. This biography not only happened to be the first full-scale biography of any composer, but also one of the first works that would today be recognised as musicology.

Indeed, performance of Bach’s music can never be an ideologically disinterested aesthetic experience. It elects specific high European cultural codes, of which a message of anti-Semitism contained in the *Johannes-Passion* is instructive. Taruskin (2005:389) mentions that the turba from this passion contains a by now problematic articulation of the “blood libel”, which is a view long discredited by theological and

historical scholarship that holds Jews specifically culpable for the killing of Christ. This musical message had a much more muted meaning in Bach's time: first, on account of Bach not really having known Jews and not having thought about them to any great extent, except where anti-Semitic Gospel texts occurred in his music; and second, because Bach's music originally had a very limited local impact, and could therefore not have pronounced hatred against Jews with great effect.

Owing to the twentieth century's violent history, and also to Bach's international fame, the anti-Semitism contained in the *Johannes-Passion* now has a much more virulent and menacing meaning. Even though Bach is long dead, his work survives. Jews who hear and even perform anti-Semitic snippets from the *Johannes-Passion* are often shocked by what they hear, and one can understand that they might want to amend the work's text so as to erase its reference to the blood libel (Taruskin 2005:389). From the universalisation of Bach's music arises difficult questions about the adjudication and possible censorship of high art that has become offensive with the passing of time.

[These questions] crystallise important historical problems – problems of appropriation, universalisation, recontextualisation – that have arisen along with the practice of historiography itself, and that historiography not only poses but in large part creates. Precisely because these problems are part and parcel of historiography's essence and its legacy, historiography often remains blind to them, not regarding itself as a part of its own subject matter. But responsible historiography, most historians now concede, must contain an element of reflexivity – concern with itself as a historical entity and with its own potential cultural and social influence, alongside the entities it purports to study (Taruskin 2005:389).

Taruskin's ideas about historiography are similar to the ideological blindnesses that Coetzee imagines to be part of Bach's various contextualised historical meanings. The anti-Semitism contained in the *Johannes-Passion* has become problematic precisely because Bach's music has survived long after its own historical time and far beyond its own cultural environment. In a world where the blood libel has formally been discredited, people may unfortunately still "learn" from Bach's passion that Jews were responsible for the death of Christ:

What was merely a latent message in Bach's time, stating an accepted truth to which no one would have paid much attention *per se*, has become a potentially explicit message in our time, and a potentially mischievous one. We have history – or rather the sense of history fostered by romantic nationalism – to thank for that. The peculiarly romantic sense of the timeless relevance of history, called "historicism," is what vouchsafed the work's survival. The problem comes in deciding just what it is in the treasured legacy of the past that should be regarded as timelessly relevant (Taruskin 2005:390).

Bach's universalisation has led to his music being contextualised in various different cultural environments. Yet, in Coetzee's reading, the long tradition of "testing" Bach's music has apparently given it immunity to ideological questioning. In South Africa, particularly, it is often accepted that Bach's music (along with other Western art music) is universally and timelessly relevant. If Bach's music could, however, have become problematically anti-Semitic in its modern incarnations, then one must consider that it could also contain other ideological failings. Coetzee's attempt to avoid this line of scrutiny, and thus to preserve Bach's status as a "classic", accentuates the professionalism ("testing" music through practice) involved in transmitting his music without it having a public platform. This reading ignores the place that music institutions occupy in South Africa's public life, and isolates university music departments from the societies surrounding them.

In contrast to my critique throughout this thesis, Coetzee strives for a personal interpretation where Bach is a touchstone because many preceding individuals regarded him in this very manner. Ironically, Coetzee's ideologically decontextualised analysis arrives at the same end-point that my politically conscious analysis places Bach's music; viz. that its continued survival provides an escape from (perceived) "barbarism":

What does it mean in living terms to say that the classic is what survives? How does such a conception of the classic manifest itself in people's lives?

For the most serious answer to this question, we cannot do better than turn to the great poet of the classic of our own times, the Pole Zbigniew Herbert. To Herbert the opposite of the classic is not the Romantic but the barbarian; furthermore, classic versus barbarian is not so much an opposition as a confrontation. Herbert writes from the historical perspective of Poland, a country with an embattled Western culture caught between intermittently barbarous neighbours. It is not the possession of some essential quality that, in Herbert's eyes, makes it possible for the classic to withstand the assault of barbarism. Rather, what survives the worst of barbarism, surviving because generations of people cannot afford to let go of it and therefore hold on to it at all costs – that is the classic (Coetzee 2001:19).

Coetzee finds his lecture arriving at a paradox in which the "classic" is constantly defined through survival. From this he gathers that criticism of the "classic" is to be welcomed, however vehement this interrogation might be:

[C]riticism is that which is duty-bound to interrogate the classic. Thus the fear that the classic will not survive the de-centring acts of criticism may be turned on its head: rather than being the foe of the classic, criticism, and indeed criticism of the most sceptical kind, may be what the classic uses to define itself and ensure its survival (Coetzee 2001:19).

The criticism Coetzee refers to here is not the disinterested “testing” that professional musicians perform, generation after generation, so that an uninterrupted pedagogical tradition can help Bach’s music to survive. Instead, his reference is to a purely academic criticism (thinking, as opposed to doing), very much of the type he used to question his own boyhood election of Bach as a “classic”, or, in Chapter Five, that Stephanus Muller directs towards Hofmeyr’s *Sinfonia africana*. To make this point, Coetzee has to allow for the existence of a professional class of musicians who are not artists, but technicians, artisans, and custodians. And it is in this regard that his understanding, situated as it is in a South African experience, becomes complicit in the anti-intellectual discourse that has made Bach a touchstone of a neutral, beneficent Western modernity espoused by the avowedly non-political musical beneficiaries of apartheid.

Musicology would be the foremost relevant discipline from where to cross-examine Bach’s status as a “classic” and ensure its continued survival. This has, however, not always been the case, seeing as German musicology has a long history of positivistic criticism – especially where Bach’s music is concerned (Kerman 1985:49-59). One of the most influential neopositivistic movements in Bach scholarship came from Göttingen and Tübingen, where in 1954 work was begun on creating a complete edition of Bach’s works, which was to replace a previous Bach-Gesellschaft Edition dating from 1850-1900 (Kerman 1985:49). Methods and findings used by these Bach scholars delivered stunning results, some of which upturned previous accepted dogmas about the chronology of Bach’s music.¹² Nevertheless, this emphasis on a philological approach to Bach’s music undermined the reception of any musically – let alone sociologically – informed interpretative scholarship:

[D]istrust of interpretation is programmatic among the traditional German Bach scholars. That this attitude was shared by American Bach scholars, at least of an older generation, will appear in a moment; it also came naturally to the leading British Bach specialist, Walter Emery [...]. “What Bach scholarship needs today”, wrote Emery in 1961, “is not only more facts – both fresh facts, and corrections of traditional errors – but also greater caution in interpreting facts.” He said nothing about any need to direct those facts to a new appreciation of Bach’s music as music (Kerman 1985:54-5).

As Kerman (1985:54) puts it, Bach scholarship was – for a time at least – “poised on the brink of the classic positivistic dilemma: more and more facts, and less and less confidence in interpreting them”. This necessarily contributed to the exaltation that has universalised Bach into one of the ultimate musical

¹² One of the most astonishing discoveries was that a famous group of chorale cantatas, dated by Phillipp Spitta to the 1730s and 1740s (based on watermarks in the manuscripts), actually dated from a much narrower time period (the years 1724-5) (Kerman 1985:51).

“classics”.¹³ Another strand of scholarship that contributed to Bach’s veneration is music analysis, which originated in much the same time as Forkel (1802) published his groundbreaking Bach biography (Kerman 1985:64). Theorists like E.T.A. Hofmann initiated the musical canon by first studying “classics” of composers like Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven (whom they called “Romantics”), and then adding new works into an ever expanding archive of musical works as they were written and performed. Interestingly, once Bach had been sufficiently revived, he was claimed by the “Romantics” and restored to the canon (Kerman 1985:70). Due to its complex abstractions, his music was particularly influential in promoting an idea that musical works were autonomous, and that music was an absolute and non-referential art form only beholden unto its own obtuse meanings.

Positivism’s great curse, then, was that academics were only discussing the poietic aspects of Bach’s music (when it was put together and how), instead of interpreting its various aesthetic qualities or, more advanced even, trying to understand it within its variable contemporary social contexts (Kerman 1985:55). South African Bach scholarship is of course another matter entirely. There is not only a paucity of scholarship in this country, but also a noticeable absence of work that is not both derivative and hagiographic. Hubert du Plessis has probably made the most lasting contribution, with his biography and essay collection *Johann Sebastian Bach: ’n biografie en ag opstelle* (1960). South African musicology has not made any substantive contribution to international Bach scholarship, in spite of his music enjoying considerable status in the country’s tertiary music departments.¹⁴ It constitutes an enormous chunk of the required practical and undergraduate academic (music theory and music history) syllabi – quite simply because it is accepted to be a universalised “classic”. The kind of sceptical interrogation of Bach that Coetzee writes about in the conclusion to his essay should ideally come from musicology. Regrettably, the South African variant of the discipline seems to have been under the sway not only of German romantic positivism, which shored Bach up as a German “classic” once his music was rediscovered, but also of the post-war neopositivism associated with Göttingen and Tübingen. Therefore, unlike Coetzee, the South African practitioners of Western art music and musicology seem unconvinced that strong criticism is exactly what enables the “classic” to survive.

¹³ Kerman (1985:55) writes that some of the older scholars proved to be interesting exceptions. Friedrich Blume (one of Coetzee’s Bach sources) wrote the following in 1963: “A rather exaggerated dogmatism is prevalent at the moment, the belief that only that is true which results from the close textual investigation of the original sources and that whatever does not result from it cannot be true. The climate of scholarship will change, however, and the textual scholars will not have the final word. The purely textual will be followed by a more interpretative phase.”

¹⁴ Bach’s music has little or no status outside academe in South Africa. In African choralism, for example, Bach is hardly known, whereas Handel is very influential. My thanks to Christine Lucia for pointing this out.

This is an interesting point at which to begin considering the hegemonic potential of cultural artefacts that are simultaneously fretted over because they are feared to be in danger. Something weak becomes strong once its value is universalised, and once institutional structures are put in place to ensure its glorification. The Western musical “classic” is taken out of its original European context, recontextualised to an entirely foreign African situation, and then constantly practiced as an indication of “white civilisation”. “White” South Africans automatically accept the north’s cultural ideals as their own, and sustain the illusion of their pure cultural identity by conceiving of culture as a “strategy for survival” (Bhabha, quoted in King 2012:6).¹⁵ Civilisation becomes a sacred flame that needs to keep burning inside a dark and hostile “barbarian” environment. This is one of the lynchpins of my arguments about survival, and my musicological appraisal follows that of Taruskin (2009:xiv), who is sceptical of any stance that “advocates the keeping of an endangered flame”. Although people who protect culture in this way often convince themselves that “they are keeping faith with revolutionary ideals”, the position which they occupy is actually the most conservative one possible, because of its inherent utopianism.

Although Coetzee is careful not to invest the “classic” with any specific ethical value, he nevertheless mentions how it perseveres because its practitioners want to ward off “barbarism”. Apart from actually investing the “classic” with a specific civilisational value, this formulation against “barbarism” is the exact moment when the survival of Bach’s music turns into the survival of the individual who associates with Bach’s music. Something as seemingly innocuous as Western art music thus participates in a broader and oftentimes boorish public conversation, whose sole imperative is to ensure the continued endurance of the South African “white” race. Where, as a blunt political utterance, the survival idea is predominantly always concerned with “white” biological survival, it can conversely become more supple and subtle when adapted to narrower discursive contexts such as Western art music and musicology. This means that “classics” can be invoked to articulate the original apprehension for “white” biological survival, or else shift through metonymic associations into more refined utterances of cultural survival. In conservative social environments these nuances are unfortunately lost, and ethnocentric pride invariably articulates arrogant assumptions about civilisation, humanity and being humane.

To this day, in the utopian racial context of South African “whiteness”, European culture is often understood (implicitly) as having a civilising and therefore also benevolent role to play in the “dark” African

¹⁵ It is worthwhile considering Rian Malan’s (1990:46) view of the “white” South African allegiance to European and American culture: “Our heads turned to the north like flowers to the sun, toward where the great white mother culture lay. Our imaginary lives were rooted there, not in this strange place, where Zionists danced on Thursdays and rain washed the red earth of Africa into the streets.” Malan’s example is interesting for the way in which it also includes popular culture, and not only the high European culture that is the predominant topic of my research.

continent. Whereas the exploitation inherent in colonialism's economic and political programmes have by now dismissed the chances of valorising the ascension of "whiteness", colonialism's cultural legacies are often still regarded with approval. This is due to entrenched assumptions that European masterworks (e.g. the canon of Western art music) somehow have an Enlightenment ethos embedded in them, with an implication that the continued survival of this culture is seen to benefit the surroundings where it is practiced (Muller 2000:10-2, esp.11). Coetzee's so-called high European cultural codes (Western art music's "classics", in the case of this thesis) have a startling potential for hegemony, precisely because – in an attempt to make them impervious from criticism – an argument of *universalisation* is used to suggest that these works of art *humanise* those who come into contact with them.

The twentieth century's political history has by now made such lines of reasoning questionable. Most obviously, the genocide of Jews conducted by Germans – many of whom were ardent followers of Western art music – has disrupted the simplistic worldview that a culture of "classics" (to use Coetzee's words) "withstand[s] the assault of barbarism". The holocaust was perpetrated within an environment of high Romantic German culture, and by people who were supposed to have been humanised by that culture's artefacts. One could therefore be disturbed, as are Germanophiles like George Steiner, that the Shoah was either ignored or else went unnoticed while high German culture (he specifically mentions Schubert's music) was being performed or listened to in close proximity to the slaughter. This is a central theme in Steiner's (1997:60) oeuvre, and extends to the point where he even mourns how God abandoned the world during the twentieth century, precisely when the masterworks of Western culture suggested an immanence of the numinous. With specific reference to Steiner's complaint, Taruskin (2009:344) answers that this lament is itself problematic, because of the way in which it confuses aesthetics and morality (ethics). Any cultural criticism that prostrates itself in "omniscient worship of the classics" needs to be treated with scepticism, since it subscribes to utopian tenets about the intersection between culture and the human condition. It could be more productive to be sceptical of the humanities, since they are clearly all too human and therefore susceptible to human foibles and prejudices.

After the transplanting of European culture into colonial contexts, it seems unavoidable that distinct (and therefore comparative) modes of criticism should materialise in the centres and margins of the colonial world. Not only art/culture is at risk in this exchange, but also criticism, which is constantly tempted to make use of ready-made models and narratives borrowed from European (and, to a lesser extent, American) discourses (Muller & Walton 2009:3-6, esp.5). Not only does South Africa have a history of

anti-Semitism (particularly during the 1930s), but it has also gained iconic status for its own “crimes against humanity”. Although it is necessary to understand the complicity of “white” South Africans in this country’s racist ideologies, the discourse becomes oddly appendaged to Europe when Afrikaners are crudely likened to Nazis.¹⁶ All the same, my intuition is that Steiner’s disappointment (and Taruskin’s pessimism) over high European culture’s failure to humanise and civilise can be extended, so that something of the Second World War’s troubled cultural environment would be applicable to apartheid South Africa.

Just as Steiner has asked about Nazi Germany, one of my substantial questions about South Africa concerns why the “classics” of Western culture survived in a society where systematic human rights abuses were convention. The many different answers to this enquiry reveal as much about the “classics” as they do about South Africa. Although Steiner does not state it explicitly, he alludes to what may be the biggest problem where “classics” are concerned; the shocking inability of those who adhere to high culture either to notice or else be disquieted by significant social irregularities in their environments. One of the most revealing aspects about Eliot’s disquisitions on the “classic” is that they hardly mention barbaric conflicts like the Second World War. In his “T.S. Eliot memorial lecture”-response to Eliot, Steiner (1971:3) describes Eliot’s *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* (1948) as an unattractive book, “gray with the shock of recent barbarism, but a barbarism whose actual sources and forms the argument leaves fastidiously vague”:

The failure of Eliot’s *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* to face the issue, indeed to allude to it in anything but an oddly condescending footnote, is acutely disturbing. How, only three years after the event, after the publication to the world of facts and pictures that have, surely, altered our sense of the limits of human behaviour, was it possible to write a book on culture and say nothing? How was it possible to detail and plead for a Christian order when the holocaust had put in question the very nature of Christianity and of its role in European history? (Steiner 1971:33).

It is not difficult to see how similar questions are applicable to South Africa. There seems to be a consensus among many influential figures in the local Western art music scene that the past is over, and that there is no use in obsessing over an ideology that has (purportedly) been dismantled. Perhaps I suffer from the same malady as Steiner, which is an inability to comprehend how injustice thrives in the same world that allows musical “classics” to survive. Moreover, this dissatisfaction leaves me uncertain about why anyone in South Africa would want Western art music to survive at all.

¹⁶ This argument was put forward by Stephanus Muller in a published debate with Chris Walton about the South African conductor Anton Hartman. Muller (2008b) criticised Walton for comparing Hartman to a musical “Gauleiter”, thus using a pejorative that set up an analogy in which Afrikaner nationalism would inevitably be viewed as a derivative expression of German national socialism. According to Muller this evoked a European master-narrative where one more historically specific to South Africa would have been better suited.

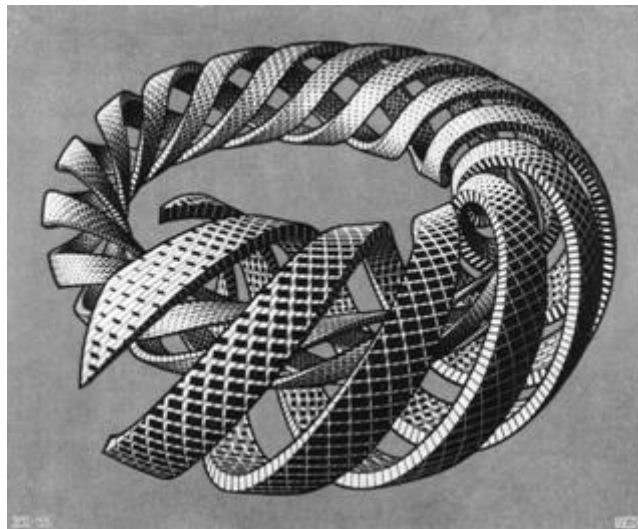
Gobbet 17: Creativity as product of a self-devouring process

We have moved beyond choosing between the [Western and African] knowledge systems to a stage of realising that both forms are needed. Oral and written knowledge systems could be compared to the male and female inflorescence of a “mealie”, both found on the same plant, ensuring survival of the plant. For us to rekindle the “mysterious flame” [Umberto Eco’s phrase] in a post-colonial society, we need to find ways of juxtaposing both approaches for the sake of posterity. [...]

A theory that encapsulates both knowledge systems [...] would hinge on the birth-death-birth process-based philosophy inherent in acts of creativity and a combination of oral and written transmission of knowledge.

[...]

The birth-death-birth cycle portrayed in the [African musical] story of Rabbit and Tortoise [collected by Hugh Tracey], in the *Mbari* temples [of the Owerri from Nigeria, as described by Meki Nzewi], and [in] Wagner’s revolution at the end of the Ring cycle corresponds with the *ouroboros* (also spelt *uroboros*) symbol of infinity found in many cultures of the world: the snake with its tail in its mouth.[...]



Escher’s mobius is nothing but a modern-day ouroboros: creativity as product of a self-devouring process.

Anri Herbst (2006:213-4)

“The dancing ‘mealie’: A realistic perspective on musical arts education”

The transformation of musical arts education: Local and global perspectives from South Africa

M.C. Escher: *Spirals* (1953)
 The M.C. Escher Company, Holland
 <www.mcescher.com>

CHAPTER THREE

The downfall of Western civilisation

Until Nietzsche turned the idea on its head, the general Western worldview understood mankind to be progressing on a teleological path towards the achievement of an idealised state of being. He argued, instead, that history happened in cycles, and that civilisations were trapped inside these cycles, trying ineffectively through them to upend the fundamental disorder of life (Spengler, in Overy 2009:29). Nietzsche's insistence on the relativity of moral systems and the illusory nature of progress made possible an intellectual offensive against nineteenth century convictions of historical progress, exemplified in narratives such as the teleological philosophies of Hegel and Marx, the incremental melioration implied by the doctrines of liberalism and socialism, and the perpetual adaptations towards ensuring survival and well-being that were put forward in Darwin's theory of evolution (Overy 2009:28). The traumatic violence of the First World War served as a confirmation of these intellectual suspicions, and therefore encouraged a popular disillusionment and malaise with inherited ideas that portrayed civilisation on a teleological track.

Writing in response to T.S. Eliot's *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* (1948), George Steiner affirms that the First World War caused an apocalyptic disruption in historical sensibility:

There is hardly a civilisation, perhaps hardly an individual consciousness, that does not carry inwardly an answer to intimations of a sense of distant catastrophe. Somewhere a wrong turn was taken in that "dark and sacred wood," after which man has had to labour, socially, psychologically, against the natural grain of being (Steiner 1971:4).

According to Steiner (1971:4-5), the nineteenth century was subsequently regarded as an anomalous and peaceful "garden of liberal culture" (England and Western Europe, ca. 1820-1915).¹ He catalogues a number of social characteristics conventionally associated with "civilisation" to construct this utopian paradigm of the nineteenth century: high and increasing levels of literacy; general adherence to the rule of law; continued gains in representative government (democracy); personal privacy and safety and "an unforced recognition of the focal economic and civilising role of the arts, the sciences and technology"; peaceful coexistence of nations (with sporadic exceptions); regulated mobility of social classes; functional patriarchal values; and sexual liberation with in-built norms of restraint.

¹ It is important to mention with this statement that Steiner's oeuvre does not take much notice at all of colonialism and its inherently violent and destructive nature.

Comparing themselves to this idealised civilisation, subsequent cultures would continually experience dejected sensibilities that Western civilisation itself had been abandoned and that concerted efforts were therefore required to keep its precious flame burning:²

In current Western culture or “post-culture,” that squandered utopia is intensely important. But it has taken on a near and secular form. Our present feeling of disarray, of a regress into violence, into moral obtuseness; our ready impression of a central failure of values in the arts, in the comeliness of personal and social modes; our fears of a new “dark age” in which civilisation itself, as we have known it, may disappear or be confined to small islands of archaic conservation – these fears, so graphic and widely advertised as to be a dominant cliché of the contemporary mood – derive their force, their seeming self-evidence, from comparison (Steiner 1971:4).

My premise in this thesis is that those who inhabit and claim Western culture in South Africa as a diacritical marker of “race”, have made similar apprehensive comparisons between themselves and the nineteenth century. This worldview has been informed not only from a temporal remove to the crises Steiner writes about, but also from a geographical one. It is also located in the country’s historical split allegiances to British and European (specifically German) culture. Internationally, the period between the First and Second World Wars contributed tremendously in shaping South Africa’s idea about cultural endurance, seeing that this period in “Western history” is notable for its profligate discourses about the survival of civilisation. This historically located discourse relates strongly to the current chapter’s theoretical description of apprehensions for the endurance of civilisation, specifically as found in the cultural criticism of three Afrikaner poets: C.M. van den Heever, N.P. van Wyk Louw and Breyten Breytenbach. This chapter demonstrates how their ideas either draw from, or otherwise mirror, two internationally prominent theories about history and civilisation – one German and the other English – by Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee. Taken together, the ideas presented by these two historians created an enduring discourse that portrayed Western civilisation in crisis.

Nietzsche’s idea that history happens in cycles permeated numerous discourses of civilisation in crisis that were prevalent during the 1920s and 1930s, specifically due to its adaptation and dissemination in Oswald Spengler’s *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (Overy 2009:29-30). Although originally disapproved of within academic circles, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* was a popular success in Germany, where it sold more than one hundred thousand copies during the 1920s, regardless (and probably also because) of the fact that

² Steiner’s phrase about a wrong turn having been taken in the dark and sacred wood refers to forest imagery in Dante’s *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, and to T.S. Eliot’s collection *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (1920).

Germany was undergoing a crippling economic crisis. Translated for the British and American markets into English as *The Decline of the West*, Spengler's treatise sold more modestly. Nevertheless his ideas about civilisation in crisis were absorbed and reworked by various intellectuals and pamphleteers, and therefore still made a considerable cultural impact.

In Spengler's view, cultures (German: *Kulturen*) were organisms whose "biographies" – based on a general archetype – lasted for approximately a millennium, after which they expired and made way for the dawn of other cultures (Spengler, in Boorstin 1998:197). This was in opposition to the Hegelian theory of history, which espouses a uniform and progressive teleology for civilisation (Spengler, in Overy 2009:31). Spengler's predetermined life-cycles each underwent identical stages of development. In their beginnings, cultures were primitive, spontaneous and creative, but they would inevitably "ripen" to produce "a mechanical, formalistic, desiccated 'civilisation' that heralded the approaching winter of culture and its final eclipse" (Spengler, in Overy 2009:31). Such ripened civilisations would then terminate with a short-lived fanfare of violent dictatorship (a universalist "Caesarism") and an attendant surfacing of neo-primitive religions, before subsiding and being superseded by younger and more lively cultures. Most notably, Spengler's theorisation advanced an influential thesis that modern Western civilisation had already ripened and furthermore entered into this decline of "Caesarism" and decadence.

Spengler's premise of civilisations being born, living and dying in cycles was expanded upon by the English historian Arnold Toynbee in his multi-volume *A Study of History*, which became equally famous and as influential in the Anglophone community as Spengler's book did in the Germanic one. Toynbee read Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* in the original German during the 1920s, and he discovered theoretical insights there that, combined with subsequent insights garnered from the South African politician-philosopher Jan Smuts's book *Holism and Evolution* (a text cited in Gobbet 42), provided a framework for his own lifetime project to study the rise and fall of past civilisations (Boorstin 1998:198; Toynbee 1967:170). Unlike Spengler, who theorised eight past civilisations that each endured for a millennium within four dominant historical cycles, Toynbee observed twenty six civilisations throughout human history (Overy 2009:39).³

Unconvinced by Spengler's organicist conceit that civilisations were destined to wither and die after an allotment of one thousand years' existence, Toynbee substituted this determinist sleight of hand with an avalanche of empirical facts that could demonstrate a similar thesis of downfall with more flexible timelines

³ Of Toynbee's twenty six historical civilisations, sixteen were extinct and nine had become moribund, leaving only the West to survive (although it was perceived to be in its dying throes already).

for different civilisations (Toynbee, in Boorstin 1998:199; Toynbee, in Overy 2009:34). Toynbee's theory of history depended on a basic idea of human beings facing an "ordeal" and then "responding" (Toynbee, in Boorstin 1998:199). In this sense, he also made use of an autonomous organic metaphor (like Spengler), by comparing the toil and strain of whole civilisations with the biographical struggles of individual human beings like himself:

Things happen through ordeals. When somebody is subjected to an ordeal things cannot stand still. Either one or other of two things must happen. Either the person subjected to the challenge fails to meet it and goes under, or else he reacts victoriously and produces some sort of creation. I believe that there is some spark of divinity in every living creature which makes any of us capable of any one of these creative acts at any time, and I think this is the most illuminating of the many possible approaches to the history of civilisations (Toynbee, quoted in Overy 2009:37).

The ordeals faced by collectives could be military, environmental, or social (Toynbee, in Overy 2009:39). Toynbee's understanding of the adversities a civilisation must overcome and survive is remarkably similar to Northrop Frye's theorisation of the frontier "garrison mentality", which is discussed in Chapter Four in a comparison with the South African "laager mentality". In the absence of any challenging conditions or hardships, Toynbee felt, civilisations cannot respond to anything and therefore actually stagnate. Stereotypically, he presented an African culture (the Malawians) as an example of people who remained "primitive savages" until "white" colonisers arrived on their doorstep. Culture, according to Toynbee, is a succession of challenges (*ordeal* and *response*) that amount to the long-term crystallisation of a civilisation. This crystallisation can only happen on condition that enough creative individuals rise to the occasion and push the developmental track of a civilisation forward (Toynbee, in Overy 2009:39).

During the interbellum years, descriptions about the life-cycles of historical civilisations played into popular discussions about Western civilisation's meagre chances of survival beyond the twentieth century. Overy (2009) has analysed specifically British expressions of this anxiety, and identified their presence in an extensive array of public and academic discourse. This includes books, manifestos, pamphlets of various societies, public lectures, and radio broadcasts – all of these platforms dealing with fields of enquiry such as history, culture, economics, psychoanalysis and eugenics. An inventory of some of the books on which Overy bases his analysis gives an indication of how widespread concerns were for the survival of Western civilisation, and furthermore also for the uncontaminated endurance of the "white" race:

Year of Publication	Title	Author
1918	<i>Der Untergang des Abendlandes</i>	Oswald Spengler
1921	<i>The Salvaging of Civilisation</i>	H.G. Wells
1922	<i>The Revolt Against Civilisation: The Menace of the Under-Man</i>	Lothrop Stoddard
1923	<i>The Pivot of Civilisation</i>	Margaret Sanger
	<i>The Decay and Restoration of Civilisation</i>	Albert Schweitzer
	<i>The Decay of Capitalist Civilisation</i>	Beatrice Webb
1924	<i>Tantalus or the Future of Man</i>	Ferdinand Schiller
1925	<i>Eugenic Reform</i>	Leonard Darwin
	<i>Biology and the Future</i>	Kegan Paul
	<i>Mein Kampf</i>	Adolf Hitler
1927	<i>Will Civilisation Crash?</i>	J.M. Kenworthy
1928	<i>Civilisation: An Essay</i>	Clive Bell
	<i>The Day After To-Morrow: What is Going to Happen to the World?</i>	Philip Gibbs
	<i>Darwinism and What It Implies</i>	Arthur Keith
	<i>The Night Hoers</i>	Anthony Ludovici
1929	<i>Sex in Civilisation</i>	Havelock Ellis
	<i>The Ordeal of This Generation</i>	Gilbert Murray
	<i>Psychiatric Indications for Sterilisation</i>	Ernst Rüdin
1930	<i>Civilisation and Its Discontents</i>	Sigmund Freud
1931	<i>Modern Civilisation on Trial</i>	C.D. Burns
1932	<i>Guide Through World Chaos</i>	G.D.H. Cole
	<i>The Recording Angel</i>	J.A. Hobson
	<i>Can We Save Civilisation?</i>	Joseph McCabe
1933	<i>Modern Man in Search of a Soul</i>	Carl Jung
1934	<i>Voluntary Sterilisation</i>	C.P. Blacker
1935	<i>World Without Faith</i>	John Beevers
	<i>Europe's Crisis</i>	André Siegfried
1936	<i>On the Rim of the Abyss</i>	James T. Shotwell
1937	<i>Can Capitalism Last?</i>	Frederick Allen
	<i>Darwin's Theory Applied to Mankind</i>	Alfred Machin
	<i>Collective Insecurity</i>	Helena Swanwick
1939	<i>Culture and Survival</i>	Guy Chapman
1940	<i>The Malady and the Vision</i>	Tosco Fyvel
	<i>Barbarians Within and Without</i>	Leonard Woolf
1943	<i>The Survival of Western Culture</i>	R.T. Flewelling
1946	<i>Civilisation on Trial</i>	Arnold Toynbee

South Africa was not immune to the idea that Western civilisation was nearing its end, and this particularly crushing survival anxiety resonated with the country's existing memories and myths of endurance. The major difference between the South African response to Spenglerian thinking and contemporaneous European and British responses is a flurry of utopianism, evident in the cultural uplift (part of Afrikaner nationalism) that buoyed intellectuals into believing that an actual solution had been discovered to the problem of the West's decline. N.P. van Wyk Louw, for example, thought that the Afrikaners could revitalise European civilisation from within their African situation (Sanders 2002:66). This expectation entailed the deliberate transplantation of a decadent and morbid Western civilisation into African soil, where it could take root and flourish anew.

C.M van den Heever's (1935) essay "Die Afrikaanse Gedagte" is a South African example of crisis literature that is contemporaneous to the international examples listed in the above table. Already in the essay's opening paragraph, Van den Heever laments the existential uncertainties that Westerners faced during the post-First World War era: mankind, he writes, is asking profound questions about life's meaning, about culture, and about the existence of an own volk and language, as they have never before:

Van die grondigste kenners van die Wes-Europese beskawingslewe twyfel aan die toekoms daarvan. Hulle lees in die ontwrigting van sedelike waardes ná die Wêreldoorlog die duidelike tekens van dekadensie, van die ontbinding van 'n ekonomiese stelsel, wat met sy ingewikkelde organisasie en oberekenbare verandering selfs die skerpsinnigstes met wanhoop vervul. Sal die groot beskawing, wat sy wortels oor die hele wêreld uitgeslaan het, homself kan hernieu en 'n vrugbare aanpassing by ons verwikkelde lewe ondergaan? (Van den Heever 1935:7).

[English translation]

Among the most probing authorities of the Western European civilisation [way of living] doubt its future. In the disruption of moral values after the World War they observe clear signs of decadence, of the disintegration of an economic system, that in its intricate organisation and incalculable change fills even the cleverest with despair. Will the great civilisation that has planted roots throughout the world be able to renew itself and undergo a fructiferous adaptation to our entangled life?

For Van den Heever, the affirmative answer to this question lay in a philosophy of acculturation he termed *die Afrikaanse Gedagte* (the Afrikaans Idea): Even though the beleaguered Western civilisation was thought to have reached the point of failure and extinction, the African continent presented the optimal environment for the resettlement and renewal of this fatigued culture (Van den Heever 1935:8-12). The *Afrikaans* idea was accordingly also intended as an *African* idea; one in which a colonial mindset motivated Van den Heever to appropriate an entire continent, so that "whiteness" could undergo a spiritual renaissance. Van den Heever's thoughts about the survival of Western-European civilisation in Africa

resonate poignantly throughout this thesis, especially in the chapters that deal with the apartheid anthem “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” (Chapter Four), and the public reception of Hendrik Hofmeyr’s *Sinfonia africana* (Chapter Five). The following passage illustrates how the arts, culture (in its broadest possible sense), political ambition and social engineering are all seen as concomitant parts of *die Afrikaanse Gedagte* that respond to anxieties over a perceived Western decline:

Die vraag wat elke Afrikaner behoort besig te hou is: ons is deel van die Westerse Beskawing, en alhoewel ons hier aan die Suidpunt van Afrika verwyder is, word in ons tyd van internasionale verkeer elke trilling van die lewe buite ons om ook in ons land voelbaar. Ons het ’n swaer roeping in Suid-Afrika: die handhawing om die blanke beskawing. Maar hoe kan ons ’n beskawing handhaaf wat reeds dekadent is? Dit is die taak van besinners in Suid-Afrika om te speur na weë waarlangs die Wes-Europese Beskawing hier in ons jong land, langs vrugbare, verjongende rigtings gelei kan word. Dit is hulle taak om te sien hoe die hele Afrikaanse staats-, kultuur- en maatskaplike organisasie, wat wortel in ’n groot verlede, uitgewerk kan word, sodat dit net in diens staan van die Afrikaanse Gedagte, wat ons hele gemeenskapslewe in sy breedste vertakkinge moet omsluit en dra (Van den Heever 1935:7-8).

[English translation]

The question that should occupy each Afrikaner is: we are part of the Western Civilisation, and even though we are removed here at the Southern tip of Africa, during these times of international travel every vibration of life outside of us becomes palpable in our country. We have an arduous calling in South Africa: the maintenance of the white race. But how can we maintain a civilisation that is already decadent? It is the task of thinkers in South Africa to find ways along which the Western-European Civilisation can be led, along fructiferous, renewing directions. It is their task to see how the whole Afrikaans organisation of state, culture and welfare, which is rooted in an enormous past, can be harnessed, so that it stands in service only of the Afrikaans Idea, which has to encircle the life of our entire community in its broadest filiations and prop it up.

Die Afrikaanse Gedagte was based on a concept – borrowed from Spengler’s *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* – in which the “Idea” of a civilisation was its spiritual destiny-force, struggling for survival against the surrounding chaos, in defence of an own identity and way of life (Van den Heever 1935:10-2). Most significantly, Van den Heever (1935:13) understood that civilisations were destined to die once their souls had exhausted every creative potential. When a civilisation had embodied the full spectrum of arts, languages, religions, governments and nations that its “Idea” could bring forth, the soul of this depleted entity returned to the mysterious condition of the Ur-soul. Because Western-European civilisation was also preordained to break down, it thus follows that Afrikaners from the epoch of *die Afrikaanse Gedagte* could not merely try to inaugurate the morbid and desiccated copy of this European original in their African geographical and historical setting.

The paradox that faced Afrikaners was to ensure the endurance of a still dominant “white” civilisation by renovating and rejuvenating it, so that they eventually brought about an own culture and an own identity for the Afrikaners. This contradiction presents the specific instance of theorisation where the poet Van den Heever’s hopes for *die Afrikaanse Gedagte* rendered a confusing mismatch. Spengler’s hypotheses about *whole civilisations* were harnessed to describe the history and providence of the comparatively diminutive *ethno-national group* that identified as the Afrikaner volk. These supremacist speculations present the reader with a complicated intellectual patchwork, whose frame of reference comes across as panoptic and *universal* (i.e. inclusive of everything that is worthwhile about Western civilisation), while the tone of language often betrays a specific antagonism towards those who could possibly threaten Afrikanerdom’s survival. Also, Van den Heever’s poetic utopianism pictures Afrikaners in a more significant and more *universalised* role than conventional prosaic accounts of history would reveal.⁴

In this manner, his essay “Na Die Toekoms” shows that he appropriated Spengler’s ideas about history for the poetic implications of their organic metaphors:

Omdat kultuur dus in sy groei organies-lewend is, opwellend uit die geheimsinnige bronne van die volksiel, kan dit nie uitgroei en ontwikkel tensy die penwortels in die lewe van die volk self lê nie, en eers goed geanker moes [sic] wees voordat dit aan te swaare invloede van buite blootgestel word (Van den Heever 1935:117).

[English translation]

Because culture is thus organically alive in its growth, surging from the secretive sources of the volk-soul, it cannot grow and develop unless the main root lies in the life of the volk itself, and is first anchored deeply before it is subjected to too extreme external influences.

Perhaps because Van den Heever confused the Afrikaner “volk” with “white civilisation”, his theorisation presents his project as something much more vulnerable to external influences than one would expect an entire civilisation to be. His idea with saving civilisation is evidently also far more about the survival of the newborn Afrikaans language than it is about values per se:

⁴ In finding new creative potentialities for a “white civilisation” that had supposedly been exhausted throughout the rest of the world, they are regarded as a group that initiates an African renaissance from which the whole continent will benefit. The chapter on Hendrik Hofmeyr’s *Sinfonia africana* will show how, even after the historical evidence of apartheid, the perception remains persistent that Van den Heever’s *die Afrikaanse Gedagte* applies with universal benevolence to the entire African continent.

Vir kleiner kulture bly die gevaar daar dat as hulle nog nie sterk genoeg is nie, as daar nog geen wortelvastheid is nie, dat 'n sterker kultuur dit heeltemal kan dooddruk. [...] Vir kleiner tale soos Afrikaans en Vlaams is [lening] soms wel 'n bron van groot moeilikheid, want die weerstandsvermoë van hierdie tale is nie groot genoeg om die swaar aandrang van buite te weerstaan nie, en word die invloed te sterk, dan ontstaan dikwels net 'n verbastering en ontaarding, waarvoor elke mens wat respek het vir die rasegte afsku sal voel (Van den Heever 1935:118).

[English translation]

There remains for smaller cultures the danger that if they are not strong enough, if there is no rootedness, that a stronger culture could squeeze it to death. [...] For smaller languages like Afrikaans and Flemish [borrowing] can sometimes be a source of great trouble, because the power of resistance in these languages is not great enough to resist the clamours from outside, and if the influence becomes too strong, then often all that comes into existence is a creolisation and degeneracy, for which each person who respects the racially pure will feel distaste.

It is ironic that English culture could be regarded as an external influence that could destroy Afrikanerdom, when the whole idea with transplanting Western culture to Africa was to *salvage* a highly developed Western civilisation (such as the British Empire). This particular survival anxiety in this instance seems rather to be connected with an already existing South African situation where the fledgling Afrikaans language was pitted against the English language: Despite Van den Heever's (1935:14-5, 119, 121-2) willingness to include English-speaking South African "whites" under the sobriquet "Afrikaner", a gesture which is not unusual for the politics of his time, he nonetheless still disparages the consequences that their hegemonic linguistic identity could hold for *die Afrikaanse Gedagte*.

For Toynbee, the moment when physical survival is secured by a civilisation signals an instance of *etherealisation* – "an overcoming of material obstacles which releases the energy of the society to make responses to challenges which henceforth are internal rather than external, spiritual rather than material" (Boorstin 1998:199). According to Van den Heever (1935:128), the Afrikaner-soul was intensified by the ethnic cleansing of the Anglo Boer War, meaning that Afrikanerdom was *etherealised* – to borrow Toynbee's concept – for the first time by this traumatic *ordeal*. Van den Heever's commitment towards inverting the dystopian environment of British-run concentration camps – he was born in a concentration camp near Norvalspont (Terblanche 2014) – moulded him into a thinker who embraced an ethno-national teleology.

Consequently, in "Die Afrikaanse Gedagte", Van den Heever (1935:130) explains that the *ontwikkeldes* (developed individuals) among Afrikaners should bolster the spiritual front that leads less advantaged members of the culture. For Afrikaners to make their contribution to the *groot mensheidskultuur* (great culture of humanness), their collective spirit also needs to deepen and purify, thereby achieving a *universalised* harmony between creative individuals and the volk. He even insists that *die Afrikaanse Gedagte* is

so compelling that God himself sanctions the newly discovered creative energies of Afrikanerdom (Van den Heever 1935:130).

Van den Heever was not alone in holding fast to ethnocentric convictions about Afrikanerdom. Subsequent ideologues consolidated the initial cultural and political surge that Afrikaners experienced between the two World Wars. The impression of *etherealisation* that Van den Heever attributed to the suffering experienced by Afrikaners during the Anglo Boer War was extended when subsequent challenges were incorporated into the volk's psyche. Mostly, these included variants of the twin threats of Communism and the so-called "black menace" (*swart gevaar*). Ultimately, the South African response to Spengler's and Toynbee's perceived ordeal of Western civilisation was implemented through apartheid's over-confident attempt to subvert the *downfall of Western civilisation*.

Ironically, the triumphalism of apartheid contradicted Spengler's historical theory of an *inevitable* and predetermined downfall. Apparently, Van den Heever's point with applying Spenglerian theory to Africa was emphatically to negate Spengler's pessimistic predictions about the preordained abdication of Western civilisation. Prime Minister J.B.M. Hertzog – himself an adherent of Spengler's famous book (Marx 2008:224, 227; Moodie 1975:210; Scholtz 1975:10, 15-22) – led the charge by internalising a misunderstanding that Spengler's concept of "Caesarism" (dictatorship) presented Western civilisation's best possible means of escape from the *inescapable* cycle towards decline. Consequently, he initiated a programme of discriminatory laws that turned out to be foundational to apartheid's subsequent framework. Unfortunately, the overriding perception was that civilisation could only be entrenched in South Africa by uniting the "white" section of the population and then removing "blacks" from positions of influence over the country (De Villiers 1987:275-6; Moodie 1975:124-5). This programme of social engineering presented one significant problem: Afrikaners might find themselves clinging to *survival through unjust means*. It was a predicament that would be taken up famously by N.P. van Wyk Louw.

Gobbet 18: And be lost altogether to the silences

Ek kom om vir 'n volk te pleit
Wat klein naas al die volke staan,—
Dat hulle naam nie sal verklink
En tot die stiltes gans vergaan.

N.P. van Wyk Louw (in Willemse 2006:11)

Die Dieper Reg

Translation:

I come to intercede for a nation
Which stands small next to all the nations,—
That their name should not fade away
And be lost altogether to the silences.

Gobbet 19: In order to survive in South Africa

In short, my Lord, there came a day when I could no longer tolerate that history in our country be kept in a straitjacket. It meant that I had to turn against my own people: those very Afrikaners who in the past had fought for their own freedom and who had now assumed for themselves the historical vocation to decide utterly the lives of others.

In order to survive in South Africa, I realise today, more than ever before, it is necessary to shut one's eyes and one's conscience: one has to learn not to feel or to think, else it will become unbearable. In other words, the paradox obtains that one should really learn not to live, in order to go on living. And how can that be worth anybody's while?

André Brink (1978:116)

Rumours of Rain

Explanatory Note:

This excerpt is from a scene in Brink's novel that depicts a treason trial. The name of the character speaking these words in defence of his treasonous actions is Bernard Franken, which is Brink's fictional placeholder for the Afrikaner anti-apartheid activist Bram Fischer. Franken uses arguments that furthermore correspond with those put forward by the Afrikaner poet Breyten Breytenbach, as part of his own defence in a similar real-life treason trial.

Louw was arguably the most important Afrikaner poet, playwright and popular intellectual of his generation (Giliomee 1994:530). His work made its first impact during the 1930s, when Afrikaner nationalism began directing ethnic mobilisation and linguistic cultural awareness against the prevailing British imperialism. Among the most significant of Louw's works during this time were his historical play *Die Dieper Reg* (The Deeper Right),⁵ which validated Afrikaner hegemony on grounds that Afrikaners had conquered and cultivated South Africa at great personal cost, and his essay collection *Lojale Verset* (Loyal Opposition), which criticised Afrikaner cultural programmes constructively from within.

Over time, Louw's ideas became ever more critical of the establishment, so that eventually he became ostracised from the Afrikaner political elite. These heterodox views were first distributed in 1952, when he published a series of five civic-minded essays on "Culture and Crisis" in the popular Afrikaner magazine *Die Huisgenoot*.⁶ Each essay is cast in the form of a Socratic dialogue that discusses the theme of culture and crisis with an imaginary young and questioning reader. Louw's philosophical ideas on an Afrikaner cultural crisis have far exceeded the mundane origins of their first publication, to such an extent that no subsequent South African debate on the topic of "white" cultural and biological survival could be conducted without at least a cursory nod to his essays (Giliomee 1994:531; Katzew 1965:37-49).

There is evidence that Spengler's ideas about cultural survival influenced Louw, mainly found in research conducted by the Louw scholar Gerrit Viljoen (Marx 2008:225). During the 1930s, Louw demonstrated a tolerance for totalitarianism ("Caesarism") that can be traced to an internalisation of Spengler's book *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*. The following section of this chapter will show how Louw's understanding of Spenglerian survival changed by the 1950s, so that unlike more conventional ideologues, he came to embrace an idea that Afrikanerdom's downfall might be preferable compared to survival ensured by despotic "Caesarism". The discussions on survival that reference Louw's "Culture and Crisis" most frequently highlight an epigraph from the third dialogue, in which Louw identifies three possible *volkskrisisse* – scenarios that put the continuation of the Afrikaners at risk (Giliomee 1994:531).⁷ Such crisis situations are premised on the idea that South Africa constituted (and still constitutes) a complicated community of people, comprised of many races and cultures, so that Afrikaners have either already felt, or could still feel, threatened enough to fear for the ultimate *survival* of the volk (Louw 1958:58). It is important to note Louw's Afrikaner nationalist sympathies: he frames the anxieties that Afrikaners have

⁵ Louw's sister-in-law, Rosa Nepgen, set *Die Dieper Reg* to music as a cantata for solo voices and orchestra in 1943.

⁶ These essays were subsequently anthologised in Louw's (1958) book *Liberale Nasionalisme*.

⁷ In Louw's paradigm, Afrikaners are thought of as an ethno-national group. This thesis argues that Louw's hypothetical "white extinction" scenarios apply as much to "white" English-speakers.

over their own possible extinction as a national crisis when Afrikaners are only one among a plurality of South African ethnicities/cultures. Eschatological impressions of living in the end times evidently motivate these kinds of solipsism where the self, or in this case the group to which the self belongs, becomes the protagonist in an inflated historical narrative.

The three possible end-time scenarios or crises that Louw foresees are:

1. Wanneer ons met militêre oorrompeling (soos Transvaal in 1899) of met toeploeg (massa-immigrasie e.d.m.) bedreig word.
2. Wanneer 'n groot deel van ons mense self daaraan sou begin twyfel of ons as volk moet voortbestaan. (Dink jy dit is onmoontlik? Praat maar met iemand wat werklik so twyfel – daar is genoeg – en kyk hoe byna aanneemlik hy sy argumente kan plooi.)
3. Wanneer 'n groot deel van ons volk in die gevaar sou kom om te meen dat ons nie *in geregtigheid* met ons mede-volke in Suid-Afrika hoef saam te leef nie: sou kon meen dat *blote voortbestaan* die hoofsaak is, nie regverdige bestaan nie (Louw 1958:58).

[English translation]

1. When we are threatened with military seizure (like Transvaal in 1899) or with being ploughed under (mass-immigration, and so forth).
2. When a large section of our people would themselves begin doubting whether we should continue existing as a *volk*. (You think that is impossible? Then speak to someone who truly doubts like that – there are enough – and see how plausibly he can construe his arguments.)
3. When a large section of our volk could fall into the danger of supposing that we do not have to live together *in justice* with our fellow ethnic groups in South Africa: could suppose that *mere survival* is the chief issue, and not a just existence.

Setting up imagery of Afrikaners as resident inside a protected space, Louw explains the first potential threat as something external: Afrikaners could be attacked from outside by a foreign army. Such a threat could be recognised without difficulty, and the necessary forces could be marshalled to ward off danger. Louw nevertheless inverts the so-called “ploughing under” of Afrikaners, which he posits as an external threat, into an internal one. In so doing, miscegenation is foremost on his mind:

Daar was – en daar sal weer wees – pogings om ons volk se verworwenheid van 'n paar eeue, dood te smoor, uit te wis; om al die hoop en al die strewe van geslagte te laat ondergaan in 'n vormlose volkebredie wat hom makliker na die wens van die groot politieke en geldmagte van die wêreld sal voeg. Ons weet dit: ons volksbestaan is nooit volkome veilig nie; die bedreiging kan soms gaan wegkruip of hom dood-hou, maar hy wag altyd net sy dag af. En tog: juis omdat ons dit so waaksaam weet, kan ons soms asem-skep wanneer hy skynbaar sluimer; kan ons voortgaan met edeler werk as bloot net altyd veg om te bestaan (Louw 1958:58).

[English translation]

There were – and there will be again – attempts to choke, to eliminate our volk’s attainment of a few centuries; to let all the hope and all the striving of generations collapse in a formless stew of ethnicities [*volkebredie*] that would easier conform him [the Afrikaner volk] to the wishes of the big political and money powers of the world. We know it: the survival of our volk is never completely assured; the threat can sometimes hide itself or pretend to be dead, but it is always waiting for its opportunity. And yet: precisely because we know it so vigilantly we can sometimes catch our breath when it seems to be sleeping; we can continue with nobler work than merely always fighting to survive.

Politically empowered collectives can, in spite of their strength, feel swamped and subordinated, and can therefore react to modest crises in a hyperbolic manner (Giliomee 1994:536). This may well be a case that one group’s fears about survival are actually inverted projections of unacceptable impulses felt within that group towards the thing or group that it fears. The argument goes that if “black” people are to be feared because they will somehow plough Afrikaners under, then the true impulse is actually the reverse: Afrikaners want to plough “black” people under to protect themselves (Giliomee 1994:536). South Africa’s history of “black” oppression does much to confirm this hypothesis. Giliomee writes that even in the 1960s, when the implementation of apartheid ideology and its bureaucracy had left “white” South Africans both materially safer and culturally stronger than a generation before, there were still widespread misgivings about the continued survival of the Afrikaners. Consequently, the country’s “white” politicians went to well-documented legislative and policing extremes to render the “black” population politically helpless.

It is instructive to note how Louw formulated the undesirability of a miscegenetic *volkebredie* (formless stew of ethnicities). This imagined Creole race seems to be feared with the same irrationality that J.M. Coetzee (1996:168-9) identifies in the writings of apartheid theorists like Geoffrey Cronjé.⁸ Furthermore, Louw seems unable to resist the *non-sequitur* of portraying an *unconcealed* external threat as something that, somehow, operates with stealth: either hiding or pretending to be dead.⁹ Lastly, his formulation of nobler work than merely fighting for survival refers to the “civilised” vocation of *kultuurmense* (culture-people), without whose creative energy Afrikanerdom would fall into decline. This thesis focuses on how Louw’s *kultuurmense* – specifically people who make, teach and write about music – have come to understand and argue for “white” cultural survival.

⁸ Sanders (2002:76) draws attention to how the concept of *voortbestaan* (survival) links Louw and Cronjé, when these two writers are usually considered antithetical to one another.

⁹ Reading the above passage of Louw’s, one is reminded of the monster in Dan Heymann’s anti-apartheid song “Weeping”, popular in the mid-1980s (and renowned for the way in which it *stealthily* snuck the music of “Nkosi sikelel’ iAfrika” past the apartheid censors). The lyrics of “Weeping” describe a man who lives in such fear of a demon hiding just behind his house that he keeps it at bay with walls and guns and also – like Louw – “tells the world that it’s sleeping”. The song’s poignancy is captured, however, in the last two lines of the chorus: “I heard its lonely sound. It wasn’t roaring, it was weeping” (Heymann 2012).

The third cultural threat is the one most often cited by scholars of apartheid intellectualisation; its significance seemingly being that an Afrikaner intellectual of Louw's stature could "prophetically" envisage a political scenario where *not surviving* was preferable to *surviving through unjust means*. Admittedly, Louw was prescient in foreseeing the political stalemate and recurrent emergency situations of the mid- to late-1980s. Even so, he was partly responsible for that development by formulating and upholding a liberal-nationalist culture of which Afrikaners were the beneficiaries. Some of Louw's most influential ideas argued how Afrikaners were the inheritors of Europe's humanist tradition and portrayed them "on a civilising mission in Africa, more and more as a *European* volk" (Sanders 2002:66). He formulated this narrative by appropriating ideas on liberalism of R.F.A. Hoernlé, one of the early twentieth century's foremost *liberal* South African intellectuals (Sanders 2002:66-8). South Africa's ethnic plurality obliged Louw to adopt Hoernlé's liberal credo, and through expedient misappropriation turn it into a qualified doctrine of just trusteeship, meaning that liberty could only be applied to the "white" population.

"White" South Africans, so the reasoning goes, were compelled by an historical calling to remain the country's dominant ethnic group. Somehow the benevolence contained within their own civilisation would be transmitted over time, through the uplift of a generous trusteeship. Consequently, Louw's position on survival is uncomfortably consonant with the separate development that H.F. Verwoerd presented to his countrymen and the world as a policy of good neighbourliness:

Verwoerd had little doubt that Afrikaner and larger white survival should prevail over other rights: "Every nation had the right to self-protection and self-preservation." If that nation at the same time "exercises that right in such a way that it uplifts the other people and protects them from disorderliness and disease and destruction, and educates and takes care of them, then it need not do it in such a way as to constitute a threat to its own survival" (Giliomee 1994:535).

The fourth dialogue in Louw's "Kultuur en Krisis" is devoted in its entirety to an explanation of his third envisioned end-time scenario. This is the hypothetical, but nevertheless pressing, question of collective survival or extinction, together with the relationship of these options to the concept of justice. Louw (1958:61) uses similar imagery to Breyten Breytenbach (discussed subsequently) in comparing the protection of Afrikaner culture at large with the defences of a city. With words that are both moving and painful, Louw (1958:63) suggests that should the fight-to-the-death scenario ever arise where Afrikaners were unable to defend the Afrikaner garrison by just and honourable means, it would be better for them simply just to let their civilisation subside:

[Daar is seker geen volk] wat nie op een of ander tyd so gesondig het nie; en belangrikste van alles is dit om te weet dat die versoeking die bestendige versoeking is wat vir elke volk in die woestyndae wag – dat dit die grootste, byna mistieke krisis is waarvoor ’n volk te staan kom. Ek glo dat op ’n vreemde manier dit die krisis is waaruit ’n volk herbore, jonk, skeppend, te voorskyn kom, hierdie “donker nag van die siel” waarin hy gesê het: Ek sal liever ondergaan as deur ongeregtigheid bly voortbestaan.

[English translation]

[There is probably no volk] who did not at some time or other sin in this manner; and the most important of all is to know that this temptation is the enduring temptation that awaits every volk in its desert days – that it is the greatest, almost mystical crisis confronting any volk. I believe that in a strange way this is the crisis from which a volk emerges reborn, young, creative, this “dark night of the soul” in which it said: I will rather perish than survive through injustice.

The phraseology throughout the fourth lecture is anxious: multiple metaphors of defence (organic, city, military) are employed to illustrate the inevitable moment where Afrikaners will have to undergo a collective *katabasis*.¹⁰ Toynbee explained this process of a civilisation’s death and transfiguration by suggesting comparisons with the Book of Job and Goethe’s *Faust* (Overy 2009:37). According to Toynbee, any civilisation’s demise amounts to a “schism in the soul” (words akin to Louw’s “dark night of the soul”), resulting in a cataclysm that can only be overcome through an authentic religious or spiritual experience (Overy 2009:40, 45). He imagined each of his twenty-six major historical civilisations to have come about through a creative minority’s spiritual endeavour (Overy 2009:39). It is not difficult to imagine Louw’s *kultuurmense* (culture people) as a similar minority.

Louw did not live long enough to witness the renewed and radicalised South African implementation of this eschatological idea, from the 1970s onwards, by public figures such as the classicist-turned-politician Gerrit Viljoen, the philosophers André du Toit and Johan Degenaar, the Sestiger novelist André P. Brink, and the iconoclastic poet Breyten Breytenbach (Giliomee 1994:540-6). However, when Louw died in 1970 he had already become a pariah to the Afrikaner political establishment, after Verwoerd denounced him publically for a perceived liberalism. Breytenbach’s own subsequent denouncement and imprisonment – events to which this discussion now turns – indicates just how threatening the idea of *voortbestaan in geregtigheid* (survival in justice) was to the apartheid system.

¹⁰ *Katabasis* is a process of dying and being reborn again, represented in epic journeys where heroes descend into and subsequently return from the underworld (e.g. Orpheus). As is the case with Louw’s “dark night of the soul”, such mystical “ordeals” also serve as compelling metaphors for the creative extension of the human spirit.

Breytenbach invoked Louw's survival discourse during December 1976, while defending himself during a frenetically publicised treason trial (Sanders 2002:133-47). He had been arrested three months earlier at the Jan Smuts airport in Kempton Park, after being in South Africa illegally and pursuing apparent terrorist activities, and thereafter trying to leave the country on a false passport (Galloway 2007:13). Even though Breytenbach admitted guilt on a number of charges laid against him under the Suppression of Terrorism Act, he nonetheless contextualised his terrorist sympathies to the court in a personal statement (similar to the one quoted in Gobbet 19 from Brink's novel *Rumours of Rain*), hoping to demonstrate a sincere love of South Africa and Afrikanerdom. The most notable assertion made in Breytenbach's testimony was when he explained his illegal activities as necessary measures to secure the survival of Afrikanerdom:

Dit is dalk paradoksaal, maar vir my het dit gegaan om die voortbestaan van ons volk, 'n voortbestaan met regverdigheid soos Van Wyk Louw dit uitgedruk het, oor die inhoud en gehalte van ons beskawing (Viviers 1978:58).

[English translation]

It may be paradoxical, but for me it concerned the continued existence [survival] of our volk, a continued existence with justice as Van Wyk Louw expressed it, about the content and quality of our civilisation.

Breytenbach's paradoxical conviction illustrates that Louw's ideas – *voortbestaan in geregtigheid* and *lojale verset* – impacted on his own understanding of Afrikanerdom and apartheid so thoroughly that he reworked them into an argument about overthrowing the Afrikaner political establishment to ensure that Afrikanerdom's cultural content could survive.¹¹ His public discourse of the immediately preceding years had already embraced the critical need for Afrikanerdom's *katabasis*, particularly as pertains to miscegenation and creolisation. According to Breytenbach, Afrikaners would ultimately only ensure their survival by negating a pure "white" identity. These ideas were first presented publically when the exiled Breytenbach visited South Africa in 1973, and delivered an iconic lecture at the University of Cape Town's Summer School.¹² This lecture was titled "Blik Van Buite" (View From Outside), since it described

¹¹ The judge-president of the Transvaal subscribed to a more conventional worldview of how to secure the volk's survival: according to him Breytenbach's activities posed a serious threat to state security and the *vreedsame naasbestaan* (peaceful coexistence) of South Africa's inhabitants (Viviers 1978:73). He found Breytenbach guilty of actively supporting the African National Congress (then still a banned organisation), of helping others establish secret anti-apartheid organisations, and of committing eleven acts of terrorism whose purpose were to achieve a revolution. For these offences the judge sentenced him to nine years in jail (Galloway 2007:13-4).

¹² Breytenbach's visit enjoyed considerable media coverage, partly because his Vietnamese wife's visa granted her honorary "white" status while in South Africa, whereas previously she had been refused access to the country altogether (Galloway 2007:8).

Afrikanerdom from an exile's perspective, and its theme concerned Afrikanerdom's reliance on apartheid as bureaucratic methodology to protect "whites" against racial decomposition.

Breytenbach rejected Afrikanerdom's so-called "white" identity as an essentialist's deception, and proposed instead a hybrid genetic and cultural identity in which Afrikaners are recognised as a *bastervolk* (bastard/miscegenetic people) (Sanders 2002:144). Even today, this kind of statement is extraordinarily controversial and courageous. The word *baster* (bastard) carries obvious pejorative connotations. Yet Breytenbach's use of the concept was both radical and overwhelmingly salutary, since the main focus in employing it was to portray the miscegenation or creolisation of pure identities as something desirable:

Ons is 'n bastervolk met 'n bastertaal. Ons aard is basterskap. Dis goed en mooi so. Ons moet kompos wees, ontbindend om wéér in ander vorme te kan bind. Net, ons het in die slagyster getrap van die baster wat aan bewind kom. In daardie gedeelte van ons bloed wat van Europa kom, was die vloek van meerderwaardigheid. Ons wou ons mag regverdig. En om dit te kon doen, moes ons ons gewaande stamidentiteit stol. Ons moes áfkamp, bekamp, verkramp. Ons moes ons andersheid verskans en terselfdertyd behou wat ons verower het. Ons het van ons andersheid die norm, die standaard gemaak – en die ideaal. En omdat die handhawing van ons andersheid *ten koste* van ons mede Suid-Afrikaners – en ons Suid-Afrikaansheid – is, het ons ons bedreig gevoel. Ons het mure gebou. Nie stede nie, maar stadsmure. En soos basters – onseker van hul identiteit – het ons het die begrip van *suiwerheid* begin aanhang. Dit is apartheid. *Apartheid is die wet van die baster*. (Galloway 2007:12; Viviers 1978:15).

[English translation]

We are a bastard people with a bastard language. Our nature is bastardy. It is good and beautiful thus. We should be compost, decomposing to be able to combine again in other forms. Only, we have walked into the trap of the bastard who has acquired power. In that part of our blood which comes from Europe was the curse of superiority. We wanted to justify our power. And to do that we had to consolidate our supposed tribal identity. We had to fence off, defend, offend. We had to entrench our otherness while retaining at the same time what we had won. We made our otherness the norm, the standard – and the ideal. And because our otherness is maintained *at the expense* of our fellow South Africans – and our South Africanhood – we felt threatened. We built walls. Not cities, but city walls. And like bastards – uncertain of their identity – we began to adhere to the concept of *purity*. That is apartheid. *Apartheid is the law of the bastard* (Sanders 2002:144).

Several themes in this paragraph are relevant to arguments developed throughout this chapter. To begin with, there is the perceived centrality of *the Afrikaans language* to the survival of the Afrikaner culture. Unlike the protective theorisation presented in C.M van den Heever's *die Afrikaanse Gedagte*, Afrikaans is described here as something hybrid that decomposes and takes on new creative forms (something that all vibrant languages do over time), with the result that Breytenbach posits a vital concept of Afrikaner identity in opposition to conventional notions of linguistic and racial purity. Just as Louw did in his fourth dialogue on "Culture and Crisis", Breytenbach also uses metaphors that compare Afrikanerdom's political and cultural defences to the defences of a city. Where an obsession with "white" survival prompted the

construction of an isolated utopian environment (apartheid), Breytenbach presents the dystopian and threatening racial elements outside this contained environment as an essential component of Afrikanerdom's future survival. In his outsider's view, the genetic and cultural markers of other races are not only already contained within Afrikanerdom's essence, but their continued influence would strengthen endurance prospects through a miscegenetic or bastard-forming metamorphosis that Breytenbach (2009:78) calls *die groot andersmaak* (the great other-making).¹³ In this rhetorical turn, Breytenbach transforms essentialised "Afrikaners" more completely into "Africans".

How is the bastard identity formed, I asked? By mixing, by making other, by painful or pleasurable or shameful passages from the known to the unknown (urgently manifesting its need to become known), by seizing the moments of intervention, by inhabiting niches and exploring interstices, by moving, by traveling deeper, by learning to read the wind, by confrontation, through struggle, and by conflict. The bastard, I think, has a heightened sense of identity-awareness as pathology and as passport, perhaps of the furtiveness thereof: the past is more complex and entangled than that which meets the eye, the future less certain. Identity accrues from the wells and the pastures and the stars along the lines of the journey. It has the smell of blood. *The Afrikaner is only an identity in becoming another* (Breytenbach 2009:78).

This powerful idea of transformation, of opening up for the other to intermingle with oneself, follows on a long tradition of intellectual and poetic concern with Afrikaner survival. It radically transforms the philosophies of both Van den Heever's *die Afrikaanse Gedagte* and Louw's *voortbestaan in geregtigheid*. Furthermore, this celebration of miscegenation goes against the Kuyprian idea of essentialised diversity (discussed in Chapter Six) that motivated apartheid's ideologues to separate South Africa's "races", ostensibly allowing each to maintain sovereignty in their own sphere and also to develop along their own evolutionary trajectory. For all Breytenbach's powerful imagery and his rousing call to epic journeys and justice smelling of blood, his theme is nonetheless survival. It is an aspect of his poetics and politics that has become clearer in his post-apartheid critiques of the state and the precarious position of Afrikaans.

¹³ Breytenbach borrowed this phrase from Jan Rabie's eponymous novel about the destruction of the Khoikhoi that resulted from the migration of "white" farmers into the South African interior.

Gobbet 20: "White civilisation" will survive only if one is prepared to fight for it

At least two policies are adopted by the Afrikaner Nationalists. [...] The first is called Separate Development, i.e. granting equality by means of total territorial separation; this policy commends itself to idealists and intellectuals. The second is called *baasskap*, and means plainly White Supremacy; its supporters regard total territorial separation as impossible, and consider that "white civilisation" will survive only if one is prepared to fight for it. At the same time, a large number of Nationalists are able to justify the repressive laws of *baasskap*, because they regard them as steps towards total separation, which some authorities suppose to be a goal that may not be reached for a hundred more years. Many Nationalists are thus able to live in two worlds, swallowing injustice in the one that is here, so that there may be justice in the other that is yet to come.

Alan Paton (1959:3)

Hope for South Africa

Gobbet 21: A preoccupation with survival, with continuity in time

The essence of the Afrikaner problem in South Africa is a preoccupation with survival, with continuity in time, a preoccupation that has been with them for a century and more and which was once put into these words: "Not to drown in a British sea, and not to drown in a black sea." Preoccupation? More than that: a haunting.

Henry Katzew (1979:157)

"Afrikaner survival: the undiscussed question"

Contribution to Edwin S. Munger's anthology *The Afrikaners*

Gobbet 22: A matter of “adapt or die”

To survive in the changing political environment the NP government developed a series of new responses. The 1977 White Paper on Defence encapsulated the belief of the security establishment that the country faced a total onslaught on virtually every area of society. The Botha government, which came to power in 1978, broke with the past in openly seeking the support of the English-speaking captains of industry to strengthen the state and persuade the African working class to see the political and economic order as legitimate. The Botha Government also vigorously sought to attract black allies, trying to co-opt them into consultative structures and to induce them to “govern” their own communities and help administer the state. [...]

The dramatically changing external environment and internal balance of forces injected new vigour in the ongoing debate about Afrikaner survival. Different responses can be discerned. The right-wing rejected all adaptations of the apartheid order. [...] Treurnicht, who became leader of the Conservatives, emerged as their main ideologue. In the classic apartheid way he argued that it was not in conflict with the will of God for a volk to maintain its own identity and pursue a separate destiny in its own territory.

The Afrikaner mainstream in the NP, on the other hand, accepted the fact that major reforms had become necessary for survival, even if it meant sacrificing some of the democratic freedoms that whites had enjoyed. Shortly after coming to power in 1978, P.W. Botha declared that the political challenges were such that it had become a matter of “adapt or die.” The head of the military, General Magnus Malan, referred to the “problem of reconciling democratic principles with a total strategy” to combat the onslaught, concluding, “I must emphasise that the overriding consideration is survival. Survival concerns every citizen in South Africa directly or indirectly”.

But survival of what and by which means? Connie Mulder, who was narrowly edged out by Botha in the 1978 leadership contest, declared that the fight for survival knew no rules; but this sentiment was widely denounced and retrospectively associated with his downfall.

Hermann Giliomee (1994:538-9)

“Survival in Justice”: An Afrikaner Debate Over Apartheid

Comparative Studies in Society and History, 36 (3)

Having demonstrated the way in which Afrikaner cultural hegemony was steeped in discourses of survival (Van den Heever, Louw, Breytenbach) indebted to similar European discourses preoccupied with the decline of the West (Spengler, Toynbee), what remains is to articulate these concerns to a South African musicological discourse. My research in Chapter One and Chapter Two – along with many of the Gobbets cited throughout this thesis – already reveals that *kultuurmense* interested in Western art music took up Louw’s call for a nobler cultural vocation than mere physical survival, although this would not necessarily have been done consciously. This section of the thesis focuses on two contributions to South African musicology that were aware of the dynamic exchange of ideas about survival between Spengler and Toynbee on the one hand, and Louw and Breytenbach on the other.

Chapter One already discussed research published by the German-born South African musicologist Klaus Heimes (1985; 1986; 1989), in particular his understanding that the country’s Western art music enclave functions as a fetishist “caretaker culture”. His cogent “new musicological” critiques participated in a larger South African discourse of political, social and cultural crisis that originated during the late-1970s and intensified throughout the 1980s. R.W. Johnson’s (1977) *How Long Will South Africa Survive?* and Anna Starcke’s (1978) *Survival: Taped Interviews with South Africa’s power elite* are prominent examples of this local variety of crisis literature. Texts like these were indicative of Afrikaners and English-speaking “whites” having developed a “Masada complex” in which apocalypse seemed like an inevitable and perhaps even an attractive outcome (Bosch 1986:215; De Villiers 1987:385-6).

Along with the caretaker petitions of other writers discussed throughout this thesis, Heimes’s awareness of cultural protectionism and endurance is coupled with social apprehensions. Like many other musicians and musicologists who are concerned about Western art music’s survival in South Africa, he regards this musical tradition as being safeguarded within the confines of a minority cultural enclave. However, he is the only petitioner who explains his own ideas about survival with declared knowledge of Spengler’s and Toynbee’s relevant historical theories on the life cycles of civilisations.

Heimes’s (1985:139) sociological critique is rooted in a Platonic interpretation that music directly influences the ontological concepts that determine the nature and *quo vadis* of a society. Interestingly, he views South Africa as simultaneously part of the Western world as of the African continent. This porosity means that socio-musical dynamics are open to cross-cultural influence, but that the country’s “whites” nevertheless expect the musics from various cultures to ossify despite often being performed within earshot of one another (Heimes 1985:139). Another problem that preoccupies him is the commercialisation of

music into an industry that supplies “Instant Art” to satisfy the unreflective demand for pleasure (the Freudian “pleasure principle”) that drives modern Westerners. His Adornian interpretation of popular music’s social function translates into a pessimistic concern for the listening public’s increasing abandonment of Western art music – especially new music – during the twentieth century, and from there into a concern for civilisation’s spiritual content and endurance. Although based on an interpretation borrowed from Adorno, Heimes’s anxiety for the cannibalising effect of commercialised popular music is comparable with similar crisis scenarios presented almost three decades later, by the composer and early music specialist Hans Huyssen (2011:161-2) and Winfried Lüdemann (2009a; 2009b; discussed in-depth in Chapter Six). Heimes’s critique is the most well-argued one; something which becomes clear not only in the quality and scope of his theoretical framework, but also in his willingness to allow for the failure and demise of Western art music, should that outcome be inevitable:

Is it reasonable to evaluate a musical culture solely by the quality of its socially relevant current production [i.e. commercialised popular music], i.e. is it not possible that the minority-pursuit of tending the art-music of the past is enough to safeguard the quality of our culture for those who want to partake in it? Is it not possible that the scenario sketches a polarisation that is attitudinal rather than real, because the lasting works of the art of music have all too frequently been subject to later archaeological salvage from among the pebbles of the merely contemporary, i.e. that pop music may currently be producing significant art that escapes our myopic perspective of historical nearness? [...]

Finally also, does the whole thing matter? The world is in a many-pronged crisis of such proportions that what matters is the creation of ways, means and tools for survival, and is an ebb in the arts not an expected and tolerable price to pay in historical periods of this kind? (Heimes 1985:141).

This critical perspective is astonishing, since it positions Heimes as one of the few local advocates of Western art music who recognises that this musical tradition is not indispensable, and that there are inevitably other more meaningful methodologies that ensure human survival. Depending on one’s interpretation, he may well represent the second of the internal threats (*volkskrisisse*) proposed by Louw: which is doubting that Afrikaners or the broader “white” South African population should continue to exist culturally (and even biologically). Then again, he may also be someone who is willing to undergo *katabasis* and discover potential for the creative miscegenation of existing cultures.

He mentions Toynbee’s explanation that civilisations *etherealise* when difficult material conditions stimulate cultural activity, and argues that the validity of this theory was confirmed during and after the Second World War: Prisoners in concentration camps harnessed philosophy, music and poetry as tools to ensure psychological survival, and the civilians who survived in completely destroyed German cities made a point of attending performances of Büchner’s *Woyzeck* and Bach’s *Matthäus-Passion* (Heimes 1985:141). This

latter example of German civilisation in post-war ruins reminds of the psychological vulnerability and “natural history of destruction” that W.G. Sebald portrays in his 1999 book *Luftkrieg und Literatur*.

Inge Burger (2006:89) maintains that “white” artists opposed to apartheid, like the Afrikaner popular signer Amanda Strydom, used music as “a crucial vehicle for psychological survival”. It must nevertheless be stressed that the sociological context of Heimes’s critique was not apocalyptic: Even though “white” South Africans constantly anticipated a post-war apocalyptic landscape, their material condition was generally one of material comfort when compared to their oppressed counterparts from other “races”. Furthermore, Heimes (1985:141) understands their cultural reliance on material values as indicative of the post-creative stage in Spengler’s theory of civilisations, which is marked by “Caesarism” and spiritual decline. Referring to Toynbee’s theory of civilisations as well, Overy explains this post-creative cultural stage as follows:

Breakdown and disintegration come into play only when the fund of creativity grows weak and the responses become merely mechanical. The creative minority becomes a dominant minority of tyrants or demagogues or the wealthy while the rest of society becomes a disaffected “internal proletariat” (in the Roman rather than the Marxist sense). Stagnation then provokes the barbarians on the frontiers, or the “external proletariat”, to become more violent. Internal degeneration is the primary cause, but external defeat the likely consequence (Overy 2009:39).

Heimes (1985:141) interprets local cultural diversity through a Spenglerian lens as well, and therefore finds a temporal discrepancy between our society’s “Western” and “African” socio-cultural cycles. When he asks what the implications of this discordance might be, he apparently points to the likelihood that South Africa’s “Western” cultural institutions (already belated copies) are in decline, while “black” African groups – who presumably are the “barbarians” in this model – face authentic ordeals and will therefore crystallise into a vibrant civilisation (Heimes 1985:141). Despite his not bracketing an emergent indigenous civilisation together with the cultural threat of an unreflective and fetishist popular music, it remains significant – in the terms of social Darwinism – that he postulates how South Africa’s “black” cultures might “belong to an altogether different socio-cultural cycle of history”.

He introduces a theoretical concept which has the potential to salvage the cultural relevance of Western art music: For, in assuming “that the quality of a culture – and its ability to survive – must be judged by its current product [i.e. popular music]”, one neglects to understand that Western art music’s preservation is already only tended by a *minority* within the broader “Western” culture (Heimes 1985:141). This concept links with Van den Heever’s *ontwikkeldes* and with Louw’s *kultuurmense*, and, as will become

apparent in the remainder of this chapter (and in Chapter Five), it also links with Stephanus Muller's (2009:20) explanation that Western art music's local "relevance" is limited to a minority within a minority.

Heimes discusses various reasons why this musical heritage is in fact steeped in "relevance", but also explains that there remains an imperative to criticise the cultural work done by this minority's members:¹⁴

The replies to these protests [about Western art music's relevance and survival] are difficult and painful, because they entail a fundamental critique of that small group in our society that has the greatest potential for deep musical insight and discernment. The nucleus of this minority group is highly erudite, and its dedication to the art-music of the past is based on a realisation that it alone still possesses, namely that music is what Schopenhauer called "the copy of the will itself", and what Nietzsche called "a symbolical analogue". For this reason, this nucleus sees music not merely as a matter of enjoyment but as of critical importance to man's spiritual household, and this view is shared – with varying degrees – by the entire minority group (Heimes 1985:142).

Conversely, the emancipation of dissonance at the beginning of the twentieth century fractured this minority group into conservative and progressive factions, while the majority of the Western art music audience sided with the former group. The conservative opinion-makers and their audience, writes Heimes (1985:142), are "militant in their defence of the dividing line between art and non-art, but they are also wrong in its identification". Significantly, and relevant to the axiological tenets discussed in Chapter Five and Chapter Six, the conservative grouping within the minority equate Western art music's aesthetic "harmoniousness" with benevolent ethical values:

To be accepted as art-music, a work must fulfil the expectancy of beauty in sound, and since most art-music after Debussy fails to respect this idiosyncrasy, our conservatives actively resist even the acquaintance with the art-music of their own day. These people plainly want to be transported by beauty because, according to Colin Wilson, beautiful music gives them an overpowering conviction of the value of life (Heimes 1985:142).

Heimes (1985:142) makes clear that the premium put on being transported into Utopia by "beautiful" music is not only responsible for the general resistance to contemporaneous forms of art music, but that its sociological consequence is equally dire, since the conservative faction becomes progressively more irrelevant with each passing year, "and their activities acquire more of the characteristics of a caretaker culture". Their nostalgic musical philosophy tacitly accepts the credo expressed in Richard Benz's

¹⁴ Considering that Heimes premises his sociological critique on a Platonic attitude that the quality of music listened to in a society informs its ontology and direction, the minority resembles the intellectual class in Plato's *Republic* commonly referred to as the "Guardians", whose ultimate responsibility is to defend civilisation from disintegration and downfall (Blackburn 2006:62; Frye 1970:118). In Plato's blueprint it is specifically music that threatens society's survival, due to his understanding that musicians corrupt the social fabric and polity (Taruskin 2009:169).

1923 publication *Die Stunde der deutschen Musik*: that the hour of music as a living art is irretrievably lost; but that the hour of music as the experienced revelation of the spirit, and of the reflective echo (*Widerklang*) is nevertheless approaching (Heimes 1985:142). Heimes links this pessimistic sentiment directly with Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, which was published the year before, and explains that the caretaker culture's retrospective musical activities – historicising, maintaining and sanctifying the spiritual history of centuries – are similar in temperament to how Spengler conceived of civilisations in their final phase. Heimes even writes that the safekeeping activities of Western art music's caretakers encourage the tradition's decline, much as "Caesarism" precipitates a civilisation's destruction.

The caretakers of Western art music represent a cult for Heimes, who – like all cults – counterproductively adopted fixed formulae and rituals:

The first step along the way was the identification of and increasing programmatic restriction to the most towering masterpieces of the past. Great composers and their greatest works became stars, with the result, in Adorno's words, that "a pantheon of best-sellers builds up. The programmes shrink, and the shrinking process not only removes the moderately good, but the accepted classics themselves undergo a selection that has nothing to do with quality" (Heimes 1985:142).

Fetishist consumption vulgarised and devalued these masterworks, meaning that substitute cultural values needed to be put in place. Heimes (1985:142) writes that performers became idolised as celebrities, and that appreciation of their stamina and virtuosity became the object of listening, reducing the works performed "to the status of a track facility". Another consequence was the idolisation of standardised instrumental apparatus together with the ironing out of sonic and acoustical variability (cf. Volans 1986). According to Heimes (1985:143, quoting Adorno) this fetishism not only introduced emotional dimensions outside the conceptual frameworks of historical composers, but where orchestras were concerned, the preoccupation with "the flawlessly functioning, metallically brilliant apparatus" precipitated an ideal of the "perfect, immaculate performance [that] preserves the work at the price of its definite reification".

It presents it as already complete from the very first note. The performance sounds like its own phonograph record. The dynamic is so predetermined that there are no longer any tensions at all. The contradistinctions of the musical material are so inexorably resolved in the moment of sound that it never arrives at the synthesis, the self-producing work, which reveals the meaning of every Beethoven symphony. [...] The protective fixation of the work leads to its destruction, for its unity is realised in precisely that spontaneity which is sacrificed to the fixation. This last fetishism, which seizes on the substance itself, smothers it; the absolute adjustment of the appearance to the work denies the latter and makes it disappear unnoticed behind the apparatus.

Heimes maintains that these developments caused the caretaker cult to lose sight of its original project, since the ritualistic element in concert practice – e.g. who talks to whom during intermission – overwhelmed its spiritual content. Huyssen (2011:162-3) echoes a sentiment expressed by Heimes that Western art music has fallen prey to the same meaning-stripping consumerism as popular music, although, unlike Huyssen, Heimes does not consider this music industry to be the consequence of an intentional and opportunistic treachery to the caretakers' original value system. Instead, he writes that the many unintended consequences that followed on the restriction and maintenance of the Western art music canon invalidated the good intentions of the caretakers, so that they became mired in a disfigured ideology of affirmative bourgeois music:

Adorno questioned the right of post-Auschwitz Europe to a euphonious art-music, and Karbusicky wrote that affirmative music is a lie in any of today's societies. This leads to the question whether our caretakers' craving for harmonious moral support (in Colin Wilson's sense) has a social significance more strongly characterised by escapism than musical taste, and this throws into relief the potential defeatism of a cultural activity whose critical values are so predominantly retrospective (Heimes 1985:143).

Ultimately, this predominantly retrospective musical practice creates a Spenglerian system that will eventually destroy itself. Heimes writes that it is illogical that our own moment in history should be expected to sustain any cultural tradition – or even be said to have one – when it focuses on past rather than present cultural artefacts:

We either accept new music that is qualified by the implied presence of past music, or we lose our past music because there is no new music to give it current perspective. It would thus appear that we have a choice of tragedies: shall we let our culture die because we want to listen to Spengler's end-phases, or shall we let it die because we do not want to listen to our art-music, present or past? (Heimes 1985:145).

This pessimism is limited, however, to the South African practice and study of Western art music, and Heimes (1986:29) writes that he is unconvinced that this tradition will subside internationally. His desire is that ("white") South Africans should no longer think of their culture in colonial terms, and recognise and accept their African situation together with the diverse cultural environment that it entails. There are unique challenges in this country, and failing to meet them creatively will consign the local musical culture to remaining a colonial receiving culture. And that being the case, excessive caretaking will strangle the Western art music tradition in South Africa.

Heimes suggests various methodologies to improve the well-being of the local socio-musical environment, most of them educational, creative, and political. The most important one, though, is an attitudinal adjustment to not be so anxious about Western art music's survival that inadvertent despotic strictures are placed on the organic growth of the entire musical ecology. Censorship and the demarcation of cultures are despotic attempts that caretakers implement to restrict the knowledge horizon to try and safeguard their musical tradition. Throughout the remainder of this thesis, attention is given to various forms of cultural demarcation intended to secure Western civilisation's survival in South Africa through the protection of Western art music. If Heimes is correct, these unnecessary and futile attempts are symptomatic and encouraging of an inevitable downfall.

This idea of counterproductive cultural restrictions is taken up by Stephanus Muller in his DPhil thesis, *Sounding Margins: Musical Representations of White South Africa*. In interpreting a scenario from André Brink's novel *Sandkastele* (1995), where a character continually imagines an international opera career for herself, and reflects thereupon with delusion in her diaries, Muller discerns a similar situation for South African "whites" who cling to a European cultural identity. The character in Brink's novel is an obedient housewife, and her husband a loyal National Party apparatchik who only allows her to sing at party political functions:

The more restrictive her situation becomes in reality [...], the more vivid and extravagant the pretensions to world-wide recognition become in her diaries. These illusions become "the truth in the mask of a sad lie" and "the fantasies of a frontier country, all of them larger than life: the exaggerations of a psyche on the verge of death" [Muller's translation of Brink's original Afrikaans in the quotations]. The insistence on an art music (fatally) rooted in Europe may well be the expression of the exaggerated fears of a community in perpetual fear of cultural extinction. For South African art music to chain itself to the past, to the extent that it becomes subsumed in delusion and wishful thinking, is to participate in and hasten that cultural extinction (Muller 2000:52-3).

This interpretation corresponds effectively with Heimes's diagnosis of how the retrospective caretaker culture paradoxically hastens the decline of Western art music. In his DPhil thesis, Muller examines the various ways in which musicology can be harnessed to arrest this decline, and thereby ensure the continued survival of some kind of "white" culture in post-apartheid South Africa. He presents various strategies for making "white" culture relevant to its African situation. The most notable way in which he creates a discursive *niche* to ensure the endurance of music conventionally associated with "whiteness" is through an intentionally politicised musicology. This is because democratic-era public discourse gives overwhelming credence to the narratives of ennobled "black" political struggle, and because "white" cultural

narratives are routinely demonised up to the point where “white” culture has sometimes become threatened (Muller 2000:29; 57). However sophisticated the reasoning behind this statement might be, it resonates with the historical existential dilemma of Afrikaners discussed in-depth in Chapter Three and Chapter Four. Even translated into cultural terms, this problem of a *dur désir de durer* (a harsh, difficult desire to endure) is fundamentally about an Afrikaner concern not to become submerged in a “black” African environment.¹⁵

Instead of the philological purgatory’s musicology – discussed in Chapter One – Muller therefore encourages analyses that oppose the institutional preference *not* to complicate musicology with politics (Muller 2000:6-9, esp.7). One possibility of such a discourse is to articulate musical examples of “white” opposition to apartheid (Muller 2000:7). Participating in the anti-apartheid storyline thus becomes a strategy to ensure relevance and survival. By opportunistically locating and describing the morally righteous instances in Western art music’s “white” South African history, musicologists would utilise an important opportunity for “reinventing a traumatic past and negotiating a difficult present” (Muller 2000:8). In Muller’s paradigm, such a moral archaeology would help Afrikaners survive their post-apartheid credibility crisis within the musicological discipline, and it would also redeem “whiteness” and the values that are normally associated with its cultural practices and products.

Muller (2000:8) concedes that methodically twisting works of art into documents of social and political meaning could be a procrustean exercise, bearing out better proof of a disciplinary agenda than demonstrating the poietic meaning of a work. According to Muller (2000:15), the critical perspectives and methodologies of the “new musicology” are much better suited than the positivism and formalism of the philological purgatory to serve the survival interests of a marginal “white” minority cultural practice such as Western art music. Filtering musical discourse through a politicised prism is therefore described as a compromise and opportunism in which “[s]urvival is uppermost in the mind – and the mind is what needs to survive” (Muller 2000:8). Located at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Muller’s doctoral thesis (and arguably his subsequent work as well) provides an important example of how Western art music and its discourse remain at the centre of concerns about cultural decline, and therefore inform strategies to continue safeguarding “white” heritage in South Africa. In this, as will be shown in several subsequent chapters and gobbets, Muller’s musicological discourse taps into a long obsession shared by musical/musicological ideologues not conventionally associated with one another. Of significance, furthermore, is that although Muller is associated with progressive scholarship, he remains interested in the South African *survival* of Western art music and musicology; not in the destruction of this heritage.

¹⁵ The phrase *dur désir de durer* is taken from the poet Paul Eluard, often quoted by George Steiner (e.g. 1997:29).

The specific time-period of Muller's writing is that of the so-called "new" South Africa, immediately post-apartheid, entering the "African renaissance" ideology associated with Thabo Mbeki, but still steeped in Nelson Mandela's "rainbow nation" politics. The case studies in *Sounding Margins* create a discourse of distinctively "white" Afrikaner musical opposition to apartheid where previously none was evident. As examples, Muller subjects the Afrikaner composer Arnold van Wyk's *Missa in illo tempore* and the poet N.P. van Wyk Louw's opera libretto *Asterion* (set to music by the Dutch composer Henk Badings) to counterintuitive readings. He highlights Arnold van Wyk's and N.P. van Wyk Louw's oppositional credentials, based on a perception that both of them were Afrikaner intellectuals who, from the midpoint of the twentieth century onwards, recognised and reacted to an eschatological dilemma that Afrikaners could either ignore the immorality of apartheid's political programme and ideology, or else responsibly confront that immorality and thereby risk "minority cultural and ethnic vulnerability and possibly even extinction" (Muller 2000:9).¹⁶ As artists, we are told, both of them tried to embrace the creative destruction associated with Louw's ideas about "survival in justice":

Having for so long persisted in choosing the former option (to universal condemnation), it was only after (pragmatically) embracing the total dismantling of the system that protected them, that Breyten Breytenbach could write that "we [Afrikaners] are painted in the colours of disappearance here. At best we are destined to become other (while even not knowing who we were): it is 'good' in a practical and possibly a moral sense, but it is painful" (Muller 2000:9).

Why does Muller, in spite of his apparent recognition that progressive Afrikaners have voluntarily been painted in the colours of disappearance, turn around to re-embrace a discourse of survival? One answer has already been given by Breytenbach: disappearance is painful. It entails the difficult process of gaining an awareness that recognises how survival was secured through unjust means, and volunteering to undergo an uncertain and indeterminate death-and-rebirth *katabasis*. Muller's consistent adherence to the survival idea is therefore not reactionary, but instead aligned to a transformative ideal that can have a positive impact on the broader South African cultural ecology. His proposal that musicology should become unashamedly political is an entreaty for local musicologists to change disciplinary tactics through an engagement with politically sensitised discourses that are unconventional for them and their institutions. But such an adaptation also has the potential to change the national cultural landscape for the better,

¹⁶ To underscore this argument, Muller (2000:56) mentions Louw's epic poem *Raka*, which ends in a situation of defeat in which nobody in the "white" enclave "can ever again close the gates against Raka, the dark one". He sees South African society poised at this exact historical point which Louw prophesied, and consequently asks whether Western and local art music can continue existing after apartheid?

considering that university music departments have important pedagogical functions to fulfil. In this regard, it is significant that Muller frames being painted in “the colours of disappearance” not only as a musicological imperative, but also as something that many hope can be achieved within music itself:

As art music is culturally inseparable from white South Africa, it is not difficult to transfer a crisis of white identity and legitimacy in Africa (as a result of the collapse of colonialism and Apartheid respectively), to a crisis in “white culture” and therefore in South African art music. [...] As the political credibility and survival of its white constituent base has crumbled, aesthetic value and commercial survival of art music has increasingly depended on the political credibility that could be gained by turning elitist “Western” or “European” music to a more “African” style (Muller 2000:29).

He writes that even though a significant body of South African musical compositions was created in this intercultural and transcultural spirit from the 1980s onwards, he nevertheless struggles to understand precisely what musical cross-fertilisation entails on the level of musical syntax (Muller 2000:30). Muller’s reserve that the creative “middle-ground” on which transculturation might happen is far too ambiguous for a theoretical framework or hermeneutics of South African art music relates to my discussion, in Chapter Six, where I criticise Winfried Lüdemann for dismissing the conceptual possibility of such cross-cultural interplay between South Africa’s many diverse musics.

Apparently, conceptual models that strive for musical cross-fertilisation and fusion *in the music itself* enable only “the most elementary and speculative readings of South African art music” (Muller 2000:31). This is because these models usually position “Western” and “African” musics in opposition to one another, thereby counterproductively reinforcing the conventional practice of pitting “the West” against “Africa”. Throughout Chapter Six, my theorisation posits various lines of argument that portray this binary opposition as a false dialectic, in that South Africa possesses of multiple types of music whose multidirectional interplay cannot properly be incorporated into reductive explanatory blueprints.

One of the most fundamental appeals in my research is to allow for the ludic interplay between South African musics, in the public arena and within teaching institutions. This kind of cultural interaction stands the best possible chance of undermining the essentialised identities forced upon South Africans by apartheid’s fetish for categorisation and separation.

Having discussed how the survival theories put forward by Spengler, Toynbee, Louw and Breytenbach informed intellectual approaches to apartheid, and furthermore how they found fertile discursive ground within South African musicology, this thesis now turns to analysing the historical manner in which Afrikaners tried to subvert Spengler’s pessimistic prediction of civilisation’s failure.

Widespread anxieties about racial purity in South Africa during the 1930s triggered hegemonic and overzealous anti-miscegenetic responses aimed at segregating, ordering and maintaining the extant cultural diversities within the overwhelmingly “black” social landscape. In cultural terms, this meant protecting the “classics” of Western culture from the anticipated onset of “barbarism”. One of the most effective ways to achieve this was through the anthem “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika”, which became synonymous with heroic interpretations of the Great Trek pioneer migration, as well as the survival of a few hundred pioneer Voortrekkers at the 1838 Battle of Blood River. The most significant aspect of this cultural programme was the universalising of Afrikanerdom’s perceived spiritual content into a utopian identity, possessing of a providential teleology that could break free of Spengler’s and Toynbee’s cyclical model of civilisation.

These concerns are discussed in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five an analysis of Hendrik Hofmeyr’s *Sinfonia africana* further emphasises how the universalist and teleological cultural narrative charged Afrikaner nationalism with jingoist taken-for-granted assumptions of benevolence, so that even after apartheid’s abolishment it is still implicitly understood that the Afrikaner utopia – inherent in Van den Heever’s *die Afrikaanse Gedagte* – is humane and therefore applicable to the entire African continent.

Chapter Six is interrelated with these concerns, in that it discusses a musical blueprint that seemingly wants to arrest history (the cycle and the teleology) in order to preserve extant cultural diversities and thereby avoid the apocalypse of miscegenation.

Gobbet 23: A calculation about the survival prospects of the Afrikaners and Afrikaans

How does the historian know that a concern expressed over the survival of a culture or a people is not in fact a camouflage for concern about a standard of living, a concern about privilege or even sheer racism? It is a difficult call, one that the historian must approach with great circumspection. Still, it would be shortsighted to dismiss the Afrikaner debate over ethnic survival as peripheral compared to an assessment of interests. At the heart of the decision to introduce apartheid shortly after the 1948 election and the 1990 decision to abolish all its pillars was a calculation about the survival prospects of the Afrikaners and Afrikaans.

Hermann Giliomee (2003:xviii-xix)

The Afrikaners: Biography of a People

CHAPTER FOUR

Afrikaners, their anthem, Bloedrivier, and the Voortrekker Monument

Afrikaners

Hermann Giliomee's *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* draws on a premise that a survival psychology has had an enduring influence on the history of Afrikaners: "The term 'survival'," writes Giliomee (2003:xviii), "often creeps up in Afrikaner history, but it needs to be stressed that a *nationalist* concern about survival, as distinct from a more generalised anxiety over white survival, is a twentieth century phenomenon". He then supplies five examples from more than three centuries of South African history that show how pervasive the Afrikaner preoccupation with survival has been. First, slave owners in the Cape Colony had a fear of not surviving without the constant import of new manpower through the Atlantic slave trade. Second, frontier burghers were concerned for the survival of their European cultural heritage, seeing as they were geographically removed from any colonial cultural centre and also increasingly confronted a "barbaric" landscape the deeper they penetrated the South African interior. Third, nineteenth century Cape Afrikaners worried about the erosion of their culture because of the elite's assimilation into British culture. Fourth, this fear of Anglicisation turned into hatred of anything English, after British-run concentration camps introduced a palpable threat of ethnic cleansing and possible extermination during the Anglo Boer War. Fifth, during the early twentieth century, social problems associated with "white poverty" threatened the dominance of the "white" race, not only because of their weak economic status, but also through sensationalised fears that "poor whites" would intermarry with other races.

Giliomee's qualification that a nationalist concern about survival is a twentieth century phenomenon makes a distinction between survival apprehensions that can be identified with apartheid and those that preceded apartheid. It also suggests that the rabid "Afrikaner" identity monolith contained within apartheid's ideology is actually more complex than conventionally accepted, and that it should be brought to mind as an appellation that has been negotiated in broad and slow-moving currents of historical development. My personal statement in the introduction to this thesis has already touched on how this ethnic moniker, "Afrikaner", is actually polysemous. Perhaps, as would be the case with any collective ethnic/national identity, to define oneself as an "Afrikaner" is comparable to volunteering, or being made, to lie down on a Procrustean bed, where social persuasions and expectations overwhelm religious, political, linguistic and sexual preferences. Contrary to what normative parameters for being an "Afrikaner" might

maintain, throughout South Africa's history there have been discordant ideas about who identified with this group name. Giliomee (2003:xix) writes that "Afrikaner" was first used during the eighteenth century to describe "whites" in this country. Nevertheless, "burgher", "Christian", "Dutchman" and "Boer" were just as prevalent. A more mononymous nomenclature was only adopted ca. 1875, with the *Eerste Taalbeweging* (First Language Movement), when a lobby group called the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (Fellowship of True Afrikaners) created a linguistically-based culture for Afrikanerdom (Beningfield 2006:28). From that time onwards, people subscribing to different identity paradigms began to align themselves as a homogeneous Afrikaner group.

This collective identification was intensified by rebellion and war with the British Empire at the turn of the century, and most especially by the negligent internment of "white" Afrikaans-speaking women and children in inhumane British-run concentration camps, while the British pursued a scorched earth military policy on farms throughout the South African interior. The extreme humiliation suffered by the two Boer Republics through defeat in the Anglo Boer War regrettably invested the still emergent "Afrikaner" identity formation with a pathology of victimhood (explained further along in this chapter) that animated a self-interested desire to survive.

Only during the interbellum years (particularly the Great Trek centenary of 1938) did the now pervasive and normative understanding coagulate that Afrikaners must be racially "white", mother tongue speakers of Afrikaans, and have a sanguinary connection with the soil. Modern Afrikaner interpretations of South Africa's nineteenth century history argue that the land belongs to Afrikaners because their pioneer ancestors stained and bought it with their blood (Beningfield 2006:30; De Villiers 1987:137).¹ The concentrated development of Afrikaans literature (as opposed to Dutch literature), and specifically also the translation of the Christian bible into Afrikaans, were other powerful factors that informed Afrikaner identity with a nationalistic element (Beningfield 2006:28). The crystallisation of an Afrikaner identity between the two World Wars would also have been completely different without the Anglo Boer War (1899-1902), which alienated South Africa's Afrikaans-speakers from English-speakers. This chapter scrutinises a moment in this crystallisation, viewed through the alchemy of song.

¹ This *Blut und Boden* idea is evident in a play like N.P. van Wyk Louw's *Die Dieper Reg* (The Deeper Right).

1838: Bloedrivier

There is a cultural trope that sometimes states that Afrikaners subscribe to a so-called “laager mentality”. It means that they have a habit of insulating themselves from perceived threats, both physical and psychological. The word “laager” is derived from a defence tactic (that also became a military tactic) used by various frontier settler groups – Afrikaner ancestors, known collectively as the Voortrekkers – during the nineteenth century, who would circle their wagons into improvised forts from which they could defend themselves in the event of an attack. Laagers proved highly successful, and several documented cases exist where Voortrekkers managed to survive the hostile landscape of the South African interior, even at times when they were outnumbered a hundred to one (De Klerk 1975:36).²

Different Voortrekker settler parties would meet up with one another as they moved away from the British controlled Cape Colony in about 1836 to 1838. These *maatshcappije* (communities) were, however, commanded by stubborn individualists who differed from one another about possible locations for an independent Boer Republic, and also about interim forms of political organisation (De Klerk 1975:37-8; Giliomee 2003:164). In December 1836, the *maatshcappije* under the leaderships of Hendrik Potgieter and Gerrit Maritz elected a seven-member Burgher Council, which was constituted at Thaba Nchu, and whose structures made allowance for civil legislation, law enforcement and military defence (Giliomee 2003:164). However, the leaders of these two Voortrekker groups disagreed with one another too often, and the Council split into two uncooperative factions.

Five months later another *maatschappij* arrived at Thaba Nchu, under the leadership of Piet Retief. He was elected governor of the Burgher Council and also took control of the military (Giliomee 2003:164; Muller 1985:161). Soon after a fourth *maatschappij* arrived, of which Gerrit Maritz was the leader. Both Potgieter and Maritz were excluded from structures of governance, and they became very unhappy with Retief’s dictatorial style of leadership. The consequences of one historically influential disagreement between Potgieter and Retief are particularly relevant to defining the Afrikaner’s survival mentality. This, in turn, is crucial to grasp the significance of this chapter’s notion of singing of survival.

² This statistic is unsurprising, considering that the Voortrekkers had guns, both inside the laagers and with outriders on horseback, while the “barbarians” who attacked them generally had less efficient weapons and war tactics. The first recorded laager defence manoeuvre took place at Vegkop (Fight Hill) on 16 October 1837, when an estimated six thousand Ndebele attacked a group of sixty Voortrekkers. Although the Ndebele lost the battle, they nevertheless managed to steal cattle that had been grazing outside the encampment. In an act of retribution, the Boer commando under the leadership of Hendrik Potgieter attacked the Ndebele some months later, looting six thousand cattle (De Klerk 1975:37; Muller 1986:161). One year after Vegkop, Potgieter led another commando that attacked the Ndebele at Mosega, managing to conquer their territory and displace their leader Mzilikazi.

Potgieter was a headstrong patriarch who wanted to settle in the Transvaal Highveld, whereas Retief favoured negotiations with the Zulu King, Dingane ka Senzangakhona (hereafter Dingane), to negotiate territory for a Boer homeland in Natal (De Klerk 1975:38; Giliomee 2003:164; Muller 1985:162). On a reconnaissance voyage to meet Dingane at uMgungundlovu, Retief learned that the desired land had already been ceded to an English missionary. After invoking the Christian bible to threaten the Zulus with a similar fate as had befallen the Ndebele, Retief reached an agreement with Dingane for future negotiations, on condition that the Voortrekkers reclaimed and returned cattle stolen from Dingane by the Tlokwa tribe (De Klerk 1975:38; Giliomee 2003:164; Muller 1985:163).

Without any official agreement having been reached, an assembly of Voortrekker parties crossed the Drakensburg mountains from the Transorangia and set up various encampments at several places along the upper Tugela river (De Klerk 1975:39; Giliomee 2003:165). Retief managed to locate Dingane's stolen cattle, and along with his hundred-man strong commando returned the cattle to uMgungundlovu. At the same time he presented the illiterate Dingane with a treaty. Historians differ over whether Dingane did in fact sign this document. De Klerk (1975:39) and Muller (1985:164) write that there were three days of negotiations, after which Dingane endorsed the secession of land between the Tugela and the Mzimvubu (including Port Natal) to the Voortrekkers. Retief and his commando were then tricked into attending a celebration at uMgungundlovu, which included beer and dancing, and ended with them being ambushed and massacred by the Zulus.³ Giliomee (2003:165) writes that Dingane persuaded Retief's commando to leave their weapons outside the chief's village for the signing ceremony, and that they were clubbed to death before any official agreement was made.

The various groups who had already crossed the Drakensburg mountains and formed laagers in the Natal plains were unaware of Dingane's actions. Early on the morning of 17 February 1838, the Zulus attacked various laagers between Blaauwkrantz and Moordspruit. The result was devastating to the Voortrekker side, who lost three hundred "white" trekkers and two hundred and fifty "coloured" servants, as well some twenty thousand cattle (De Klerk 1975:40-1; Giliomee 2003:165; Muller 1985:165).⁴

³ Later on this chapter will show how the final words of the apartheid national anthem were placed on an illuminated cenotaph that represents Retief's symbolic grave, at the centre of the Voortrekker Monument.

⁴ When Potgieter heard about Dingane's actions he returned from the Highveld (as did Pieter Uys), and helped the Natal Voortrekkers establish a commando that could strike back at Dingane and recover the lost cattle. This punitive expedition failed due to an ambush at Italeni and is still known as the Commando of Flight (*Vlugkommando*). As a consequence another Voortrekker leader, Pieter Uys, was killed along with his son, Dirkie (De Klerk 1975:41; Giliomee 2003:165; Muller 1985:165). Potgieter once again left Natal to return to the Highveld.

Surprisingly, the nearly defeated Natal Voortrekkers managed to avoid an onrush of subsequent attacks, although admittedly having guns and slaves could have contributed to their survival:

[T]hey soon set about ploughing, sowing and doing all the things which indicated an intention to remain. They even drafted a constitution for the new Republic of Natalia, and founded its capital, naming it Pietermaritzburg: after the leaders Pieter Retief and Gert Maritz. Most remarkably, even while Dingane, with two great victories to his credit, had every reason to be not merely defiant but dominant, the site for the capital of the Republic of Natalia was chosen. Plots were offered to the Trekkers (De Klerk 1975:42).

Nevertheless, as far as they were concerned, the landscape surrounding them still contained the threat of extinction. This was confirmed in August 1838, when an army of ten thousand Zulu impis attacked a wagon fortress on the Bushmans river, consisting mainly of women and children, and also in September when another Voortrekker leader, Gert Maritz, died from an unexpected illness (De Klerk 1975:42; Giliomee 2003:165; Muller 1985:165-6). Into this dystopian environment another Afrikaner leader, Andries Pretorius, arrived from Graaff-Reinet in the British controlled Cape with something resembling messianic deliverance.

Pretorius arrived in Natal on 22 November 1838, together with sixty men and a bronze canon (De Klerk 1975:42; Giliomee 2003:165; Muller 1985:166). He was a magnetic figure, as well as an excellent war strategist, and was elected Commandant-General within three days. A commando of four hundred and seventy men with fifty-seven ox wagons moved steadily towards uMgungundlovu, in anticipation of a showdown with Dingane's army.⁵ The commando appears to have demonstrated extraordinary piety, drawing into a defensive laager each night and meeting for prayers. The musicologist Jan Bouws reminds us that music played a central role in these gatherings:

After the tragic events in Natal it was only natural that merry songs, dances and other fun almost disappeared from the lives of the survivors. The stricken people turned to their psalms and hymns for consolation and support. Their religious services became more important than ever before, and even when the enemy was near, they would gather for evening prayers. Their lights had to be extinguished, the sentries could not light their pipes, as the enemy lurking in the dark might see them, but still their hymns would resound over the veld, and the listening Zulus would wonder at the queer war cries of the white people (Bouws 1949:7).

⁵ Exact figures are four hundred and sixty-eight Trekkers, three Englishmen, and sixty "black" servants/conscripts (Giliomee 2003:166).

Pretorius advanced the idea that his commando should make a covenant, “and on 9 December and over the next few days the commando, led by Sarel Cilliers, made a vow that if God granted the men victory, they and their descendants would commemorate the day of the battle and would build a church” (Giliomee 2003:165). The commando finally alighted themselves in a bend of the Ncome river, where they drew up a laager that could withstand an assault from the Zulus.⁶ On 16 December an army of ten thousand Zulu impis attacked Pretorius’s commando. The Zulus were repelled, and the Voortrekkers managed to kill three thousand Zulu warriors, with the result that the Ncome turned red with their blood (De Klerk 1975:43; Giliomee 2003:165; Muller 1985:166). Consequently this battle has been dubbed *Die Slag van Bloedrivier* (The Massacre of Blood River, or otherwise The Battle of Blood River). There are obvious traces of Moses weaved into the accepted narrative account of this battle: Moses smiting the Egyptians, turning the Nile into a river of blood, and leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. This biblical analogy is strengthened by the Moses-like guidance of Sarel Cilliers, who prayed to the Abrahamic God and bargained for the survival of the Voortrekkers.⁷ Much has been made in twentieth century historiography, and even more in civic and religious discourse, of there not having been a single Voortrekker death at Bloedrivier.⁸ The landscape of Bloedrivier has held sway over the popular Afrikaner imagination, so that the image of the Voortrekkers sequestered inside their makeshift garrison became a cultural metaphor, a century and more later, for Afrikaner survival amidst threatening foreign surroundings.

Most of all, the Pretorius commando’s feat of survival is often understood as *deus ex machina*: an indication that God was on the side of the Voortrekkers, and that they had a predestined historical mission to accomplish. Giliomee (2003:165) writes that, even though the Voortrekker victory at Bloedrivier “secured only a temporary beachhead”, Afrikaner nationalists from a century later remodelled it into a decisive massacre “that ‘saved’ the trek and secured the victory of Christianity and ‘civilisation’.”⁹ De Klerk (1975:44-6) adds that further military expeditions were made immediately subsequent to Bloedrivier, which aimed to crush Dingane and thereby “ensure the survival of the embryonic Voortrekker state”. These efforts subdued the Zulu threat for a generation at most:

⁶ The Ncome is also called the Buffalo, or simply Blood River.

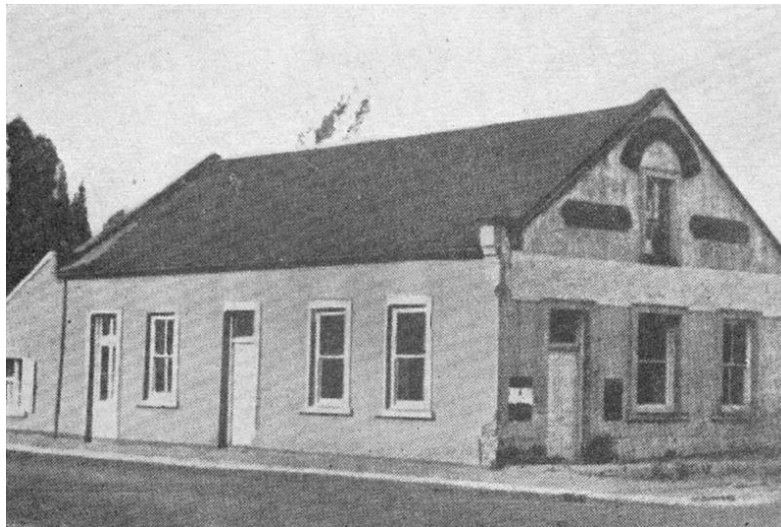
⁷ De Klerk (1975:43) calls Sarel Cilliers “the old Prophet of the Trek”. Benningfield (2006:30) writes that, because it spoke to the political ambitions of Afrikaner nationalists in the twentieth century, the entire Great Trek has come to be viewed as a biblical narrative “of a ‘Chosen People’ let through the desert into the land of milk and honey”.

⁸ There were three light injuries, sustained by outriders in the commando (De Klerk 1975:43).

⁹ Recounting that Pretorius’s commando found strength in singing Psalm 38 on the night of 15 December, the musicologist Jan Bouws (1949:7) also describes the Massacre of Bloedrivier as “the battle which decided the fate of European civilisation in South Africa”.

That Blood River and what followed put an end to Zulu power once and for all [...] is a myth. The force which finally broke the Zulu as a nation of exceptional militancy was the imperial English (De Klerk 1975:46).

This chapter's discussion of the apartheid national anthem and the Voortrekker Monument makes patent how an entirely different "Afrikaner" point of view developed between 1838 and 1938 to inform the politics and culture of Afrikaner nationalism. Although an intimate *Geloftekerk* (Church of the Covenant) was constructed in Pietermaritzburg during the 1840s, the religious covenant made by Pretorius's select commando was exploited a century later for nationalistic purposes. Thus the authentic *Geloftekerk* and what it symbolised was completely overshadowed by the construction of a much more imposing monument: a national "Voortrekker Monument" that was erected, as if it were a logical fulfilment of the promise made a century earlier at Bloedrivier, to build a church. That the Voortrekker Monument was built in Pretoria, which is hundreds of kilometres removed from Bloedrivier's site, and was completed one hundred and eleven years after the promise made by Cilliers, should make it obvious that the original covenant had either initially been ignored, or was now being manipulated dishonestly. The anxieties over survival experienced by a few hundred Voortrekkers (and their slaves) in the incipient Republic of Natalia were "remembered", re-imagined, and made applicable to millions of later South Africans, who lived their lives in a completely different epoch and on a vastly altered landscape.



The Geloftekerk was erected in Pietermaritzburg during the 1840s
This photograph was taken in 1910 by an anonymous person
<www.af.wikipedia.org>

Gobbet 24: It's a matter of survival, Charlie

"You can't hold me responsible for everything happening in the country."

"Of course I hold you responsible. You and every White in the country."

"Now you're being unreasonable, Charlie. I inherited this situation exactly as you did. Neither of us can be blamed for what our forefathers did."

"That's not what I'm blaming you for. What gets me is that history didn't teach you anything at all."

"My history provided me with the means to survive in this land!"

"That's what you think. All your history taught you was to mistrust others. You never learned to share anything or to live with others. If things got difficult you loaded your wagon and trekked away. Otherwise you took aim over the Bible and killed whatever came your way. Out in the open you formed a laager. And when you wanted more land you took it. With or without the pretext of a 'contract'."

"It's a matter of survival, Charlie. I'm not trying to defend the methods of history. But what else could my people have done to survive?"

"Do you expect me to approve of survival achieved at the expense of others?"

"You're just generalising as usual, Charlie."

"Jesus, Martin: your people started as pioneers. I respect them for it. But that you still haven't shaken off the frontier mentality – there's the rub."

"What do you so glibly call a 'frontier mentality'?"

"Protecting your identity so frantically. My God, the very phrase gives me a cramp in the arse. Because the only way you've managed to maintain your identity was by fucking around my people."

André Brink (1978:30 & 432)

Rumours of Rain

Explanatory Note:

This confrontation about how survival concerns shaped Afrikaner history takes place between Brink's characters Martin Mynhardt and Charlie Mofokeng. Brink relays their argument with one another in two separate fragments which Mynhardt remembers at the bookends of Brink's novel. I have incorporated these two fragments into one composite dialogue.

Gobbet 25: We will live, we will die, we for you South Africa

Uit die blou van onse hemel,
Uit die diepte van ons see,
Oor ons ewige gebergtes
Waar die kranse antwoord gee.
Deur ons vêr verlate vlaktes
Met die kreun van ossewa.
Ruis die stem van ons geliefde,
Van ons land Suid-Afrika.
Ons sal antwoord op jou roepstem,
Ons sal offer wat jy vra:
Ons sal lewe, ons sal sterwe,
Ons vir jou Suid-Afrika.

Lyrics by C.J. Langenhoven (1918) and music by M.L. de Villiers (1921)

“Die Stem van Suid-Afrika”

Literal English translation:

Out of the blue of our sky,
Out of the depth of our sea,
Over our eternal mountains
Where the rock faces give answer.
Through our desolate plains
With the creaking of ox wagon.
The voice of our loved one murmurs,
Of our country South Africa.
We will answer your calling-voice,
We will sacrifice what you ask.
We will live, we will die,
We for you South Africa.

Explanatory note:

There are three more verses of lyrics to this Afrikaner anthem. However, they were/are rarely performed and therefore were/are not universally known.

1938: God Save “Die Stem”

1938 was an election year in South Africa. Apart from concerns about possible loyalties in a tense and still unfolding European political scene, South Africa’s almost exclusively “white” electorate also tested its loyalties to the British Crown at the ballot box (Paton 1964:280-3). The coalition government of Prime Minister J.B.M. Hertzog was sympathetic to South Africa’s status as a dominion of the British Empire.¹⁰ Within parliament, though, a group who had broken away from the National Party, and was called the Purified National Party, made increasing calls for South Africa to distance itself from Great Britain. This position was informed most especially by an anticipation that there would soon be a war in Europe.

Under D.F. Malan’s guidance, this fringe group of Purified Nationalists made modest advances in the national election, winning an extra seven seats out of the hundred and fifty three available in the House of Assembly, thus putting their total at a mere twenty seven (Muller 1985:440). They nevertheless positioned themselves as the natural home and political mouthpiece of Afrikaners, meaning that although their electoral advances were modest, these paled when measured against their cultural victories, which were galvanised by popular sentiments over the centenary celebrations of Afrikanerdom’s great migration into the South African interior. Most notable of all was Malan’s opportunism for setting in motion a debate in parliament about the volatile issue of a uniquely South African national anthem.

There were two anthem crises in 1938, caused respectively by Prime Minister Hertzog and by the Minister of Defence, Oswald Pirow (Paton 1965:280-1). At the opening of parliament in February 1938, Hertzog had provocatively arranged for “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” to be played along with the customary anthem “God Save the King” (Muller 1985:439). When confronted with this in parliament, he caused consternation by stating that “God Save the King” had never been regarded as South Africa’s national anthem, but that “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” might still one day be (Paton 1965:280). This blunder apparently sent Jan Smuts – then deputy-Prime Minister – fleeing from the House. When asked by other cabinet members to protest, he apparently replied, “My position with the Prime Minister is too delicate. Go and see him yourself” (Blackwell, in Paton 1965:280). This great statesman’s timorous reaction to something as commonplace as a song is an indication of just how delicate the coalition between Hertzog and Smuts was.

¹⁰ The coalition consisted of the National Party, under Hertzog’s leadership, and the South African Party, under Jan Smuts’s leadership. Together these two parties were called the United Party.

As far away as Canada, the *Vancouver Sun* for 26 March 1938 reported on this story with the heading “National anthem row started by Premier Hertzog”. The cabinet’s English contingent rejected Hertzog’s arguments about the respective status of each of the two anthems, and urged him to back down immediately. In a modified statement he then said that “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” was perhaps regarded by Afrikaners as their own national anthem, but that “as long as the King was king of South Africa and ‘God Save the King’ remained an invocation to the Almighty, it would be played and sung when His Majesty’s representatives were present” (*Vancouver Sun*, 26 March).

That promise was broken just more than a month later with the Union Day celebrations. This time Oswald Pirow (1957:203) decided to omit “God Save the King” from the national festivities, and rather to introduce “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” as a march for military parades, together with short fractions of the anthem used for military salutes. Hertzog insisted once again that “God Save the King” was not the national anthem, but rather a prayer (Pirow 1957:203). This prompted one of the members of Hertzog’s cabinet, Robert Stuttaford, to resign in protest at the Prime Minister’s actions. Once again the fracas was reported on throughout the British Empire, as the following extract from an article, “South African controversy on national anthem”, in the *Glasgow Herald* of 3 June 1938 demonstrates:

The nation-wide storm on the national anthem issue is expected to die down as a result of a declaration by the Cabinet this afternoon giving equal status to “God Save the King” and “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” (the voice of South Africa), the Afrikaans anthem.

Earlier in the day Mr. R[obert] Stuttaford, minister of the Interior and of Public Health informed Reuter that he had tendered his resignation. He withdrew it, however, after the Cabinet’s statement, with which he expressed satisfaction, had been issued.

The statement [...] lays down that on all formal occasions when either of the anthems is played the other will also be played.

It is notable for its declaration that there is at present no official National Anthem for the Union.

Stuttaford’s withdrawal of his resignation averted any collapse of the fragile coalition. Paton (1965:284) writes of fears that the coalition “was on the point of breaking up over these repeated anthem troubles,” so that even something as banal as a fanfare of trumpets accidentally drowning out “God Save the King” at parliament caused unnecessary conflict. The most interesting occurrence of all is, however, that Prime Minister Hertzog was consistently playing into the expectations and machinations of D.F. Malan’s Purified National Party, by aligning himself in favour of recognising “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” as an anthem. Yet, after Hertzog put this anthem on the agenda he suddenly had to backtrack, effectively distancing himself from both sides of the argument.

Malan stepped into this void, and utilised this divisive anthem effectively against Hertzog's cabinet. Paton points out how Hertzog's conduct revealed his stubborn and short-sighted leadership:

So the crisis passed, but it revealed again the deep internal strains to which this fusion between English- and Afrikaans-speaking people was being subjected. It revealed something else too, the fact that Smuts, although second to the Prime Minister and acknowledged leader of the stronger section of the United Party, was no longer a member of the inner Cabinet. Hertzog said he had consulted colleagues, but Smuts was not one of them. Crafford the biographer argues that the Smuts of this time was keeping the United Party together by his genius for compromise, while Blackwell declares that he was being ignored. Pirow gives a picture of a Smuts forced to capitulate to a more determined man. The truth seems to be all these judgements compounded, namely that Smuts was willing to endure almost anything to avoid a break in the party (Paton 1965:281)

Smuts too had his eyes set on the possibility of war, and in the event of this occurrence wanted South Africa to fight at Britain's side (rather than with Germany). Hertzog and Malan had originally belonged to the same National Party before Smuts masterminded a coalition between himself and Hertzog, to try and stem the tide of conservatism entering mainstream South African politics (Paton 1965:192-203). Through the political fusion of English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking "whites", who were then still considered to be separate "races", a united "white" political front was created in South Africa.¹¹

Malan refused to participate in this charade of a union of souls. His ambitions over who could legitimately be called Afrikaners were more restricted and also incompatible with the political interests of the ruling English "oppressors". As his faction of Purified Nationalists gained prominence, they were seen by some to represent "a grave threat to the peaceful development of South Africa", precisely because they always "put the welfare and survival of the Afrikaner people above any consideration of liberty and justice" (Paton 1965:182). Throughout the 1930s, Malan exploited anxieties about the persecutions and genocide suffered by Afrikaans-speakers during the Anglo Boer War. He even managed, in the anthem debates that he created, to persuade Hertzog's Anglophile government to withdraw from festivities related to a planned Monument of the volk, because their official presence there would necessitate the playing of the British anthem "God Save the King". It was considered that this would be a grave insult to Afrikaners, who had painful memories of being eradicated systematically during the War. An understandable anti-British sentiment from a generation before was thus continued, but these traumas were also abused by conflating them with the larger history of the Great Trek migration and settlement.

¹¹ In the parlance of that time, a broader and more cosmopolitan South Africanism inspired many to conceive of the sobriquet "Afrikaner" in a new and emergent way, as including "whites" regardless of their language preference and racial ("English" as opposed to "Dutch"/"Afrikaner") background (Moodie 1975:210).

As Giliomee (2003:432) explains, Malan and the Purified Nationalists exploited the centenary to drive home a message “that the Afrikaners as a people had had to fight their own battles for survival and could still rely only on themselves”. During this time, he proposed in parliament a legislative agenda that would put into place many apartheid-style objectives:

Separate residential areas for whites and non-whites in urban areas, separate spheres of employment as far as possible, limitation of certain occupations to whites, separate representation of coloured voters, and legislation against mixed marriages and employment of whites by non-whites (Paton 1965:281).

However, setting up the possibility of a frenetic debate about the national anthem was by far the most effective way to remind Afrikaners of their historical struggle for survival. In parliament, this debate ran intermittently for more than a month, from 16 July until 25 August. Although Malan’s motion was eventually rejected, the explosiveness of the whole anthem debate is underscored by the fact that its transcriptions add up to four hundred columns, or roughly one tenth, of the year’s parliamentary proceedings.¹² It culminated in a parliamentary sitting that ran through the night of 24 August and ended after a vote the following morning at 6:25am (Hansard 1938:1649). The debate centred around three critical perspectives:

1. The Purified National Party’s (and Malan’s) insistence on proclaiming the popular Afrikaner anthem “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” as the only legitimate anthem, in opposition to British rule. This would no doubt promote the twin projects of Afrikaner nationalism and republicanism, but also raise the cultural status of Afrikaners who, through the hegemonic oppression of British rule, had come to feel like second-class citizens in South Africa when compared to their English-speaking countrymen.
2. The ruling United Party’s insistence on an appeasement in which “God Save the King” would remain in use on official occasions, as a prayer that invoked the Almighty (Hertzog’s words), while “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” could also be performed on these occasions as an ancillary song, although definitely not an official anthem. This position was aimed at keeping the United Party’s fragile coalition of English- and Afrikaans-speakers aligned with one another.

¹² This statistic was gathered by means of a manual search through the Hansard (parliament’s record) of 1938.

3. The English Dominion Party's insistence on proclaiming "God Save the King" as the only legitimate South African national anthem, in deference not only to the authority of God, but also that of the British King.

Malan timed the debate successfully. The United Party's factional cabinet was already disintegrating, and the anthem debate drove them further apart.¹³ The motion that Malan put forward in parliament on 26 July 1938 called for the introduction of "only one authentically South African and officially recognised national anthem". The motion stated that any course of action or statement by the cabinet on the anthem be interpreted as a debasement of South Africa's independence and national pride (Hansard 1938:88). An indigenous anthem, Malan argued, is one of the symbols of autonomous national identity, even more important than a national flag, because it can be sung by the masses.¹⁴

[A]s daar 'n beroep op die vaderlandsliefde van die volk gedoen word, dan doen ons dit deur die vlag, en die volk wat sy onafhanklikheid en sy vryheid op prys stel, moet daarop antwoord gee deur sy eie vaderlandsliewende volkslied (Hansard 1938:89).

[English translation]

If an appeal to patriotic love is made to the volk, then we do it by means of the flag, and the volk that values its independence and freedom, needs to answer that call by means of an own fatherland-loving anthem.

Accepting "God Save the King" as South Africa's only anthem would be an intolerable acknowledgement of inferiority among the brotherhood of nations, showing others that South Africa was England's "shoe-shine boy" (Hansard 1938:90). Malan mentioned Argentina, America, Canada and Australia as examples of countries who replaced the anthems of their countries of origin with new ones. He also invoked an image of transplanted cultural growth that resembles Van den Heever's *die Afrikaanse Gedagte*: "White" culture and civilisation is considered sufficiently removed in Africa from its European origins, so that it now begins to take root on African soil (Hansard 1938:91). Hence it is necessary for racial unity among South Africa's two "white" races to rid the country of its allegiance to British cultural symbols, in favour of incipient and indigenised Afrikaner cultural symbols.

¹³ Only two weeks after the anthem debate, two of Hertzog's ministers, J.H. Hofmeyr and F.C. Sturrock, resigned in protest at the unfit appointment of A.P. Fourie as one of four senators who represented the political interests of the "Coloured" races (Muller 1985:440; Paton 1965:285). These four positions, one for each South African province, had been created two years earlier as a compromise for the removal of the "Cape franchise", one of apartheid's foundational laws, which took away the rights of any "non-whites" already registered as voters in the Cape Province.

¹⁴ South Africa first flew its own flag in 1928.

One of Malan's major objections against any further official use of "God Save the King" was based on Hertzog's premise that it was actually a prayer and not an anthem. Why would the government sanction the playing of a prayer in indecent places like cinemas where, in the words of Malan, "the profane shenanigans of Mickey Mouse" were the order of the day? Malan was himself a man of the cloth, and he clearly could not reconcile himself with any improper use of an anthem that masqueraded as a prayer (Hansard 1938:97).¹⁵ This was, however, also a back-handed way of trying to show that the government of the day had no respect for the country's national symbols. Malan had no real interest in defending the status or proper use of "God Save the King". He simply wanted to show that Hertzog's cabinet had done a thoroughly botched job at handling the anthem issue.

Malan demonstrated Hertzog's own behind-the-scenes cabinet dealings to try and get "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika" accepted as the only South African national anthem (Hansard 1938:93). He bemoaned Hertzog's and Pirow's capitulation to anglophiles in the cabinet, who all felt that South Africa's English-speaking population were not ready to accept "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika" as their own anthem. The scandalous dilly-dallying of the government was put to shame, Malan explained, by the hard work of Afrikaner cultural organisations. They were far ahead of the government in trying to secure an anthem that suited "both white races", and they had long already suggested "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika" as an anthem.¹⁶

Most of all, the trajectory of Malan's parliamentary speech aimed at an overriding concern that "God Save the King" should not be played at any of the Great Trek centenary festivities; and most especially not at the cornerstone-laying of the Voortrekker Monument just outside Pretoria. This solemn occasion would be of tremendous importance for Afrikaners, and because of its political consequences, also affect all other South Africans throughout the twentieth century. Malan spoke of the planned ceremonies at Monumentkoppie on 16 December 1938 as both religious and national observances (Hansard 1938:104). Even were the Governor-General (who represented the King in South Africa) to attend the centenary activities, Malan insisted that a sensitivity to Afrikaner history should legitimate the replacement of "God Save the King" with "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika" as anthem (Hansard 1938:103-5). This very uncomfortable

¹⁵ Malan was disingenuous in exploiting the fact that Hertzog had described "God Save the King" as a prayer instead of an anthem. "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika" also has religious content in its lyrics. Langenhoven composed a fourth verse of overtly religious text at a later date than the previous three, after a reader of *Die Burger* wrote in to complain that an "Afrikaner" anthem should give some kind of reflection that they are a God-fearing people (Bothma 1986:3).

¹⁶ Among these were two *volksliedwedstryde* (anthem competitions) hosted by the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge (F.A.K.) in 1933 and 1934, where the well-known English-speaking music professor Percival Kirby served as one of the adjudicators (Bothma 1986:4, 11-3, 23). In the absence of any other suitable song entries in the competitions, the F.A.K. decided at a congress in December 1934 to redouble their efforts in lobbying for the acceptance of "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika" as an anthem (Bothma 1986:24).

precondition led to Prime Minister Hertzog, who was himself considered the father of modern Afrikanerdom, staying away from the centenary celebrations completely. Hertzog was invited, but would not go unless the Governor-General was also invited (Giliomee 2003:433). It was not an unreasonable request when one considers that the government was going to foot a considerable portion of the planned Voortrekker Monument's costs. Hertzog's ultimatum was ignored. He did not yet realise this, but he was no longer the spokesperson for Afrikaner political and cultural interests (De Klerk 1975:118).

While Hertzog's political programme signalled the beginning of discriminatory legislation meant to protect "white" South Africans against the downfall of Western civilisation, he lost touch with popular sentiments among Afrikaners by advocating for a comprehensive "white" national identity that did not ostracise English-speakers. Marq de Villiers (1987:275) suggests that subsequent governments, even though they subscribed to "Hertzog's elevation of ["white"] survival into a Christian virtue", neglected to translate this already inclusive gesture into "a larger and colour-blind national identity" because they failed to understand that the Christian virtue of *generosity* could help ensure survival. Malan's interpretation of survival was to mobilise Afrikaners in pursuit of a monistic idea that their continued existence could only be ensured through tribal cohesion (De Villiers 1987:279). An obsessive desire to achieve survival through separate development thus instigated the apartheid ideology. The remainder of this chapter examines how "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika" was used to communicate and validate this desire.

1938: Monumentkoppie

The Afrikaner novelist Elsa Joubert (2005:94-155) has documented her own experiences of the Great Trek centenary celebrations in her memoir *'n Wonderlike Geweld* (A Wonderful Violence).¹⁷ As its title suggests, this narrative is at times suffused with eroticised descriptions of violence, particularly fascist images of various gatherings and militaristic rallies of a youth movement called the Voortrekkers, occasions at which songs like "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika" and the "Vlaglied" were usually sung (Joubert 2005:110). These Voortrekkers were not the original frontiersmen, but rather a twentieth century movement that was modelled on Baden-Powell's boy and girl scouts and on Germany's Hitlerjugend (Joubert 2005:97).¹⁸

¹⁷ Annemie Stimie (2012:93) first highlighted the importance of Joubert's memoirs for musicologists. In its descriptions of music and culture she has discerned a cultural shift, reflected in Afrikaner culture at large, where cosmopolitanism gradually gave away to the monistic worldview of Afrikaner nationalism.

¹⁸ Joubert (2005:108) even writes of a young South African boy of German heritage who attended Hitlerjugend meetings in the Western Cape.

Joubert's memoir describes her intellectual and sexual awakening as a series of events running coterminous with the patriarchal dawn of Afrikanerdom's newfound political voice. Her youthful obsession with the politics of purified nationalism emerges as dependent on memorialising "a century of wrong" – a phrase borrowed from the eponymous Reitz tract, quoted from in Gobbet 30 – committed by the British Empire unto Afrikaners. Specifically, she mourns the deaths of Afrikaner mothers and children inside concentration camps, and is therefore ashamed when her Anglophile mother disrespects these atrocities by eating chocolate on a tour through the Boer War Museum in Bloemfontein (Joubert 2005:116). Of further importance to her identity's continuing purification is her music lessons, with a German violin teacher who introduces her to Wagner's music (Joubert 2005:102-6). After falling in love with him, and also with a number of other boys, she has Wagnerian fantasies of a purified female identity, up to a narrative culmination where she imagines herself as Brünnhilde on a funeral pyre. The following passage relays her account of the duplicate Bloedrivier centenary celebrations at Monumentkoppie just outside Pretoria, where the Voortrekker Monument would eventually be built:

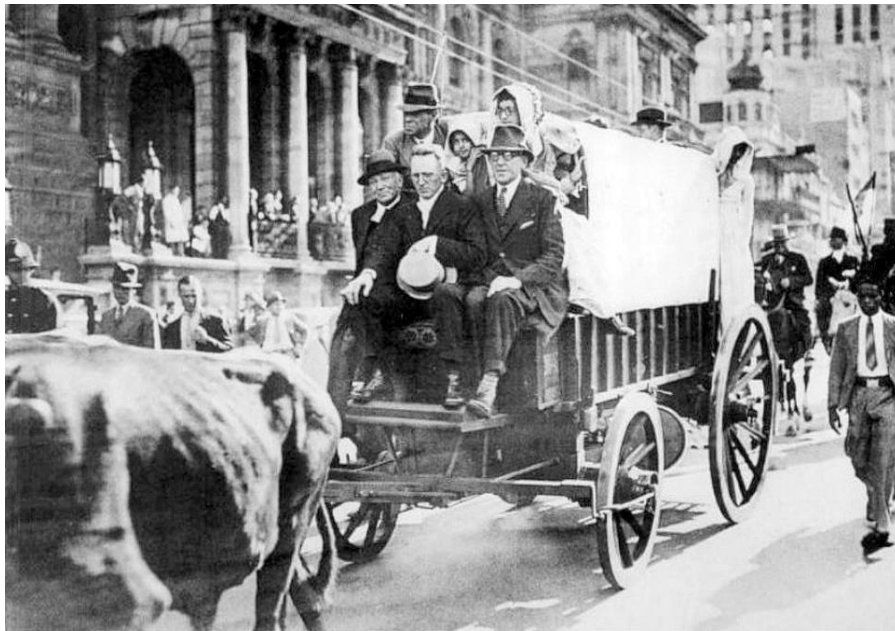
Die mense om ons en langs ons is stil, ons loop met lig wat die heuwels soos 'n lang, brandende oer-vuurspoegende, segmentbewegende slang uitseil. [...] Daar is gerugte dat 'n republiek uitgeroep gaan word. In die donker voor ons [...] stoot 'n nuwe rooi gloed teen die lug op, ons hoor al hoe duideliker die geknetter soos geweervuur; die vlagpale, tente, mense se gesigte verskyn uit die donkerte met 'n onnatuurlike lig oor hulle. Dis die vreugdevuur, die brandstapel, gaan dit deur my gedagtes, ons struikel voort tot ons kom by 'n groot oop ruimte op die feesterrein waar 'n reuse-vuur brand [...] by die brandstapel waarin Siegfried verteer word, ruk Brünnhilde haar perd om en storm die vuur binne, ek is Brünnhilde, ek is al digterby die brandstapel, ek moet gooi [...] my armbeweging is swak, my fakkel val net naby genoeg dat die offisier dit met sy lang stok kan inhark en in die vuur stoot (Joubert 2005:153).

[English translation]

The people around us and next to us are quiet, we walk with light that sails over the hills like a long, burning, primal-fire spitting, segment-moving snake. [...] There are rumours that a republic will be proclaimed. In the dark in front of us [...] a new red glow pushes out against the sky, we hear the crackles more and more clearly, like gunfire; the flagpoles, tents, people's faces appear out of the dark covered in an unnatural light. It's the bonfire, the funeral pyre, are thoughts that cross my mind; we stumble ahead until we reach a great open space where a huge fire burns [...] on the funeral pyre that consumes Siegfried; I am Brünnhilde, I approach the funeral pyre more closely, I need to throw [...] my arm movement is weak, my torch falls just near enough for the officer to rake it in and push it into the fire with his long stick.

Joubert participated in the staging of a purified community. The images of light and the fascistic metaphor of gun-fire assert a *universalised* conformity for the hundreds of thousands of "Afrikaners" who participated in Monumentkoppie's inaugural ritual. Admittedly, adolescence is a difficult phase of

development marked by pronounced and debilitating fears of social discord, pain and the uncertainties that attend to anything that is “other” (Sennett 1970:22-48). The frightening thing to witness, though, is that adolescents were not the only Afrikaners reacting in this way during the celebrations. Most of the people involved in the memorialisation of the Great Trek and Bloedrivier showed traits of an adolescent enthusiasm unimpeded by, and also unaccommodating to, different political realities.



Re-enacting the Great Trek one century after it happened
Author unknown, Cape Town City Hall 1938 <www.flickr.com>

The Voortrekker centenary celebrations were structured around an “electrifying” symbolic trek, which involved the Great Trek’s re-enactment by nine ox wagons journeying from Cape Town, either to the authentic Bloedrivier site, or else to Pretoria where a duplicate and much bigger national commemoration was staged (Giliomee 2003:432; Grundlingh 2001:98). These treks “evoked indescribable emotion” and furthermore provoked “an upwelling of Afrikaner pride and sentiment such as South Africa had never known” (Paton 1979:25). The following outsider observation, reported by the liberal novelist and politician Alan Paton, gives an indication of the collective outpouring of a rapturous sentiment:¹⁹

¹⁹ Remarkably, Paton actually participated in the Voortrekker centenary festivities. At that stage of his life he was thirty five years old, and not yet famous for having written *Cry, the Beloved Country*, which was only published in February 1948. Paton (1979:25-6) demonstrated surprising sympathy with the cause of Afrikaner nationalism, first learning to speak the language fluently, and thereafter joining in on one of the wagon treks, flying the *Vierkleur* flag (South Africa’s version of the Confederacy flag) and growing a trademark Voortrekker beard.

The wagons were met in every village and town and city by men and women in Voortrekker dress. Prayers were said, meat and *boerewors* [Boer-sausage] were cooked over fires, nostalgic Afrikaner *liedjies* were sung. Old men and women would weep, and touch the tent of the wagon, its wooden frame and its wheels. Speeches were made of dedication and burning love, and history being what it was, many of these told of past British sins. [...] Small monuments, sometimes cairns of stones, rose all over South Africa to mark the passing of the wagons, but when one spoke of the Monument, it could mean only the massive tower that was to be built outside Pretoria (Paton 1965:299).

Grundlingh confirms this sentiment at greater historical remove:

It turned out to be an unprecedented cultural and political theatre: frenetic crowds dressed in period Voortrekker garb welcomed the procession as it approached the towns and cities. Streets were renamed after Voortrekker heroes. Men and women were moved to tears by the spectacle. Young people were married and couples christened their babies in the shade of the wagons (Grundlingh 2001:98).

Among the notable cultural phenomena of these treks were the rediscovery and popularisation of *braaivleis* – which was how Voortrekkers cooked their meat – and also the dissemination, to thousands of South Africans who had never heard it before, of the Afrikaner anthem “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” (Giliomee 2003:432; Paton 1965:299). Other serious musical items performed during these Afrikaner festivals include original and newly adopted *volksliedjies* (folks songs) from the 1937 FAK singing anthology, and the Dutch hymns “Dat’s Heeren Zeegen op U Daal” and “Prys den Heer met Blye Galmen” (Stimie 2010:94).²⁰ At Monumentkoppie’s festivities the *Eeufeeskoor* (Centenary Festival Choir) performed a badly rehearsed or technically incompetent version of Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” in Afrikaans translation, predominantly because English was an intolerable language to those commemorating *the century of wrong* (Stimie 2014:15).²¹ The then still emergent style of “Afrikaner jazz” known as *boeremusiek* provided a much more informal counterpoint to this Christian Afrikaner nationalist pageantry, up to the point that popular boeremusiek songs like “Suikerbossie” were seen to denigrate the solemnities (Froneman 2012:22-7).

Grundlingh (2001:98) writes that the celebrations were foremost informed by a conviction that Afrikaners were outsiders in their own country, that British imperial capitalism dominated them unjustly through a foreign political machine, and that an incredible amount of self-empowering uplift was needed in economic, political and cultural spheres. As a result there was a consistent ethnic mobilisation that stressed

²⁰ The acronym FAK is short for *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge* (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Associations). The FAK was responsible for organising the entire centenary celebration project.

²¹ Stimie played an SABC archive recording of this performance during her paper presentation, “Songs, Singing and Spaces: *Volksliedjies* in Nationalist Publications”, at the 2012 SASRIM conference in Pretoria.

the Voortrekker history as something virtuous – an Arcadian ideal called *Voortrekkerdeugde* – that could inspire Afrikaners to work “for their survival and for the future” (Grundlingh 2001:98).

16 December 1938 was the central festival day and also the centenary of Bloedrivier. Of the celebrations at Monumentkoppie in Pretoria, Paton gathered the following impression:

Next to its fervour, [the gathering’s] notable characteristic was its exclusiveness. The theme of every meeting was Afrikanerdom, its glory, its struggles, its griefs, its achievements. At one remarkable meeting the voice of Mr E.W. Douglass, K.C., descendant of the 1820 Settlers who had given Jacobus Uys a Bible when he set out on the Trek, and who was bringing a message of goodwill in English, was drowned out by the singing of “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika”. After the singing, a man in Voortrekker costume took over the microphone, and began to recite a patriotic verse. There was tumultuous applause, and above it, [E.G.] Jansen [the chairman of the organizing committee] could be heard saying in tones of great distress, “Ek is bedroef... ek is bedroef... vriende, ek is diep bedroef.” [I am distressed... I am distressed... friends, I am profoundly distressed.] His words were then drowned by the singing of another patriotic song, “Afrikaners, Landgenote” (Paton 1965:300).

It is clear from Paton’s description that Monumentkoppie’s rituals were exclusionary.²² Malan’s sustained campaign to divorce true “Afrikanerdom” from any concept that included English cultural markers had succeeded. Yet Malan was not in Pretoria at the Monumentkoppie festivities. Instead, he chose the more authentic environment of Bloedrivier’s original site to commemorate the battle’s centenary. There is a striking incongruity that the Bloedrivier commemoration was duplicated with primary festivities conducted on two important cultural sites. This chapter now moves on to a discussion of how Malan reinterpreted Bloedrivier’s meaning to suit the cultural and political needs of his own epoch. To do this, he utilised contemporaneous nationalist sentiments associated with “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” (whose lyrics date from 1918 and music from 1921) and projected them retroactively over a century, onto Bloedrivier. This necessarily invested the new Afrikaner anthem with this iconic battle’s “laager mentality”, and by extension also joined it to the Voortrekker Monument, which still needed to be built. When this national memorial was completed in 1949, thus usurping the Church of the Covenant that had been erected in Pietermaritzburg a century before, “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” was shackled onto apartheid, and finally also onto the prospect of an independent, Afrikaner-dominated Republic of South Africa when, in 1957, it became the country’s national anthem.

²² This was confirmed for Paton when he went to the communal showers on the first day of festivities. Someone asked him if he had seen how many people there were, which he had (there were more than two hundred thousand people): “He said to me, with the greatest affability, *Nou gaan ons die Engelse opdonder* [Now we are going to stuff up the English]” (Paton 1979:26). Paton was chilled by this exchange, lost interest in the good intentions of the festivities, and came to regard Afrikaner nationalism as something exclusive and destructive (Alexander 1995:155-6).

1938 (2038): Bloedrivier

The Afrikaners who celebrated the centenary at Bloedrivier erected around two thousand tents and a wagon “laager” during the three days that preceded the 16 December festivities. When Malan arrived at the train station nearest to this campsite, nearly a hundred men greeted him there, and carried him off the train while singing “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” (Korf 2010:378). He delivered a political speech at the Bloedrivier campsite on 16 December, in which he commemorated the battle from a century before, but in which he also sketched a utopian vision of Afrikanerdom a century ahead. This rhetorical device of postulating both a past and future narrative was in vogue, and many Afrikaners thinking in this manner referred to this phenomenon as *Die Pad van Suid-Afrika* (The Road of South Africa). Through an oblique reference to C.J. Langenhoven’s poem “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika”, several public commentators, including Malan, envisioned Afrikaners fulfilling a providential historical mission in response to a *roepstem* (calling voice) – which could either be the voice of God, or that of their nation; or sometimes both.

Malan’s speech was delivered in front of an enormous *Vierkleur* – the former flag of the defeated Transvaal Republic – and was so successful that it was eventually anthologised in published collections of his oratory (Korf 2010:378). It restated a speech he had delivered some weeks earlier, but which was now filled with poeticised imagery related to “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” and the Great Trek (Korf 2010:378). Generally, Malan convinced those assembled that they were standing on holy ground, at the temporal midpoint between 1838 and 2038. He explained that they needed to grasp how important the great resolution was that decided on their country’s destiny one century before, at Bloedrivier:

Daar is voorwaar geen geskikter plek en geen geskikter geleentheid om na daardie stem van u volk te luister nie. Op Bloedrivier se slagveld staan u op heilige grond. Dis hier waar die groot beslissing geval het oor Suid-Afrika se toekoms, oor die Christelike beskawing in ons land en oor die voortbestaan en die verantwoordelike magsposisie van die blanke ras. Dis hier waar die Voortrekker se menslike hart, se leeumoed, se onwrikbare geloof in sy God en in sy volk die duidelikste en kragtigste spreek tot die nageslag. Dis hier waar in die uur van doodsgevaar en sonder om dit self so te bedoel, u voorvaders voor die wêreld ’n aanskoulike beeld van hulself afgeteken het wat op die mees afdoende wyse die vurige laster van die eeu wat kom, beskaam.

Maar daar is grond waarop u staan wat nog heiliger is. U staan op die skeiding van twee eeue. Agter u rus u oog op die jaar 1838 as op ’n hoog uitstaande en alles beheersende bergtop in die bloue verte.

Voor u op die nog onbetrede Pad van Suid-Afrika lê daar ewe ver en dynsig-blou die jaar 2038. Agter u lê die spore van die Voortrekkers se ossewaens, diep en onuitwisbaar afgedruk oor die wyd uitliggende vlaktes en oor die grynse, draakagtige bergreekse van ons land se geskiedenis (Malan 1964:122).

[English translation]

Indeed, there is no more suitable place and no more suitable occasion to listen to that voice of your nation. On Blood River's battlefield you stand on hallowed ground. It is here where the great resolution on South Africa's future was decided, on the Christian civilisation in our land and on the survival and responsible authority of the white race. It is here where the Voortrekker's human heart, fortitude, and unshakable faith in his God and in his volk speak most clearly and powerfully to posterity. It is here, in the hour of mortal danger and without meaning it so themselves, that your forefathers created an image of themselves for the world that shames, in the most definitive way, the calumny of the coming century.

But there is ground on which you stand which is even holier still. You stand at the fulcrum of two centuries. Behind you your eyes rest on the year 1838 as on a high, dominant and all-encompassing mountaintop in the blue distance.

Ahead of you on the still uncharted Road of South Africa there lies equally distant and haze-blue the year 2038. Behind you lie the tracks of the Voortrekkers' ox wagons, carved deep and indelible over the wide prising plains and over the grimacing, dragon-like mountain ranges of our country's history.

In looking backwards, Malan thus also looked a century ahead, so as to compare the Arcadian moral stature of the Bloedrivier Voortrekkers with the possible corruptions that could befall Afrikanerdom in 2038, in the event that Afrikaners did not heed their historical mission.

Sal Suid-Afrika dan nog 'n witmansland wees? Sal daar dan nog 'n armblankevraagstuk wees wat hierdie ryk land van ons met vermoiede oë sal aanstaar as 'n ewige verwyd? Sal die Afrikanerdom dan een wees en vry? Sal u volk dan God nog ken? (Malan 1964:122).

[English translation]

Will South Africa then still be a white man's country? Will there then still be a poor white problem that will, as an eternal slur, stare with fatigued eyes at this rich country of ours? Will the Afrikanerdom then be one and free? Will your volk then still know God?

The points touched on here are intimately connected with the hoped for survival of a specific "white supremacist" paradigm or way of life. K. Anthony Appiah (1994:157-8) points out that when a specific generation wants to ensure the survival of its culture and society, it ignores the autonomy of future generations in the culture by imposing a particular restrictive worldview on them. This seems to me precisely what Malan did when he envisioned the Afrikaners of 2038.

Especially topical during 1938 was the so-called "poor white" question: a "Grapes of Wrath"-type dustbowl slump in the South African economy that had crippled the social standing of a sizeable proportion of the "white" population. Irrational fears associated with "white" poverty prompted large-scale social engineering with funded interventions from organisations such as the Carnegie Corporation. The Afrikaans writer M.E.R. (Maria Elizabeth Rothmann) was one of the eight social scientists commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation to do fieldwork throughout South Africa, and thereby collect data on the "poor

white” problem. As she understood this pressing issue, Malan was unnecessarily obsessed with it, and unfortunately, as chief editor of the Afrikaans daily *Die Burger*, his opinions carried exceptional weight, convincing many who read the newspaper that Afrikaners were becoming degenerate because they were no longer an agrarian people (M.E.R. 1972:236-7). Degeneration and miscegenation, it seems here, are interchangeable concepts. Moreover, M.E.R. explains that popular superstition laid the irrational blame for “white poverty” at the door of the British Empire, because of the concentration camps and scorched earth policy of the Anglo Boer War.²³

By touching on the problem of “white poverty”, Malan evoked a then widespread anxiety that forcing “whites” to compete with “blacks” and “Asians” in the marketplace, and furthermore allowing these races to live side by side in mixed urban environments, could eventually lead to interracial sexual relations and the intermingling of Afrikaner blood with other blood (Malan 1964:124-7). Owing to the promise their ancestors had made a century before, he explained that Afrikaners – in 1938 – had a sacred duty to continue the struggle for “white” cultural endurance and to secure Christian civilisation in Africa:

Hulle het die Stem van Suid-Afrika gehoor. Hulle het uit Gods hand hul taak ontvang. Hulle het hul antwoord gegee. Hulle het hul offers gebring. Daar is nog ’n blanke ras. Daar is ’n nuwe volk. Daar is ’n eie taal. Daar is ’n onsterflike vryheidsdrang. Daar is ’n onafwysbare volksbestemming (Malan 1964:122).

[English translation]

They heard the Voice of South Africa. They received their task from God. They gave their answer. They came with their offerings. There is still a white race. There is a new nation. There is an own language. There is an undying desire for freedom. There is an inescapable volk-destination.

Malan thus essentialised “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” into a song that stood for everything that the Voortrekker centenary of 1938 meant, both culturally and politically, to Afrikaners. His claim that the song’s spirit could be heard at Bloedrivier is a deliberate rhetorical anachronism, which uses music as the pivot between the distant past and the distant future. It is musical mythmaking that attributes the needs of the present to an imagined past, and projects certain desirable/undesirable outcomes onto the future. Although often remembered as a reasoned orator, Malan’s Bloedrivier homily imparts the symptomatic deliriousness that swept through Afrikanerdom during the Great Trek’s centenary commemoration.

²³ Today the Carnegie Corporation holds to a position in which it admits that its first study into South African poverty (there have been two subsequent studies) had the “completely unintended effect of being used, in later years, to help justify apartheid” (Gregorian 2007:5). Initiated in 1929, with findings published in 1934, the Study on White Poverty in South Africa served as a blueprint for apartheid’s destructive economic policies. One wonders how “unintended” it was, during the 1930s, not to launch a simultaneous study into South African “black poverty”.

Malan's narrative is littered with morbid fears of urbanisation and racial mixing. Through utopian and dystopian mythmaking, he described two idealised historical moments – 1838 and 2038 – as comparative social environments for his own economically pressured historical present – 1938. Both 1838 and 2038 function as utopias, and the latter as a further possible and dreaded dystopia. Imagining the former time period requires a creation myth, whereas the latter's envisioning depends on using the myth of telos.²⁴ The laager mentality was consolidated as a mindset in the 1930s, first because Bloedrivier could be accepted for its historic truth and therefore offered a model through which to think, but more importantly because the 1930s offered a worldview compatible with the mythological image of the laager.²⁵ Malan's 2038, on the other hand, can only be constructed by extrapolating a likely outcome based on present cultural concerns and activities. His main desire was to ensure "white" survival and supremacy, seeing that the 1930s presented him with an environment that did not guarantee this worldview.

Malan addressed the rampant urbanisation of "poor white" subsistence farmers extensively. He was troubled that, despite scientific proofs that there was nothing wrong with their intellect or spirit, they nevertheless migrated from farms into impoverished and inferior multiracial urban environments:

Maar dit neem nie weg nie dat hy [die armblanke] tog die beliggaming is van die armoede wat die Boereplaas in die agterbuurte van die stede stort. Omdat Afrikaner-armoede nie luidrigtige armoede is nie, maar swygende armoede, het u nie geweet hoe wyd en hoe diep dit was nie. Ná die ontdekkende lig van die Carnegie-ondersoek weet u dit nou (Malan 1964:125-6).

[English translation]

But it does not negate that he [the poor white] is after all the embodiment of the poverty that the Boer Farm dumps in the slums of the cities. Because Afrikaner poverty is not a boisterous poverty, but a mute poverty, you did not know the width and depth of it. After the revealing light shone by the Carnegie investigation you now know.

Employing the imagery of pioneer migration as a metaphor – imagery "remembered" and re-imagined in 1938 – Malan described "poor white" migrants as the Voortrekkers of his century. He complained that the poverty of so many "white" citizens (predominantly Afrikaners) in South Africa would endanger the *worstelstryd* (struggle for survival) to keep South Africa a "white" man's land (Malan 1964:126).

²⁴ Although these two myths are temporally distant from any present-day social order, and also temporally distant from one another (they are bookends of the Christian bible), each of them nevertheless "begin[s] in an analysis of the present, the society that confronts the mythmaker, and they [therefore] project this [contemporary] analysis in time and space" (Frye 1970:109). This means that the pressures and character of any contemporary worldview influence the ways in which humans extrapolate their ideas about mythological pasts and possible futures.

²⁵ Frye (1970:110) argues that myths of origin pass themselves off as fact because their roots are located in the same area as history. In contrast, the myth of the telos is entirely speculative.

Once again he invoked the image of a pastoral idyll, using the image of the *Boereplaas* (Boer Farm, or Homestead) to signal normative Arcadian ideals. However, because of an excessive drought during the 1930s, coupled with an international economic recession, this pastoral Eden had become an inhospitable landscape, thus forcing *Boere* (Afrikaner farmers) to move to the evil metropolis.²⁶

Die Afrikanertrekker in die stad moet lewe, en Suid-Afrika verwag van hom dat ten spyte van sy armoede hy moet lewe as 'n beskaafde witman.

En goddank, met al die diepste verlange van sy siel wil hy dit self ook nog. Die Afrikaner in hom weier nog altyd om homself te verloën.

Maar komende van die Boereplaas het hy [die armblanke] geen ander kanse nie as om te probeer lewe as 'n ongeskoolde of halfgeskoolde arbeider van sy handewerk (Malan 1964:126).

[English translation]

The Afrikanertrekker [Afrikaner migrant] in the city must live, and South Africa expects him to live as a civilised white man in spite of his poverty.

And thanks be to God that he wants to achieve just that, with all the deepest longing of his soul. The Afrikaner inside of him has always refused self-abandonment.

But coming from the Boer Farm he [the poor white] has no other chance than to try and live from manual labour as an unskilled or a semi-skilled worker.

The ultimate obsession in this discourse, which includes the anthem “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” and also the *Boereplaas*, is the protection of a pure “white” race. Speaking to his Afrikaner audience at the Bloedrivier site, Malan thanked God that Afrikaans-speaking “poor whites” would never endanger the purity of the “white” race, since he was sure that they would not allow social relations, forced onto them by poverty and urbanisation, to lead to immoral sexual relations: “So it still is with the trekker who has brought the righteous faith and the philosophy of the Boer Farm with him” (Malan 1964:127).²⁷

Malan’s sureness of a communal resistance to miscegenation is a kind of doublespeak, which also implicitly posits the danger of the thing it insists will never happen. It was threatening enough of an obsession for him to inaugurate a political programme that prohibited any form of racial interaction, by enforcing a Kuyperian ideal of segregated pure identities (discussed in Chapter Six) in the same way that God had scattered essentialised linguistic groups throughout the world after Babel Tower. If Afrikaners could only stay inside their laager, then they would survive any threat of miscegenation.

²⁶ Such a loss of equilibrium is reflected in the Afrikaans novels of this era. J.M. Coetzee (1988:82-3) points to a series of plot elements in the *plaasroman* (farm novel) – particularly those written by C.M. van den Heever – that pivot on an entire constellation of dystopian social factors.

²⁷ Original Afrikaans: “So is dit nog by die trekker wat die godsdienssin en die lewensuitkyk van die boereplaas met hom meebring het.” Even though this statement contradicted some of the findings made by the Carnegie Institute, Malan nevertheless insisted on the virtues of Afrikanerdom.

Gobbet 26: So God helped the Voortrekkers

There's a big painting in Mrs Kok's sitting room. One never gets tired of looking at it, and every time you look you see something different.

In the middle of the picture is a broad river. On one side of the river there's a lot of men and women with ox-wagons and bushy things that look like hedges. The men are wearing old-fashioned hats and the women kappies. In between the hedges the men are shooting with their guns.

On the other side of the river there's a hill and a whole crowd of near-naked kaffirs coming running over the hill. A lot of the kaffirs are already shot dead and they've fallen into the river. The river is red with blood.

Mrs Kok says it's the Battle of Blood River and the whites on the one side are Voortrekkers. Those people, the Voortrekkers, are all ours. They're Afrikaners who believed in God.

The Voortrekkers killed the kaffirs because they'd knocked the white children's heads to bits against the wagon wheels and dug out their insides with the spears.

When they murdered the kids like that, says Mrs Kok, the Voortrekkers prayed to God and promised Him that if He'd help them to kill the kaffirs they'd keep that day as a Sunday every year. So God helped the Voortrekkers, says Mrs Kok, and that's why the government are now putting all the kaffirs on one side. So that they won't kill the white kids again. If ever they find a kaffir in the streets after dark, says Mrs Kok, they put him in jail there and then.

Jeanne Goosen (2007:84-5)

We're Not All Like That

Gobbet 27: We must fight until the bitter end

Afrikaner Nationalism is well aware of the insecurity of its tenure. Even now, at the very height of its power, Minister Jan de Klerk, speaking at Brits on June 21, 1958, said, "We must fight until the bitter end and support Mr. Strijdom, just as an Aaron and Hur of old held the arms of Moses aloft." Mr. De Klerk, proud to be known as "Bloedrivier" de Klerk, is continually reminding Afrikaners that they dare not relax.

Alan Paton (1959:73)

Hope for South Africa

Explanatory Note:

Minister Jan de Klerk was the father of the last apartheid-era State President, F.W. de Klerk.

Laager mentality

J.M. Coetzee's (2009:5) novel *Summertime* describes how, historically, Afrikaners have retreated behind a fortress wall to ensure their own survival (an idea discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Two of this thesis). One can make an intimation from his metaphor that the survivalist mindset of Bloedrivier was applied expansively from 1938 onwards, so that Afrikaners especially, but also other "white" South Africans, were subsequently convinced that theirs was an existential struggle to protect Western Christian civilisation on the African continent. Afrikaners are not alone for having adopted and been defined by a strategy of survival. In his own explanations of the Afrikaner preoccupation with ethnic survival, Giliomee (1994:527) finds comparable situations in Israel, French Algeria and Yugoslavia. An example which has been instructive for my research is Northrop Frye's (1965:224) theorisation of the Canadian "garrison mentality", a cultural trope which is remarkably similar to South Africa's "laager".

Frye's "garrison mentality" was formulated in reaction to Canadian narratives (fiction and history) about a threatened outward-looking gaze: the worldviews of those who are anxious to endure hostile landscapes, and thus construct solipsistic bulwarks against any perceived physical and psychological threats. According to him, this protectionist sensibility was shaped specifically by frontier conditions, among small and isolated communities, who lead a precarious existence and are continuously endangered by the unfamiliarity of their surroundings (Frye 1965:224).

Jennifer Beningfield (2006:30) maintains that the Voortrekkers had to modulate their perception of the interior's wilderness from an impermeable landscape into one that allows those through who have secured the entitlement to inhabit it. She adds that this mutation was informed by an "anxiety of erasure". Marq de Villiers attributes a similar mental condition to the pioneer Voortrekkers:

Chaos seemed the normal condition, the people timid and afraid. In their vision of themselves, their role as pacifiers and civilisers took shape among the feelings of rejection and insecurity; one reinforced the other, their own tribal ethos reinforced by the tribal realities of the black peoples (De Villiers 1987:106).

Writers discussing the broader scope of Afrikaner history identify similar collective ordeals. Patterson (1957:294-5), for example, writes that an inherited and hyper-sensitive attitude of persecution has made modern Afrikaners profoundly anxious and pessimistic about the future. It appears therefore that an anxious mentality (the "laager mentality") was both foundational (in that it recognisably belongs to the

pioneer history of the Voortrekkers), and was adapted to twentieth century nationalistic contexts (where it functioned as justification for apartheid's attempts to avoid "black swamping").

An allegiance to authoritarianism is one of the possible schemes used to attempt an avoidance of the individual and social psychologies that collapse under the pressures of vulnerability. Just as happened with South Africa's pioneer Voortrekkers, similar Canadian communities took refuge in social structures like religion and the law, with the hopes of furthering their chances of survival (Frye 1965:224).

In a multi-authored book called *Cultural History of the Afrikaner*, the Stellenbosch-based psychologist R.W. Wilcocks listed the following characteristics as being typical of Afrikaners:

"[F]ondness for order; respect for law and moral precepts; devoutness in his life and in his general outlook; conservative disposition; a strong spirit of freedom and individualism; self-reliance; hospitality; a certain wanderlust or trekgees (not universal); isolationism and quarrelsomeness; a lack of co-operative spirit; self-sufficiency; and personal dignity" (Patterson 1957:278).

Although not formulated with specific reference to a frontier survival mentality, this catalogue nevertheless contains significant traces of the frontier – self-reliance, wanderlust, isolationism – and seems to suggest that Afrikaners embraced and maintained the conservatism that Frye associates with the garrison. What is of greater interest here is that frontier psychologies are sustained long past their expiry date, and reformulated into a cultural sensibility that informs the behaviour of frontier descendents when the conditions of the frontier no longer apply. In this respect, theorists subsequent to Frye, such as the novelist Margaret Atwood (2004:31), have used his explanation of an anxious frontier psychology as a framework on which to ground their own theories of a national literature. Turning the garrison into a myth of origin facilitated the imagination of a national identity, and from there it became possible to imagine the nation as a civilised centre with valuable cultural artefacts, instead of continuing to envision it as a colonial outpost whose cultural existence is inferior to metropolises like London, Paris and New York.

Before demonstrating how South Africans reshaped their survival anxieties into a sophisticated theory of culture, there are valuable insights to be gleaned from Atwood's discovery of how Canada's historical garrison mentality influenced both its literature and culture at large. In her book *Survival*, she locates her country's preoccupation with endurance in an extensive array of novels and poetry, and uses this literature to formulate an overarching idea of a national Canadian identity. A thematic disquiet over survival, expressed in the works of numerous authors, is thus theorised into a meta-narrative or overarching cultural consciousness that defines people who think of themselves as "Canadians". In this thesis I adopt a

similar approach with “Afrikaner” cultural – especially musical – artefacts, to pinpoint various expressions of survival anxiety, and to reveal salient forms of the survival fixation that defines “white” South Africans.

Atwood’s theory transforms the iconic image of the “garrison” into a descriptive nomenclature, or a metaphor, for the essentialised survival of a “Canadian” national identity. Bloedrivier’s “laager” has likewise undergone metonymic transferences that guarantee the perpetuation of survival anxieties in “white” South African cultural consciousness:

Within its protection men defended themselves against the impis of the Zulus or the Matebele. Today their descendants seek to retreat within a new *laager* made up of laws and restraints as if they could thereby be protected against the turmoil of a multi-racial society (Vatcher 1965:ii).

Another example of this transference is mentioned by De Villiers, when he explains how the Afrikaners had to assemble a citizen army in order to ensure their own survival during the Anglo Boer War:

The citizen army was a new phenomenon. It might disintegrate after victory, it might lack discipline, its argumentative ways might irritate leaders – but it could survive in the field where others could not. The Afrikaner gathered about him his long history of withdrawal, isolation and retreat, and found he had no more place to go but into the laager once more. A new kind of laager, as defensive and prickly as the old, but now internalised, the wagons converted to hatred, the guns to rage. The British policies of the next two years caused scars where they were hardest to heal, on the bruised psyche of a whole people (De Villiers 1987:230).

Formulating a survival mentality for either Afrikaners or Canadians involves purloining historical sensibilities associated with the “laager” and “garrison”, turning them into myths of origin, and then projecting their anxieties onto modernised national identities; just as Malan’s Bloedrivier speech does with 1838 and 2038. This means that survival becomes a cultural concern associated with the progress of “civilisation”, and oftentimes also with the search for some kind of collective teleology or utopia (Breytenbach 2009:92). Where the idea of survival was once a biological preoccupation, applicable to small and vulnerable settler communities in the South African interior, it was revitalised during the twentieth century into a cultural fixation that defined the identity of a reified ethno-national group. These kinds of cerebral exertions over survival seem especially true of nineteenth century panoramas; not only in how they were experienced and endured, but also in how subsequent generations have come to imagine these romantic terrains. Simultaneously, consideration should be given to the likelihood that pioneer settlers were not only terrified of difficult landscapes, but that they probably also viewed them as virginal territories that were there for the taking.

For the early Canadian explorers and settlers, survival concerns were formulated “[against] ‘hostile’ elements and/or natives”, and therefore entailed basic attempts at keeping alive (Atwood 2004:41). Furthermore, such preoccupations also had to do with crises and disasters like hurricanes and shipwrecks. But as history progressed, these natural and physical hindrances were replaced with cultural concerns; e.g. how French Canadians rallied under the banner *la survivance* once an English-speaking hegemony threatened their culture’s endurance. Chapter Three highlights the survival concerns that N.P. van Wyk Louw theorised for Afrikaners, in a strikingly similar manner, including how ideas about “white” endurance in South Africa synthesise biology and culture to inform this psychology of victimhood.

Although there are prominent commonalities between the Afrikaner and Canadian survival frameworks, such as a comparable desire to identify, theorise and reify a national cultural identity based on existing narratives of survival, there are nevertheless also remarkable differences in survival anxieties that distinguish these two (erstwhile) outposts of the British Empire from one another. Atwood (2004:8) explains that the most persistent Canadian obsession with survival has been related to threatening weather conditions. In contrast, the South African “laager mentality” was (and to a large extent still is) roused more immediately by concerns over the presence of “black” human beings in the surrounding landscape. The autocratic restrictions placed on the movements and interactions of “black” people during apartheid demonstrate how closely connected the *swart gevaar* (“black menace”) was to the perceived survival of Afrikaners, meaning that the boundaries of the “white laager” needed to be made impermeable.

Afrikaners seem to have understood (and to continue to understand) their position in more vulnerable ways than Atwood’s Canadians. They mythologised Bloedrivier’s “laager” into the noble origin of a bourgeois cultural identity. However, this survivalist identity has already waxed and waned, and because of the morally damning history of “black” oppression in South Africa, Afrikaners have been left clinging to a politically compromised culture that is under renewed pressure to survive. The new South Africa forces “white” Afrikaners to question and undermine an identity that was shaped by the laager. Many are simply uninterested in this transformative soul-searching, and are non-compliant to the point of having come full circle and re-entering the protective “laager”.

Gobbet 28: And in the face of all calamity survived

So it was that the struggle to survive on a dangerous continent became the main thought of the trekboer's mind, the main purpose of the trekboer's life. Like the thorn tree, which was to play a large part as a poetic symbol in his literature a century later, he put his roots down into rock and stone, and in the face of all calamity survived. His enmity with the black man was bitter and relentless, as was the black man's enmity with him. Between white men and black men, and more still between white men and black women, there could be no relationship except those of master and servant, or of enemy and enemy. The boer could only survive by keeping himself apart; only in apartheid was there any hope for the future of himself, his children and his race. What was more, his command of a written language, his superior technological skill, his possession of things like guns and wagons and, of course, the Bible, convinced him of the inferiority of his heathen foe.

Alan Paton (1959:17 & 20; there is a map on pages 18-9)

Hope for South Africa

Gobbet 29: The nature of Afrikanerdom survived even war with Britain

The Afrikaners wanted only to be left alone to continue the life that had become part of their being, the life of the endless open, a quasi-feudal life of tenuous allegiances to outside authority. Then as later, the relationship of the Afrikaner farmer and the African farm labourer was, to be sure, patriarchal and paternalistic; it was also personal. Each had plenty of time, in the placid life of the frontier farm, to adapt himself to the other's ways. The mutual adaptation was to be hurried by the harrying presence of the British Imperium and accelerated further by the discovery of minerals in the Transorangia territory and the consequent discovery of South Africa by the forces of Western capitalism. But the nature of Afrikanerdom survived even war with Britain and their own retaking of the whole of South Africa: their desire only to be left alone persisted when they were running the country, and it influenced in some measure the weird edifice they built out of scraps of ideas and called apartheid.

Marq de Villiers (1987:141)

White Tribe Dreaming: Apartheid's bitter roots as witnessed by eight generations of an Afrikaner family

Singing of survival

The Afrikaners who celebrated the Voortrekker centenary in 1938 should be understood as being both “survivors” and “utopians” simultaneously. The staunch Protestantism informing Afrikaner culture makes survival and utopianism two interlinking facets of the same Voortrekker identity. For an empathetic understanding of this ideological connection it is necessary to consider a utopian biblical instruction that is at the heart of the Christian tradition. Christ’s “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5) offers valuable insights into how Afrikaners, in celebrating the centenary at Monumentkoppie and Bloedrivier, felt compelled not only to adopt the isolationist psychology of the *laager*, but also to shine a light unto all nations:

Julle is die lig van die wêreld. ’n Stad wat bo op ’n berg lê, kan nie weggesteek word nie; en ’n mens steek ook nie ’n lamp op en sit dit onder die maatemmer nie, maar op die staander, en dit skyn vir almal wat in die huis is. Laat julle lig so skyn voor die mense, dat hulle julle goeie werke kan sien en julle Vader wat in die hemele is, verheerlik (Die Nuwe Testament in Afrikaans 1933:8).

[English translation]

You are the light of the world. A city that sits on top of a hill cannot be hidden away; and a person also does not light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it shines for everyone inside the house. Let your light shine like this before the people, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in the heavens.

The combined idea of protectively looking inwards (the “*laager* mentality”) and being a visible beacon of hope to the rest of the world is pivotal to the survival philosophy contained in Van den Heever’s *die Afrikaanse Gedagte*. Afrikanerdom is formulated as something vulnerable and threatened, but is nonetheless simultaneously *universalised* into an organic entity that can salvage an otherwise doomed Western Christian civilisation by transplanting its cultural roots into African soil. Consequently, “whites” in South Africa have exhibited the utopian zeal associated with various founders of religious communities that functioned as outposts of the Christian religion.²⁸

In explaining the utopianism and survival anxieties contained within the “Sermon on the Mount”, Karen Armstrong (2007:70-1) mentions that “Matthew” wrote his gospel in the late 80s CE, at a time of perceived *apokalypsis* when the early Christians first began to doubt the Messiah’s return.²⁹ The four gospels were written in reaction to Vespasian’s conquering of Jerusalem in 70 CE, along with the Romans’ destruction of the temple (Armstrong 2007:52-4). Because of this turmoil, the gospel writers were

²⁸ The American pilgrims are perhaps the most famous example of such a utopian community (Atwood 2005:87).

²⁹ Matthew’s name is in inverted commas because – contrary to received wisdom – this gospel’s author was not Christ’s disciple Matthew, but actually an anonymous author from a period much later than Christ’s lifetime.

compelled to cast Christ within a chiliastic light, meaning that Jesus proclaimed new laws and a new messianic era from a mountaintop, just as Moses did (Armstrong 2007:71). The “Sermon on the Mount” has subsequently been appropriated by utopian religious communities throughout the world, by serving as a textual precedent for the validation and enactment of messianic cultural urges (Sargent 2010:92).

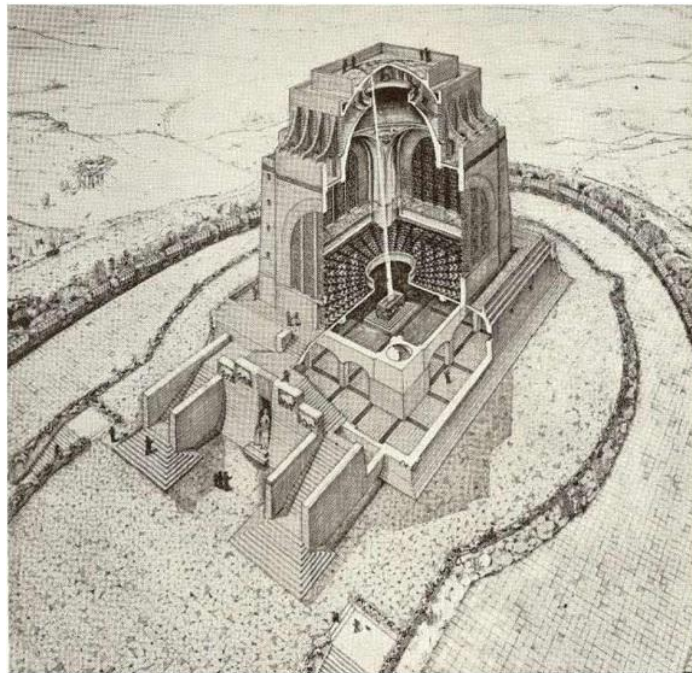
One can think similarly of the Afrikaners in 1938 – a group who had collective memories of an *apokalypsis* from the Anglo Boer War a generation before, and who were eager to secure their own survival in spite of a still-present British hegemony. In reasserting the “laager mentality” a century after Bloedrivier, and in expanding its application from the localised battlefield in Natal onto the national cultural arena, Afrikaners were actually remembering the discord of concentration camps and scorched earth practices. They constructed a purified utopian identity for themselves in order to negate any future threats of erasure. However, Afrikaners also confused the “black barbarian” beyond the fortress perimeter with their hegemonic, British imperial enemies. My argument is that a more painful and more immediately remembered ghetto landscape was projected onto the “laager” (Bosch 1986:207).

The “Sermon on the Mount” has offered consolation to many communities who have felt themselves threatened in this way – most especially in the well-known phrasing of the beatitudes, which promise redress by quite literally bestowing the Kingdom of Heaven on those who are pursued for the sake of their own righteousness. This connects with my Introduction’s Personal Statement, in which I recall singing a petrifying hymn at school that envisioned the coming of a New Jerusalem. Because utopians are impatient to achieve perfection, they cannot wait to inaugurate the New Jerusalem on “the other side of the silence”, but rather strive to create it in this life. The catastrophe of this religious aspiration lies in that a Calvinist sense of predestination convinced enough Afrikaners that they were the elect (Du Toit 1983:925). In their struggle to continue surviving they could therefore afford to do the most horrible things to those outside their “laager” and feel completely justified.

Heretical nationalistic interpretations of the “Sermon on the Mount” emphasise the section at the end of the Sermon’s first part, where Christ inveighs his followers to be perfect, “even as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). This misunderstood injunction to be perfect is central to anti-utopian critiques, on grounds that striving for perfection is an intolerant cultural impulse that eliminates anything it associates with imperfection (including an inevitable human shortfall) (Taruskin 2009:xii).³⁰ For the present

³⁰ As Sargent (2010:103) notes, the most common anti-utopian approach is to equate “the utopian with the perfect”. In terms of artistic utopianism, Matthew Arnold (1882:iv) used the Latin for this line of scripture – *estote ergo vos perfecti!* – as an inscription to head his book, *Culture and Anarchy*. In scripture the full line from Matthew 5:48 is “Estote ergo vos perfecti sicut et Pater vester caelestis perfectus est”.

discussion, though, it is necessary to focus on an even more malignant interpretation of scripture, which operates from a basic assumption that perfection has already been achieved. It is in subscribing to this belief that most utopians demonstrate a virulent form of predestinarianism. This selfish worldview is often promoted through heretical interpretations of Christian scripture (like sanctioning apartheid) where dissent from the messianic worldview of a theocracy is itself branded as heresy.



Gerard Moerdijk's design for the Voortrekker Monument
Souvenir programme: Voortrekker Monument consecration, 16 December 1949

Cities are built on hills to shine a light unto all nations. The picture above shows that this adage can apply to monuments built on hills as well. Luminescence is the most important architectural feature in the design of the Voortrekker Monument, with a sun disc suggesting that the Abrahamic God himself sanctions the Memorial and everything that it represents. This particular notion of bringing light into the world may well have been adapted from, or formulated in competition with, a specifically Victorian conviction of manifest destiny, where “whites” allegorised Christ as a Bringer of Light and at the same time viewed themselves as his chosen people (Bosch 1986:205-6; Muller 2000:10-2).

Gerard Moerdijk's design for the Voortrekker Monument insists on such a providential narrative, by choreographing a shaft of light to shine down through a carefully positioned oculus in the Memorial's roof and onto a cenotaph at the centre of its base (Crampton 2001:227). Every year on 16 December, at noon precisely, a ray of sunlight illuminates a cenotaph – representing the symbolic grave of Piet Retief and

other slain heroes – emblazoned with the words, “Ons vir jou Suid-Afrika” (We for you South Africa). These words, first written by Cornelis Jacobus Langenhoven (1918) and set to music by Marthinus Lourens de Villiers (1921), were borrowed from the Afrikaner anthem “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika”.³¹ At the heart of the Voortrekker Monument one thus finds an illuminated song, which may well have been intended to echo Goethe’s famous maxim that architecture is frozen music.

The words “Ons vir jou Suid-Afrika” are an excerpt from the last line of the anthem’s first verse. They complete a pledge of allegiance that includes answering the country’s “calling-voice”, sacrificing whatever is asked for, and then living and dying for South Africa. Even more troubling is that the imagined South African landscape described ahead of this irrational survival promise “is devoid of any human presence”, or otherwise it contains a Romanticised collective ego (in the style of Caspar David Friedrich); meaning that those who sing this anthem swear their troth to the sky, sea, mountains and plains described in Langenhoven’s poem (Venter 2009:65). The petrification and illumination, inside the Voortrekker Monument, of a song that advocates for an empty landscape indicates a desire to purify that landscape, most especially by keeping foreign humans (“blacks”) outside the “laager”. This Memorial to Bloedrivier can consequently be interpreted as a South African articulation of *Lebensraum*.

In this regard, there are ominous preferences in Moerdijk’s architecture that resonate with a pre-Second World War Germanic instinct to purify national landscapes. Most notably, the Voortrekker Monument is a copy of the Völkerschlachtdenkmal in Leipzig (Steenkamp 2009:150-60). This has led authors like Steenkamp to observe putative Masonic elements in the Monument’s design – particularly the shaft of light choreographed through its roof, and a flame of civilisation that burns in the basement on a wall facing the cenotaph. The truth is that Moerdijk assembled an eclectic mix of architectural elements in his design, drawn from the Bible, Egyptian monuments, Zimbabwean ruins, Herbert Baker, and art deco (Vermeulen 1999:138-9). Being an art deco design, it also contains the “petrified eroticism” of “sharp lines and blunt massing of material” that is normally associated with fascist aesthetics (Sontag 2009:94).³²

With an architecture that already subscribes to the utopian aesthetic of illumination, the Voortrekker Monument compounds this troubling idea by ossifying “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” within a beam of light. Afrikaners heard their nation’s voice (and by extension in their God’s voice) calling to them in this anthem’s lyrics and music, and instructing them on an historical mission to claim the country’s

³¹ “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” only became South Africa’s national anthem in 1957, while the Voortrekker Monument was already completed in 1949.

³² Sontag’s comments in definition of fascist aesthetics are not made in connection with the Voortrekker Monument, but rather in a famous essay discussing the photographic career of Leni Riefenstahl.

landscape as their own in defence of “white” Christian civilisation. This assessment is confirmed when one considers that Moerdijk argued for the Monument’s existence in legal terms, calling it a text constructed from stone that confirmed the Afrikaner’s “rightful” ownership of the land. He wanted a hallowed national building in which to consolidate a narrative of “white” migration where the land was supposedly given to Afrikaners by God (Beningfield 2006:55).

The more complicated truth is that the Voortrekkers were actually invading already-disputed territories. This contested landscape is symbolised in both the Monument and “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika”, in a way that memorialises and perpetuates the idea of “white” survival. Moreover, heretical nationalistic propaganda has taken history and distorted it through mimetic repetition, recasting the Bloedrivier story into a sanctifying myth. Authentic anxieties that the Natalia Voortrekkers experienced over their own endurance were adapted a century after the Ur-laager, to the effect that their difficult survival was recast into a bourgeois nationalistic struggle (De Klerk 1975:90).

The re-enactment of Bloedrivier’s landscape, partly through the medium of song, set the stage for the collective adoption of isolation as the most important mechanism through which to ensure survival (Grundlingh 2001:97). Furthermore, the blatant dislocation of history effected by this Monument, which was built in apartheid South Africa’s administrative capital, hundreds of kilometres away from the battle site for which it is an *aide-mémoire*, helped to make the Afrikaner survival mentality cultural as well as biological. The other way in which Pretoria links with Bloedrivier is that it was named after the Boer hero Andries Pretorius, who masterminded Bloedrivier’s massacre of the Zulus. There is a cultural praetorianship implied in this city’s name, and this defensive cultural gaze is replicated in the Monument’s second most salient design feature, which is its being built inside a protective “laager” of sixty-four granite ox wagons that resemble the wagon fortress of the original battlefield (Crampton 2001:226).

There is a scene in André Brink’s (1978:433-4) novel *Rumours of Rain* that shows how disturbing this adapted Bloedrivier “memory” became in the latter half of the twentieth century. The novel’s protagonist takes his lover to visit the Monument on 16 December, where they witness “the annual panegyric in commemoration of the victory over the Zulus”, including a ministerial speech about new threats to Afrikaner survival. After the ceremony, Brink’s two characters explore the entire monument, and observe iconic marble friezes and tapestries, and the cenotaph with the national anthem’s concluding death-wish-lyrics carved onto it. Even though Brink describes the monument as a heartless edifice, his female character – who is not an Afrikaner – wants to see the entire structure:

“For this is the heart of your Afrikanerdom, isn’t it? Perhaps it’ll help me understand you better.” And when we emerged at last, she added quietly: “You know, this is my idea of hell: exactly on the scale of this Monument and this festival” (Brink 1978:434).

This powerful sentiment is echoed in J.M Coetzee’s novel *Age of Iron*, where a dying character expresses her terrible fear of going to hell and being forced to listen to “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” for all eternity (Muller2008a:199). In understanding that the Monument and its anthem both memorialise one group’s domination over others, it becomes understandable that Afrikaner cultural heritage might evoke antithetical responses from people outside its utopia. And yet, as the following chapter’s discussion indicates: Even after apartheid’s disbandment, Afrikaners have struggled to understand the inherent flaw of C.M. van den Heever’s Spengler-inspired dream: *Die Afrikaanse Gedagte* orchestrates the progression from a collective position of pain and suffering to one of hope; but history shows that it only manages this by *universalising* Afrikaner culture, and by then cannibalising other African cultures.

Gobbet 30: Perchance, our last message to the world

In this awful turning point in the history of South Africa, on the eve of the conflict which threatens to exterminate our people, it behoves us to speak the truth in what may be, perchance, our last message to the world. Even if we are exterminated the truth will triumph through us over our conquerors, and will sterilise and paralyse all their efforts until they too disappear in the night of oblivion.

[...]

Africans, I ask you but to do as Leonidas did with his 300 men when they advanced unflinchingly at Thermopylae against Xerxes and his myriads, and do not be disturbed by such men as Milner, Rhodes, and Chamberlain, or even by the British Empire itself, but cling fast to the God of our forefathers, and to the Righteousness which is sometimes slow in acting, but which never slumbers nor forgets. Our forefathers did not pale before the terrors of the Spanish Inquisition, but entered upon the great struggle for Freedom and Right against even the mighty Philip, unmindful of the consequences.

Nor could the rack and the persecuting bands of Louis XIV tame or subdue the spirit of our fathers. Neither Alva nor Richelieu were able to compass the triumph of tyranny over the innate sentiment of Freedom and Independence in our forefathers. Nor will a Chamberlain be more fortunate in effecting the triumph of Capitalism, with its lust for power, over us.

If it is ordained that we, insignificant as we are, should be the first among all peoples to begin the struggle against the new-world tyranny of Capitalism, then we are ready to do so, even if that tyranny is reinforced by the power of Jingoism.

May the hope which glowed in our hearts during 1880, and which buoyed us up during that struggle, burn on steadily! May it prove a beacon of light in our path, invincibly moving onwards through blood and through tears, until it leads us to a real Union of South Africa.

As in 1880, we now submit our cause with perfect confidence to the whole world. Whether the result be Victory or Death, Liberty will assuredly rise in South Africa like the sun from out the mists of the morning, just as Freedom dawned over the United States of America a little more than a century ago. Then from the Zambesi to Simon's Bay it will be

“AFRICA FOR THE AFRICANER.”

Francis William Reitz (1900:89-90)

A Century of Wrong

Explanatory note:

Different editions and translations of the book *A Century of Wrong* were distributed as propaganda against the British during the Anglo Boer War (1899-1902). The book gives an overview of Anglo-Afrikaner interactions over the preceding century, and lists a litany of injustices that the British had done unto the Afrikaners. The extract given here is distressing when one considers the genocide of Afrikaner women and children in British-run concentration camps during this war.

Gobbet 31: Instead of seeing ourselves as a threatened species

It seems strange that it takes an Afro-centric attack on our so-called Eurocentric culture to prompt us into soul-searching examination of our musical relevance in the new South Africa. So many things we took for granted in the past, now seem to need defence and validation.

Because we are a minority within a minority, we are vulnerable. We feel threatened and have even become apologetic about our music. Because of mistakes and lost opportunities in the past, we are now faced with the growing ignorance and philistinism of a politically empowered majority which sees Western art music as white, elitist and culturally irrelevant.

[...]

To rediscover the underlying relevance of Western art music, we must see it in evolutionary terms. No other form of music is as representative of man's historic, psychological and spiritual development. I would prefer to call our music WORLD music. This is not chauvinism. It is plain and simple truth. It is the music of mankind as a whole. It is neither ethnocentric nor Eurocentric. It reflects the spirit and the genius of the entire human race and, as such, should be valued and preserved by all people, everywhere.

[...]

Whereas ethnic music is the soul and expression of an ethnic group, world music [i.e. Western art music] is the crystallisation of all human experience, expressed through the musical genius of an individual composer. Even nationalist composers like Dvorak, the great Russians, Sibelius, Grieg, Albeniz, Elgar and Copland – to name a few – could not help being totally individualistic in their ability to incorporate their ethnicity into a transcendent expression of human experience which is universal.

Western art music is therefore the most truly democratic form of music in existence. It reflects and represents the absolute uniqueness and creative freedom of thought of the individual. If African music belongs to Africans; if Chinese music belongs to the Chinese; if the music of Islam belongs to Muslims; then Western music – and this includes jazz and pop music – belongs to humanity as whole. It is the history of mankind in sound. Against the political accusation that our music is Eurocentric, I would say that it is, without any doubt whatsoever, totally and unquestionably ANTHROPOCENTRIC. To attack it or to question its validity in the new South Africa, is to display complete ignorance regarding its true significance for people of all backgrounds.

[...]

Instead of seeing ourselves as a threatened species, we must believe in ourselves as a vital and indispensable force for higher education. Instead of burying ourselves in the musicological minutiae of the past, we must move positively into the musical future of this country by shaping it meaningfully and practically. Instead of wringing our hands apologetically and asking for handouts, we must stand firm as representatives of a universal art form which embraces everyone.

Alan Solomon (1997:15-6)

“The Universal Significance of Western Art Music”

South African Music Teacher (Jan 1997)

Gobbet 32: A select few who not only survived, but have produced the most profoundly beautiful music

Throughout mankind's history, many have faced adversity. While faced with this adversity some have failed, some overcame such treacherous hardships sometimes merely surviving and then there are a select few who, while faced with these struggles, not only survived but have produced some of the most profoundly beautiful centrepieces in the literary and music genres. An example of such a work is the *Quartet for the end of Time* written by French composer Olivier Messiaen in 1940.

[...]

Seven years after that first auspicious performance of Messiaen's work [in a Silesian prisoner-of-war camp at Görlitz], South Africa entered into the darkest period of its history known as Apartheid.

Conroy Alan Cupido (2009:1-2)

Significant Influences in the Composition of Hendrik Hofmeyr's Song Cycle, Alleenstryd

CHAPTER FIVE

Survival Symphony

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the public understanding of Hendrik Hofmeyr's *Sinfonia africana* during the time immediately after its world premiere. It gives an extensive overview of a review of the symphony by Stephanus Muller, published in the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Burger* on 21 August 2004, as well as subsequent newspaper letters and opinion columns that were published in response to Muller's review, both in *Die Burger* and on the Afrikaans literary website *LitNet*. Hofmeyr's new symphony was afforded unprecedented media coverage compared to the habitually negligent reportage on Western art music in South African newspapers (Muller 2005:6; Muller 2009:19). Collectively, this body of contested discourse contains fascinating insights into the perceived vulnerability of Afrikaners in democratic South Africa, especially as expressed in response and retaliation to Muller's perceived negative review of *Sinfonia africana*. Principal among these observations to be made is that there remains an overconfident register of exceptionalism that informs the sense of worth that cultured Afrikaners attach to their worldview.

Muller's (2009:19) own retrospective examination of this reception history recounts the regularity of letters to the editor that were published in *Die Burger* during August and September 2004:

On 21 August **Stephanus Muller's** original review appeared.

On 27 August **Deon Knobel** wrote that *Sinfonia africana* is a monumental work and **Janette Badenhorst** voiced her opinion that Muller's criticism was uncalled-for.

On 28 August **Carmen Marchetti** and **Lina Spies** respectively criticised both the *Sinfonia africana* and its reviewer.

On 31 August **Maryna Botha** called *Sinfonia africana* a great work and **Deon Knobel** wrote about the Afrikaans language in context of Marchetti's criticism.

On 2 September **Chris Walton** wrote in defence of Muller's criticism and **John and Collena Blanckenburg** wrote about the expansively reconciliatory message of *Sinfonia africana*.

On 3 September **Jozua Serfontein** criticised Muller's review as astonishing and **Veranza Joubert** described listening to the *Sinfonia africana* as a moving experience.

On 4 September **Deon Knobel** chimed in again, this time criticising Chris Walton for defending Muller's right to criticism without ever having heard the symphony himself.

On 7 September **Pierre Joubert** assured the newspaper's readers that Hofmeyr had been commissioned without any prescription as to what the content of *Sinfonia africana* should be.

Other arenas were also used to sustain this public debate:

On 8 September **Liza Albrecht** published an interview with Hofmeyr in *Die Burger*, in which the composer stated his surprise at the severity of reaction to his symphony.

On 8 September a group interview in which **Hendrik Hofmeyr, Lina Spies, Hans Huyssen** and **Coenraad Walters** participated was published on the Afrikaans website LitNet. (Stephanus Muller had been approached to participate and would only do so on condition that Hofmeyr gave him access to the score of *Sinfonia africana*. When this could not be done he chose rather not to participate.)

On 28 October the public discussion over *Sinfonia africana* culminated in a debate between **Hendrik Hofmeyr** and **Stephanus Muller** in the Jannasch Hall of Stellenbosch University's Music Department. The debate was hosted by the Department of Afrikaans and Nederlands, under the heading "Hoe word Afrikaans vandag musiek?" (How does Afrikaans become music today?).

My own research has revealed even further public discussions:

On 30 October **Francois Smith** reported in *Die Burger* about the colloquium in which Hofmeyr and Muller participated.

On 4 November the columnist **Martie Meiring** ruminated in *Die Burger* over Muller's statements – made at the colloquium where she had not been – about how Afrikaans needed to be treated in more "humble" ways when set to music.

On 5 November **Francois Smith** reported about the debate once more.

This chapter is mainly concerned with trying to gain a purchase on this four-month public discourse, and I begin by focussing on Muller's review, after which I examine the ensuing media correspondence in relation to it, with a view to highlighting the ideological perspectives that were used to articulate an Afrikaner survivalist mindset in response to the symphony and review.

Although some musicologists mention the controversial nature and general notoriety of *Sinfonia africana*'s reception history (e.g. Claasen 2012:2, 9, 19-20; Pooley 2008:102), none except Muller (2009:19-23) himself have attempted to present a thoroughly critical analysis of this discourse. Michael Blake (2005:131-4), who is another prominent South African composer, critiques the ideological implications of the conservative musical references – especially Mahler – that Hofmeyr makes throughout his symphony. Franke (2007:64) writes briefly about the symphony's poietic structure, without any mention of ideological problems. Finally, Fritz von Geyso (2014) presents a large-scale (MMus thesis) and formalistic structural analysis of *Sinfonia africana*. His predominant focus is on the literary origins of the libretto; Hofmeyr's decision to recast and orchestrate two of his own previous works to compose two of this symphony's movements; and the compositional processes involved in basic musical elements like form, pitch, harmony, rhythm, texture and dynamics in the symphony's construction.

Contrary to my interpretation of *Sinfonia africana*, Von Geyso's (2014:170) positivistic analysis ultimately depends on "disregarding [social/political] context", deeming the symphony's textual

programme “as having a universal message”, and consequently understanding – and approving of – Hofmeyr’s compositional intention as creating “a universal work with a universal message, which should be applicable anywhere, anytime and anyplace”. The preceding three chapters of my thesis have problematised *universality* to show that it is not an ideologically disinterested concept.

Sinfonia africana was commissioned by a special interests group called *Vriende van Afrikaans* (Friends of Afrikaans). The concert programme for this work’s world premiere performance states that “[t]he idea of a major composition based on well-known literature texts in Afrikaans” was the brainchild of Gideon Joubert (No Author 2004:19). He was a founding member of *Vriende van Afrikaans* and also belonged to its executive board (Von Geyso 2014:1). After Joubert convinced his colleagues of the projected “Afrikaans” composition’s worth, they formed a Hofmeyr Project Committee – under Alta Coertzen’s leadership – on 28 November 2002, and thereafter approached Hofmeyr with the commission. *Sinfonia africana* was then intended as part of the tenth anniversary festivities of *Vriende van Afrikaans*, and would also be the inaugural composition of the society’s proposed annual “Afrikaans” music project (Von Geyso 2014:2).

Eventually, Hofmeyr’s symphony was premiered in Cape Town’s City Hall on 19 August 2004, and preceded by a week another event that *Vriende van Afrikaans* helped organise, namely the *Eerste Nasionale Taalberaad vir Afrikaans* (First National Language Summit for Afrikaans) that took place in Stellenbosch from 25 to 27 August 2004 (Von Geyso 2014:1). This “national” summit was preceded by a “language audit”, conducted collectively by multiple Afrikaner cultural organisations over the preceding year. Their objective was ultimately to find a strategy that ensured the survival of Afrikaans – both the language and its culture – in post-apartheid South Africa. Although the Stellenbosch summit contained academic discourse (by academics such as the then Stellenbosch University Vice-Chancellor, Chris Brink), members of the general Afrikaner public also participated (Olivier 2008:1-2). Discussions were marked by conflict, much of it published in *Die Burger*, because of apprehensions over a possible conservative “white” political agenda with the proposed linguistic survival strategy (Olivier 2008:2; Smith 2004:2).¹ The remainder of this chapter’s discussion gives an indication that the vehement disagreements of the *Eerste Nasionale Taalberaad vir Afrikaans* also spilled over into the reception of Hofmeyr’s *Sinfonia africana* and overwhelmed its discourse.

¹ Jonathan Jansen, who was then Dean of the Education Faculty at the University of Pretoria, and who has subsequently become the Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State, voiced the concern that “Afrikaans” was not necessarily synonymous with “whiteness”. Some audience members reacted negatively to his point of view, in particular the right-wing public intellectual Dan Roodt, who railed against what he considered to be Jansen’s encouragement of interracial relationships. Jansen replied that a sexual experience with someone from another “race” would do Roodt the world of good and perhaps even change his mind about mixed race relations.

The original parameters of the commission given to Hofmeyr included a request that he should compose a work that portrayed the role of women (No author 2004:19). This feminist theme seems to have transformed, somehow, into a celebration of “all the people of South Africa – the land, the sky, the mountains and the sea”. It is bizarre that a celebration of South Africa’s cultural diversity should immediately be reduced to the country’s landscapes, but considering my discussion in Chapter Four of the apartheid national anthem, the vocabulary used here to conceptualise a symphony that celebrates *everyone* in South Africa is reminiscent of literary tropes in C.J. Langenhoven’s anthem “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika”. Interestingly, Hofmeyr chose Eugène Marais’s “Die Lied van Suid-Afrika” as poetic text for the first movement of *Sinfonia africana*, which is also replete with Romantic landscape imagery, but actually contains interactive human beings inside this harsh landscape; although they are manipulated opportunistically by a female voice – the *roepstem* or maternal soul of the nation.

In a 2005 interview with *Classic Feel* magazine, Hofmeyr contradicts the statement that his composition was intended to portray women, stating instead that the Hofmeyr Project Committee commissioned a comprehensive symphonic work that would focus on South Africa’s “sorrowful past” and its “hopeful future” (De Kock Gueller 2005:37). In further contrast to what *Vriende van Afrikaans* state about Gideon Joubert’s desire to commission a large-scale work based on Afrikaans literary texts, Hofmeyr explains that the brief he received allowed that the symphony’s libretto comprise of several languages:

[Nevertheless, Hofmeyr decided on three specific Afrikaans poems] because of the thematic links between [them], their suitability for symphonic expansion and the universal applicability of their message. The result, he says, is a single trajectory leading from “a vision of sorrow and despair to one of hope and spiritual renaissance,” achieved by transcending national identity through the shared sufferings and aspirations that link all of humanity (De Kock Gueller 2005:36).

According to De Kock Gueller (2005:37), the commission that Hofmeyr received emanated from a prize awarded to Gideon Joubert, for the decade’s best non-fiction Afrikaans publication: *Die Groot Gedagte* (The Great Idea). Joubert’s book presents an explanation of the universe (macro-cosmos, micro-cosmos and a unifying theory of holism) to Afrikaans-speakers in the general public. Most notably, it promotes the idea of “intelligent design”, on grounds that the universe itself is proof of God’s existence. Joubert’s eventual decision to associate *Die Groot Gedagte* with a large-scale musical work may well find its origin in the musical terminologies that he employs in this science book to interpret and explain the meaning of life to an Afrikaans-speaking audience:

Die heelal is 'n lied van dansende crescendo's en diminuendo's. Daar is harmoniese frases en skerp wanklanke. Die velde van interaksies dein in golwe, met deeltjies op die kruine, soos die golvende stroom van klanke wat musiek is.

En ons, note in die groot lied van die Skepping, is vir 'n stonde deel van die Magnificat, dan is ons ook verby. Die orreltone eggo weg in die oneindigende (Joubert 1997:302).

[English translation]

The universe is a song of dancing crescendos and diminuendos. There are harmonic phrases and sharp dissonances. The fields of interactions surge in waves, with the small parts on the crests, like the waving of sounds that music is.

And we, notes in the great song of Creation, are part of the Magnificat for a moment, and then we too are gone. The organ tones echo away into infinity.

The content and character of *Die Groot Gedagte* are important in any consideration of context for *Sinfonia africana*, not only because Joubert's book offers a scientifically-based explanation for human existence and survival, but also because its title alludes to Van den Heever's *Die Afrikaanse Gedagte* (1935). As discussed in Chapter One, this anthology offers a theoretical explanation (based on Spengler's theory about the inevitable downfall of civilisations) for the grafting, nurturing and survival of Western civilisation in Africa. These concerns are prominent in the discourse about *Sinfonia africana*. Moreover, because Hofmeyr's symphony originated as what appears to be a companion piece for the first Afrikaans book about the universe, one can understand that the concept of *universality* carried over into its libretto and music.

Hofmeyr's poetic selection renders Afrikanerdom's history, culture and politics as a narrative with *universal* significance. This is an audacious endeavour, considering the discredited status of that history, culture and politics at the time when *Sinfonia africana* was composed. Chapter Three and Chapter Four illustrate how Afrikaners made a destructive claim of cultural *universalism* during the twentieth century, hoping to subvert their survival anxieties through apartheid's implementation. It therefore becomes problematic when post-apartheid compositions like *Sinfonia africana* employ conservative poetic and musical resources, which have long already been invested with an aesthetic of "white" cultural survival, to try and communicate any *universal* message of hope. Connecting all of humanity through *shared sufferings and aspirations* speaks to a redemptive utopianism that resonates in a very particular way with South African historical themes. Newspaper correspondents who rejected Muller's criticism apparently did not understand this irony. They redeemed *Sinfonia africana* from apartheid by invoking its universal meaning, when Hofmeyr's universalist aesthetic was precisely what troubled Muller in this symphony. To better understand Muller's misgivings, it is necessary to consider the work's libretto and music.

Explanation of the symphony's poetry and music

Hofmeyr's libretto consists of three poems, all dating from a period soon after Afrikaans was acknowledged as an official Germanic language – on 8 May 1925 – and also elevated to an equal status with Dutch as a language of South African governance. These three poems count among hundreds of similar contributions to this new language's consolidation, by constituting a belated corpus of Romantic national literature. (See Addendum 1 for the complete texts of all three poems and their translations.)

The first poem in Hofmeyr's libretto is “Die Lied van Suid-Afrika” (The Song of South Africa) by Eugène Marais, published for the first time in 1926. Marais modelled this pessimistic work on the Emily Lawless poem “After Aughrim”, published in 1902, where “Mother Ireland” recounts the violent deaths of patriotic soldiers (Kannemeyer, in Von Geyso 2014:27-8). Although it does not make sense to insist on any singular meaning of a poem, this one by Marais alludes to a war situation that is similar to the Afrikaner experience during the Anglo Boer War. When Marais's “Mother South Africa” needs male protection from foreign threats, she can just as well be understood as an Afrikaner woman.

Hofmeyr's (2003) description of the music for “Die Lied van Suid-Afrika” – his symphony's first movement – explains that it is composed to represent a slow and relentless march (*Quasi Marcia funebre*). This movement is cast in rondo form (ABACA) which is first presented by the orchestra, and thereafter repeated and extended with an added chorus.

The symphony opens with a dramatic clash of the tam-tam grande, which trails off into other overtones played by the orchestra's stringed instruments. One's immediate expectation is to hear a Romantic musical representation of the orient. However, a trumpet fanfare that dominates this and all subsequent A-sections immediately resituates the symphony's sound-world, and creates the distinct impression of tumbleweed caught in the wind. This sensation is increased when Hofmeyr creates a diminished fifth chord flourish, which bursts forth from the piano, timpani, clarinets, snare and field drums. The trumpet fanfare is repeated and alternates with a second similar percussive flourish.



Music Example 1: Trumpet fanfare (Hofmeyr, in Von Geyso 2014:132)

The two percussive flourishes in this short introduction already evoke the phantom of what Hofmeyr (2003) considers to be African drumming (Hofmeyr 2003). If one accepts this musical characterisation, then it perhaps becomes more apparent when the string sections begin to play an extended section of dotted rhythm and pizzicato quadruple stops, along with other pulse-accentuating rhythms from percussion instruments (Von Geyso 2014:132). The trumpet fanfare motive returns, but is developed into a theme that sustains this movement's melodic and harmonic development:



Music Example 2: Trumpet theme (Hofmeyr, in Von Geyso 2014:132)

A hymn-like brass ensemble follows on the complete (more than is quoted here) statement of the trumpet theme, mainly building upon the trumpet fanfare's minor second and diminished fifth intervals, and also alternating with a further shortened solo statement of the trumpet theme (Von Geyso 2014:128). This gives way to a much bigger and comparatively frenetic section where the orchestra's stringed instruments also participate in the A-section's motivic development.

The B-section is slower and more expressive – *tempo primo, ma tranquillo (con rubato)*. Briefly, Hofmeyr reprieves his preceding focus on the interval of a tritone, by creating a haunting second theme in which the oboe and stringed instruments mirror one another in block chords:



Music Example 3: Oboe theme (Hofmeyr, in Von Geyso 2014:133)

In dramatic contrast to this, the entire orchestra takes on the A-section's trumpet theme (*fortissimo*), and reintroduces the focus on diminished seconds and diminished fifths. This column of sound dissipates quickly into sombre and fragmented statements of the trumpet theme, first by the stringed instruments and thereafter by the woodwind instruments (oboes, cors anglais and bassoons).

The first movement's C-section incorporates a *fugato* that exploits the driving force of sequential patterns, which together climb upwards in each phrase with a major third interval, and therefore create the melodic effect of a whole tone scale over an octave's compass. The fugato begins intimately with this rising melodic theme's statement in the lowest register of the flutes:



Music Example 4: Fugato theme (Hofmeyr, in Von Geyso 2014:134)

The fugato grows in intensity with each phrase's statement of the major third interval progression: first the flutes, and thereafter the clarinets and bassoon overlapping with one another, and then doubled oboes and cors anglais overlapping with the clarinets and bassoons. Finally, doubled flutes and violins playing in their highest registers complete the *fugato*. This section of the first movement presents an aura of monumentality in this symphony for the first time. In this case, Hofmeyr's music (in particular his sensitive orchestration, which includes stringed instruments playing complex *flautando* figurations) creates the impression of sudden organic growth that arrives at an important announcement. A climax occurs when the sequential progression stops and all instruments sustain a unison g-sharp. The brass instruments reintroduce the A-section's original trumpet theme in segmented succession, while the rest of the orchestra creates a colourful and technically demanding arpeggiated accompaniment.

It is at this point of the A-section's last restatement that one encounters an insistently pessimistic military tone in the trumpet fanfare – something which has led Blake (2005:132) to compare this movement of *Sinfonia africana* with the first movement of Mahler's *Sixth Symphony*. Pointing out how wearying "the saturation of the tritone" is in this movement, especially since the tonality is mostly unvaried, Blake even characterises Hofmeyr's first movement as an "onslaught [...], where the (perhaps deliberately) bottom-heavy orchestration places enormous demands on the listener's ability to connect". This is an interesting observation, since this final monumental restatement of the A-section's trumpet theme is clearly meant to prepare the listener for the choir's entry, and also to set the appropriate pessimistic tone that would help listeners connect with the meaning of Marais's poem. Unfortunately, the choir's addition overloads an already dense musical texture. The Marais poem's lyrics are subsumed by the orchestration so that one can only really hear the bloodcurdling shout "She says:", which is the rhetorical device that Marais

borrowed from Lawless to open each stanza of his poem. Exactly what “She” says is drowned out by the density of imposing the choir’s block chordal harmonisations on top of the orchestra’s mostly repeated rondo schema. It is unsatisfactory that the choir should now repeat an already repetitive musical structure that has already been communicated. This is a narrative flaw that leads to overstatement of the movement’s pessimistic demeanour, and also overcomplicates the simplicity of Marais’s poem. Also problematic is that an overbearing orchestration prepares fructiferous ground for an opportunistic and melodramatic victim-understanding of the following movement’s war narrative.

The second poem in Hofmeyr’s libretto is the disturbing monologue “Gebed om die Gebeente” (Prayer for the Bones) by D.J. Opperman, published for the first time in 1950. Following twenty five years on the official recognition of Afrikaans as a Germanic language, this iconic poem’s publication happened shortly after the 1948 Afrikaner nationalist take-over of South Africa’s government, meaning that it participated in that epoch’s discourse on Afrikanerdom’s political triumph. A sense of national importance is confirmed by the title Opperman chose for the collection in which “Gebed om die Gebeente” was published: *Die Engel in die Klip* (The Angel in the Stone) refers to an impression that poems can – with God’s grace – literally crystallise the nation’s soul into being.²

Opperman’s monologue presents an iconic portrayal of humiliation during the Anglo Boer War, as experienced by the mother of an Afrikaner soldier (named Gideon Scheepers) when she searched with increasing futility for her son’s remains. Her historically factual degradation recalls the jingoistic Afrikaner worldview associated with the Great Trek’s centenary celebrations, since Gustav Preller popularised her painful story during 1938 in an anthology of Afrikaner folk tales (Walters 1991:81).³ The purported universal female suffering portrayed in Opperman’s poem is compromised by the vehement anger that Afrikaners have historically directed towards Britain because of the *century of wrong*. In Afrikanerdom’s historical context, this has meant that the universal suffering of women during war was remedied and corrected by a distinctively patriarchal Afrikaner nationalism. Mrs Scheepers is indeed an Afrikaner Antigone-type, struggling to complete the burial rites of a loved one. Unfortunately, those who appropriate her suffering by proclaiming its *universality* (e.g. Kannemeyer, in Von Geyso 2014:31) invariably do so from within the context of an isolated nationalist culture, which presented them with an environment where their suffering – if they had any – was necessarily dissimilar.

² This idea features in a poem in Opperman’s collection, called “Scriba van die Carbonari”, which contains the poet’s instruction to himself that he should – like a sculptor – set the angel free from the stone (Opperman 1950:15).

³ Walters (1991:77-85) gives an in-depth discussion of Opperman’s poetic character sketch.

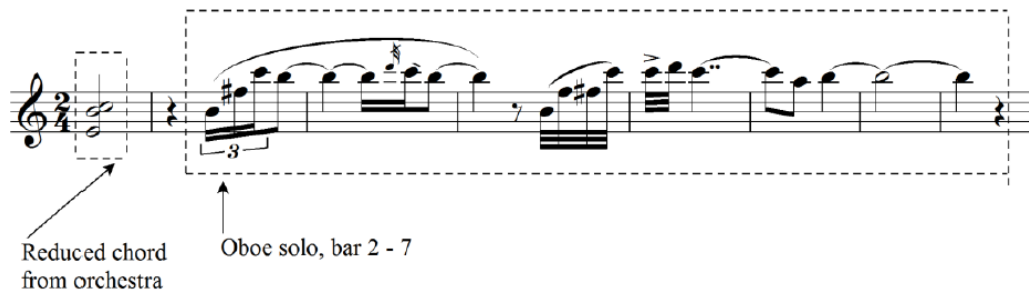
Remarkably, Afrikaner intellectuals use the *universal* character of Opperman's poem in discussions about post-apartheid reconciliation and transformation; discourse on the present work included.⁴ This bizarre point of view equates the suffering of Afrikaners under British rule with the suffering of Africans under Afrikaner rule (Jordaan 1996:42). The claim is disingenuous, on grounds of being made so soon after the abolishment of apartheid. People who have deliberately been made *other*, through Afrikaner-dominated legislation and through the utterances of a nationalist culture (utterances like Opperman's poem), are abruptly expected to consider the ways in which everyone is the same. The newspaper correspondence published in *Die Burger* after the premiere of *Sinfonia africana* gives ample indication of how prevalent this exact same argument was in the Western Cape public's enthusiastic reception of Hofmeyr's symphony. This phenomenon is related to the poem's concluding two lines, which propagate a Kuyperian paradigm in which South Africans from diverse but autonomous – segregated – cultures reflect God's divine light towards one another. It is an idea that will be analysed forthwith.

Hofmeyr's (2003) description of the music for "Gebed om die Gebeente" – his symphony's second movement – explains that it transitions (*Largo desolato*) his symphony from the first movement's pessimism to the transcendence contained in the third. He understands Opperman's monologue as both complaining against war's inhumanity and delivering a plea for reconciliation and peace. The movement has a free structure that mostly adheres to the structure and mood of the poem. Hofmeyr composed a chamber version of "Gebed om die Gebeente" in 1999, which he set as a cantata for voice, flute, violoncello and piano. This work was subsequently arranged for orchestra and incorporated wholesale into *Sinfonia africana* as its second movement (Von Geyso:138). The most significant difference between Hofmeyr's two settings of Opperman's poem is his doubling of the note values in the symphonic arrangement, along with his simultaneous general adherence to the original chamber version's time signatures. This has the effect of increasing the frequency of the music's underlying pulse – an increase in intensity which better remembers the first movement's relentless march, but which also subtracts from the free-floating opaqueness that characterises the chamber music version of "Gebed om die Gebeente". Altering the work's meter in this manner no doubt facilitates much easier reading of orchestral parts, but it also pins this movement down by making it bottom-heavy and anchoring it like a monument.

There are three main themes that underpin the musical development in this movement. They correspond with the three themes of "suffering", "searching" and "yearning for peace" that Hofmeyr (2003)

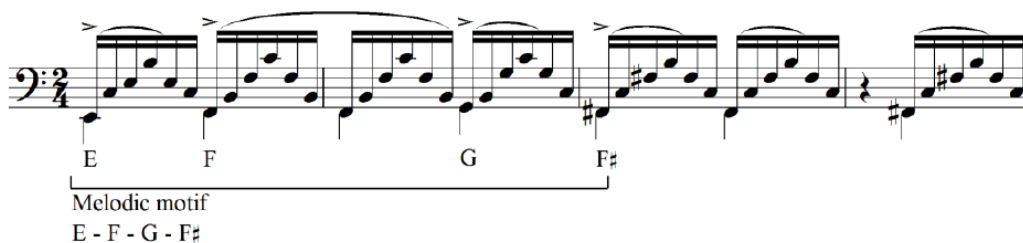
⁴ Prof. Wilhelm Jordaan (1996:42), a former UNISA Vice-Dean of Social Sciences, cites Opperman's monologue in reference to how necessary artists and musicians are in bringing about South Africa's reconciliation and transformation through a "simultaneous fusion and expansion of [the country's] many cultural horizons".

identifies in Opperman's poem. While these themes are related to motifs in the first movement, two of them ("suffering" and "searching") are also transformed in this movement's final section in anticipation of the transcendent and hopeful ethos that informs the symphony's third movement.



Music Example 5: Suffering theme (Hofmeyr, in Von Geyso 2014:142)

Hofmeyr associates the "suffering" theme with a brackish landscape and with abandonment. It stands central to this movement – and from there to the entire symphony – and once again posits the interval of a diminished fifth as an integral component of this work's melodic resources.

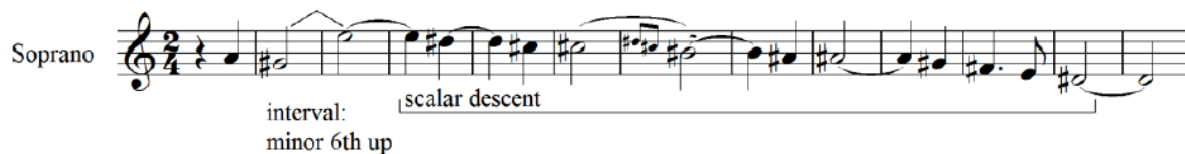


Music Example 6: Searching theme (Hofmeyr, in Von Geyso 2014:142)

The "searching" theme consists of broken chords (played by bassoons) built on a four-note melodic pattern that stands central to the second movement's motivic development. Both of these themes are stated at the second movement's opening, where they overlap and interact with one another, but each time only after the piano and tam-tam grande repeat the first movement's explosive gesture of an exotic gong. This intensifies Hofmeyr's former evocation of a desolate landscape, the image of tumbleweed even being reflected when the soprano soloist begins singing (translated: "Lord, where your northern wind trundles the dried out thistle, and harries it across the rough wasteland of Africa"). During this opening statement,

Hofmeyr's sensitive word painting even transforms the "suffering" theme into the ominous sound of a vulture, and subsequently transforms this *leitmotif* throughout the narrative to signify a rumour, sweating anxiously in the cold at night, a mock trial, midnight, an unsettling storm, a divine blessing, a soldier's grave and enormous national mirrors that reflects God's light (Von Geyso 2014:58). The "searching" and "yearning" (quoted below) themes are applied similarly.

The composer's decision to recast this movement, so that a chamber cantata becomes monumentalised into an operatic scene for solo soprano, necessarily means that there is an archetypical correspondence between "Mother South Africa" (as represented in "Die Lied van Suid-Afrika") and the *universalised* Mrs Scheepers (as represented in "Gebed om die Gebeente"). After not being able to hear exactly what "She says:" in *Sinfonia africana*'s first movement, one can be forgiven for associating this movement with whatever message Hofmeyr's archetypical female imparts. What comes across most clearly through Hofmeyr's orchestration, is that "She" is exhausted from searching, and wants a definitive assurance of her son's death by fusillading; she wants to actually see and bury his remains, and not only hear about his fate from others. Musically, this is represented in the movement's second section, by a lyrical descending theme, which is the third core melodic element of Hofmeyr's "Gebed om die Gebeente".



point that she invokes a blessing, not only for the remains of all soldiers who died in war, but also for her country. This is probably the most important part of Hofmeyr's entire symphony, and that it informs much of the discussion throughout the remainder of this chapter:

Seën, Here, ál die bleek gebeente van die stryd –
 [...] – dat ons as een groot nasie in dié gramadoelas
 met elke stukkie sinkplaat en met elke wiel,
 en wit en bruin en swart foelie agter skoon glas
 ewig U sonlig vang en na mekaar toe spieël.

[English translation]
 Bless, o Father, all the bleached bones of the struggle –
 [...] – that we as one great nation in this wasteland,
 with every scrap of sheet-iron and with every wheel,
 like white and brown and black foil behind clean glass,
 always catch Your sunlight, Lord, and mirror it to one another.

Hofmeyr's orchestration for this *pregando* section is extremely tender, and it leads into another section that sketches a dream-vision of Opperman's big nation reflecting God's light. The *pregando* begins with woodwind and brass instrumentation, and is quickly followed by a violoncello group that accompanies the soprano, so that an ecstatic atmosphere similar to the "Ave Maria" in Verdi's *Otello* is created.

614

The musical score for measures 614-618 is written for four staves. The instruments are Flute (Flg.), Fagotto II (Fagotto II), Clarinet (Cr.), and Trumpet (Tr.). The Flute part is marked 'Solo' and 'pp pregando'. The Fagotto II part is marked 'pp pregando'. The Clarinet part is marked 'con sord. di fibra' and 'pp pregando'. The Trumpet part is marked 'p', 'mf', and 'ppp'. The score includes dynamic markings (pp, mf, ppp) and articulation (accents, slurs). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

Cl.

Fg.

Cr.

Voce

Vn. I

Vn. II

Vl.

Vc.

pp

pp

pp

via sord.

pp

pp

pp pregando

ppp

Sē - en, He - re, ál die bleek ge -
Bless, o Fa - ther; all the blea - ching

3 sole
div. a 3

con sord.

pp pregando

ppp

The musical score is arranged in a system with five staves. The top staff is for Clarinet (Cl.) in treble clef, featuring a solo marked *Solo* and *pp* *limpido e tranquillo*, with a *(calmo)* marking at the end. The second staff is for Flute (Fg.) in treble clef. The third staff is for Cello (Cr.) in bass clef. The fourth staff is for Voice (Voce) in treble clef, with lyrics in Afrikaans and English: "been - te van die stryd" / "bones di - spersed by war". The bottom three staves are for strings: Violin I (Vn. I) in treble clef, Violin II (Vn. II) in treble clef, and Viola (Vi.) in alto clef. The Violin I and II parts have markings for *1.a metà (III.a corda)* and *pp sul tasto*, with a *div. (IV.a corda)* marking for the Violin II. The Viola part has a *via sord.* marking. The bottom staff is for Violoncello (Vc.) in bass clef, with markings for *1.a metà* and *pp sul tasto*.

Music Example 8: *Pregando* section (Hofmeyr 2003:73-4)

This tender prayer, together with another subsequent extension of it, presents the most intimate music in Hofmeyr's entire symphony. Unfortunately, its reprieve from the more demanding (both to play and listen to) music in the rest of this symphony is brief. Compared to Desdemona's dramatic and sustained *scena* and *pregando* in *Otello*, which is grounded by a simple and comprehensible structure, this one by Hofmeyr (i.e. the entire second movement) is crammed too full with colourful orchestration in too short a space of time. Admittedly, Opperman's poetry suggests the structure of Hofmeyr's music, as Opperman's descriptive imagery suggests the compositional devices that Hofmeyr chooses. One must therefore in the first place criticise the quality of the poetry that Hofmeyr chose to set to music – it is anachronistic, thematically inaccessible, opportunistic in exploiting suffering, and also blatantly nationalist. It is unfortunate that one of post-apartheid South Africa's most talented composers would use this obtuse nationalistic text in a musical setting that purports to connect with the diversity of Africa.

Opperman's poem ends with a Kuyperian image involving three different cultures in South Africa, each autonomous in their own right. Instead of any physical interaction between them, Opperman advocates that they mirror God's light towards one another. Hofmeyr sets this to ecstatic music in a coda that represents the bright dawn of a new national era, saturating his orchestration with a utopian aura of hopefulness and virtue. The problems with this Kuyperian worldview are discussed in Chapter Three, Chapter Four and Chapter Six. At the present juncture, this continuing analysis of *Sinfonia africana*'s public reception will render valuable insights into how Afrikaners have adopted Kuyper's concept of sovereign and autonomous cultures as a normative worldview, meaning that they even confuse continued cultural segregation with reconciliation and transformation.

The third poem in Hofmeyr's libretto is "Afrika" (Africa) by C.M. van den Heever, published for the first time in 1938. It forms part of a collection called *Die Aardse Vlam* (The Earthly Flame) that signals the artistic culmination of Van den Heever's poetic oeuvre (Kannemeyer, in Von Geyso 2014:32). Most of the poems in this volume are marked by sparse and disciplined language – at least compared to the elongated imagery in Opperman's "Die Gebed om die Gebeente". Simultaneously, these poems collectively evoke a fascistic utopianism, inspired by Schopenhauer and Fichte, that portrays Afrikaners as the keepers of a sacred flame (e.g. Van den Heever 1938:129-30). Because of its publication date, *Die Aardse Vlam* is also connected with the Afrikaner cultural renaissance that marked festivities for the Great Trek's centenary, and it therefore participates in the contemporaneous efforts to try and substitute pronounced survival anxieties with the security of Afrikaner nationalism. My theorisation in Chapter Three and Chapter Four would suggest that "Afrika" must be Van den Heever's literary articulation of his Spengler-inspired concept

die Afrikaanse Gedagte. This is confirmed by the poem's content (see Addendum 1), and by the following colonialist interpretation from the Afrikaner literary biographer and critic, John Kannemeyer:

"Afrika", een van die verse waarin Van den Heever sy nasionale bekommernis verwoord, is 'n bede dat die voorgeslagte wat hierdie vasteland help tem het, ons moet besiel (Kannemeyer, in Von Geyso 2014:33).

[English translation]

"Afrika", one of the verses in which Van den Heever articulates his national concern [anxiety], is a prayer that the ancestors who helped tame this continent, must animate [inspire] us.

As subsequent interpretations in this chapter indicate, which were voiced in the media directly after Muller's critical review of *Sinfonia africana* was published, many of the elite in present-day Afrikaner cultural circles cannot recognise the blatant colonial content of Van den Heever's poem about Africa. Instead, they understand it as something benevolent that uplifts the African continent. This is because the poem's final two stanzas contain the beatific utopianism – the anxiety associated with *apokalypsis* and the redemptive "Sermon on the Mount" – which this thesis discusses in the concluding section of Chapter Four. Van den Heever's poem "Afrika" uses his colonial concept of *die Afrikaanse Gedagte* to fashion Afrikaners as a light shining unto all nations. Hofmeyr then compounds this ideological flaw, in the music that he drapes over these words, and also by adding an additional tenth stanza to the poem (Von Geyso 2014:148):

O sing deur ons en maak ons menslik, ruim,
ons oë sag om ver die blou te meet,
dan breek gebrek in ruising van die skuim
en word ons suiwer deur te glo en weet!

O Afrika! jou naam dreun soos die see!
jou stem is op die nagwind, diep en donker,
en in ons roep 'n eeue ontwaakte beë
na vure van die nag wat helder flonker!

O Afrika! jou naam dreun soos die see!
O sing deur ons en maak ons menslik, ruim,
dan word ons suiwer deur te glo en weet!
O Afrika! O Afrika! O Afrika!

}

*Hofmeyr's additional
tenth stanza*

[English translation]

Oh sing through us and make us humane, vast,
our eyes soft to cleave the distant blue,
then flaws break in murmuring of the foam
and we become pure by believing and knowing!

Oh Africa! your name roars like the sea!
 your voice is on the night wind, deep and dark,
 and in us calls an ancient awakened bidding
 for fires of the night that blaze brightly!

Oh Africa! your name roars like the sea!
 Oh sing through us and make us humane, vast,
 then we become pure by believing and knowing!
 Oh Africa! Oh Africa! Oh Africa!

Considering Hofmeyr's statement – in his *Classic Feel* interview with De Kock Gueller (2005:36) – that thematic links motivated his specific choice of three *Afrikaans* poems for his libretto, it is curious that his programme notes (at the world premiere, in the score and the CD booklet) confuse the explanation of unavoidable Afrikaans-language thematic links by mentioning, as a disjointed and incidental comment, the strong parallels between Van den Heever's "Afrika" and other unnamed poetry by the Senegalese poet Lamine Diakhaté. My best conjecture is that the comparison made here is to Diakhaté's cycle of French poems *La joie d'un continent*, which indeed celebrates one type of ecstatic African consciousness, as Van den Heever's poem celebrates another. Mentioning the likeness of Diakhaté's poetic themes nevertheless seems peculiar, when thematic imperatives motivated Hofmeyr's choice to exclude other languages from his Afrikaans/African symphony. Perhaps the programme note on Diakhaté, which seemingly acknowledges Thabo Mbeki's "African renaissance", was then a pre-emptive response to expected political criticism. It is therefore responsible to echo Michael Blake (2005:133), who posed the following question as regards the ideology contained in Hofmeyr's symphony: "Whose Africa is being evoked?"

Hofmeyr's (2003) description of the music for "Afrika" – his symphony's third movement – portrays it as "an ode to the power of spiritual renewal of this continent". Hofmeyr composed a choral version of "Afrika" in 2001 under commission from the East Rand Youth Choir. This work was, however, altered and expanded substantially for inclusion as the third movement of *Sinfonia africana*. Hofmeyr's symphonic "Afrika" (including solo soprano and choir) is structured with a free extension of the binary form concept (AA₁), and the overall formal plan can be represented as ABCA₁DC₁EB₁E₁D₁. Thus there are ten sections in total – five of them completely different to one another, and each one of the five reappearing for a second time in a slightly altered variation (Von Geyso 2014:151).

Much of the music's thematic material is derived from the symphony's previous two movements; for example, Hofmeyr derives the A-section's opening melody (*Tranquillo*) and the shimmering orchestration that underscores it from the second movement's utopian-sounding coda, where Opperman's big nation mirroring God's light was represented musically (Hofmeyr 2003). One can therefore argue that

the so-called transcendence from suffering to hope in *Sinfonia africana*'s third movement is actually already achieved in the second movement, and that the third movement serves either as a consolidation, or that it otherwise creates another narrative effect altogether – probably “reasserting hegemony”.

The third movement also begins with an opening gong, but instead of a desolate landscape, Hofmeyr's music now evokes one that is lush and lively. Almost the entire orchestra plays complex broken chords, trills, scales and glissandi in their uppermost registers to achieve this effect. The horns and trumpet state the extended main theme, and are then joined in a repetition by the choir, whose block harmonisations of the first stanza's words double the music of the brass instruments (Von Geyso 2014:151). (In the recording of the world premiere performance, the soprano soloist does this instead – probably because the choir was under-rehearsed and could not cope with Hofmeyr's complex orchestration.)

The B-section alters the mood by introducing an animated spinning-wheel effect in oscillating patterns played by the stringed instruments (*glissando tremolato* in the double bass), while the choir sings closed-mouth glissandi and the flutes play trills on arpeggiated notes.

S. solo

Poco più mosso ♩ = c. 48-52

S.

C.

T.

B.

Vn. I

Vn. II

Vl.

Vc.

Cb.

gliss

ppp

gliss

ppp

gliss

ppp

gliss

ppp

Poco più mosso ♩ = c. 48-52

con sord. flautando (sul tasto con molto arco)

ppp

con sord. flautando (sul tasto con molto arco)

ppp

unite con sord. flautando (sul tasto con molto arco)

ppp

con sord. flautando (sul tasto con molto arco)

ppp

gliss. tremolato IIIa corda

pp

The musical score is for a piece titled "Die seewind waai om my". It features a vocal soloist (S. solo) and a choir (S., C., T., B.). The lyrics are: "Die see - wind waai om / I feel the sea - wind's". The tempo is marked *mp* (moderato). The dynamics include *sempre sim.* (sempre sostenuto), *unite con sc* (unite con sordina), and *con s* (con sordina). The score is in 4/4 time and features various musical notations such as notes, rests, and slurs.


Music Example 9: "Die seewind waai om my" (Hofmeyr 2003:108)

There are four stanzas of Van den Heever's poem that are incorporated into this section of the third movement, and they are sung by both the soprano soloist and the choir. There is a Wagnerian quality to Hofmeyr's music throughout this entire movement, but at this moment in the B-section's commencement that Romantic effect is increased by the soprano's mention of a ghost ship and a lost star. The choir's second (in the recording first) entry is unaccompanied and gives respite from what has thus far been a very busy orchestration. They announce the poem's literary theme – the ancient African continent and the incipient *Afrikaanse Gedagte*. The quiet, hymn-like quality of their entry (which was answered by the stringed instruments) is quickly erased when Hofmeyr reintroduces the various instrumental trills, oscillating

patterns and glissandi that marked the ghost ship's sighting at the beginning of the B-section. Hofmeyr then introduces a jarring (even militaristic) burst by incorporating the snare drum, along with fast staccato patterns in the brass instruments.

This dramatic device announces and accentuates the importance of the following stanza in the poem, which concerns “dark hordes”. To everything else already involved in orchestrating this section, Hofmeyr now adds an ominously soft and low *stretto* pattering in the choir (lyrics about the dark hordes), while the soprano soloist sings full-voiced above them (the same lyrics).⁵ Thereafter follows a much calmer reflective section in which the soprano soloist – followed by the choir singing the same lyrics in *stretto* – comes to a realisation about what has been lost. Her insight lies at the heart of the Spenglerian prophecy that dooms the desiccated Western civilisation to its inevitable downfall:

S. solo *mp*



ons le-we is ver-dor net soos die sand
our lives have grown as a - rid as the sands

Music Example 10: “Ons lewe is verdor net soos die sand” (Hofmeyr 2014:121)

The soprano soloist and choir continue singing in *stretto*, doubled by the woodwind instruments, and ask for their heart – presumably the collective heart of Afrikanerdom – to be made as deep as a chasm (*afgrond*) and pure (*suiwer*).

As an extension of the *stretto* singing, Hofmeyr now presents a more monumental *fugato* in the movement's C-section, as the lyrics still continue with the line of thought that arose out of the Spenglerian realisation that Afrikaners lead an arid cultural existence. Similar to the *fugato* in the first movement, this one also creates the impression of organic growth towards a point of actualisation. This section then also begins with the lowest instrumentation and voices, and builds gradually higher with each new entry of the theme, until the soprano soloist towers out above the choir – who are virtually inaudible in the recording – while singing about how “our ancestral past should arise with the ancient power of life itself from the shoreless vastness, and like a wave break into the present and show us the way to the stars”. With the utopianism of the word “stars”, Hofmeyr reintroduces his shimmering orchestration in a modified repetition

⁵ This chapter discusses further on how at least one listener at the world premiere confused these dark hordes, which Van den Heever scholars argue are ancestral spirits, with the “black menace” that threatened the safety of Afrikanerdom’s “laager”. It is Hofmeyr’s orchestration that sounds threatening in this case, and therefore Hofmeyr’s orchestration that is responsible for a literal interpretation of the text.

of the A-section, while the poem's lyrics describe how Afrikanerdom's renewed soul gets lost in the stars. Remarkably, even though by now Hofmeyr has only introduced four of this movement's ten sections, the music for "Afrika" is already two-thirds in and is fast approaching its triumphal conclusion.

Hofmeyr then introduces the beginning of the movement's coda (the D-section), with a deeply moving musical theme that could ideally have been carried through to the symphony's end. It begins with the lyrics, found in the second last stanza of Van den Heever's poem, that my thesis associates with the beatific utopianism of Christ's "Sermon on the Mount":

Oh sing through us and make us humane, vast,
our eyes measure to cleave the distant blue,
then flaws break in murmuring of the foam
and we become pure by believing and knowing!

The way in which Hofmeyr sets the first half of this stanza to alternate between 3/4 and C time signatures is dramatically effective, and captures the listener's attention with the expectation that this triumphal choir and soprano soloist are about to conclude one of the acts from a Verdi opera:

The musical score is for a choir and soprano soloist. It consists of seven staves, each with a vocal part and lyrics in Afrikaans and English. The time signature alternates between 3/4 and C. The lyrics are: "ons en maak ons mens - lik, maak ons ruim, maak ons o - ë sag om ver / us, and make us hu - man, make us free, make our eyes grow mild to cleave".

Part	Lyrics (Afrikaans)	Lyrics (English)
S. solo	ons en maak ons mens - lik, maak ons ruim, maak ons o - ë sag om ver	us, and make us hu - man, make us free, make our eyes grow mild to cleave
S.	ons en maak ons mens - lik, maak ons ruim, maak ons o - ë sag om ver	us, and make us hu - man, make us free, make our eyes grow mild to cleave
Ms.	ons en maak ons mens - lik, maak ons ruim, maak ons o - ë sag om ver	us, and make us hu - man, make us free, make our eyes grow mild to cleave
C.	ons en maak ons mens - lik, maak ons ruim, maak ons o - ë sag om ver	us, and make us hu - man, make us free, make our eyes grow mild to cleave
T.	ons en maak ons mens - lik, maak ons ruim, maak ons o - ë sag om ver	us, and make us hu - man, make us free, make our eyes grow mild to cleave
Bar.	ons en maak ons mens - lik, maak ons ruim, maak ons o - ë sag om ver	us, and make us hu - man, make us free, make our eyes grow mild to cleave
B.	ons en maak ons mens - lik, maak ons ruim, maak ons o - ë sag om ver	us, and make us hu - man, make us free, make our eyes grow mild to cleave

Music Example 11: "O sing deur ons en maak ons menslik" (Hofmeyr 2003:140)

The choir and soloist first sing unaccompanied, and their two phrases are thereafter answered by the stringed instruments. This triumphant hymn-like music, however, only communicates the first two lines of the stanza. Hofmeyr could easily have carried on with this music, but instead he reintroduces the disjointedness that first began with the oscillating spinning-wheel music when the ghost ship was sighted. That the music's structural plan now rushes through five more sections, when the third movement's duration is already three quarters complete, adds to a sudden impression of overwhelming vertigo. The choir and soprano soloist sing this "Sermon on the Mount"-stanza's concluding two lines in sequential block harmonies that rise by a third interval and further increases the already hastened musical atmosphere. The soprano soloist sings about "becoming pure and knowing", and with these words she is supposed to become the kind of woman that Elize Botha (2003:45) has called C.M. van den Heever's *skoonheidstroos* (consolation of purity/beauty).⁶ Yet, the soprano soloist's singing becomes increasingly frenetic, as her vocal part ascends above the stave – *fortissimo* – and remains there for much of the symphony's conclusion. This high-pitched and fanatical-sounding screaming – for lack of a better word – contributes to a neo-primitive and orgiastic atmosphere that marks the conclusion of *Sinfonia africana*. This may very well be an unintended musical representation of Spengler's "Caesarism", which marks the final despotic phase of development before a civilisation's downfall.

Hofmeyr then reintroduces a motif used in the earlier *fugato* C-section (Von Geyso 2014:154). The resulting music is sung sequentially in block harmonies that amplify the coda's intensity: "Oh Africa! your name roars like the sea! Oh Africa! your name roars like the sea! Oh Africa! your name roars like the sea!" The spinning-wheel music from the B-section is introduced once again, along with the *fugato* from the C-section, the subject of which is played three octaves apart by the tuba and the first violins (playing harmonics) (Von Geyso 2014:155). The soprano soloist then enters singing briefly in a lower register, with words from Van den Heever's final stanza: "your voice is on the night wind, deep and dark". The choir then sings along with her in *stretto*: "and in us calls an ancient awakened bidding for firelight blazing brightly in the darkness". High and loud again, she sounds completely possessed:



Music Example 12: "Vure van die nag wat helder flonker" (Hofmeyr 2003:157)

⁶ Botha writes that the women in Van den Heever's poetry and novels fulfil a similar purification function as the mighty visualised panorama of South Africa's empty landscapes does.

The choir and soprano soloist enter again with the incantation: “Oh Africa! your name roars like the sea! Oh Africa! your name roars like the sea! Oh Africa! your name roars like the sea!” For a moment the orgiastic pace is slackened when Hofmeyr reintroduces the D-section’s compelling choral singing that shifts between 3/4 and C time signatures, with the lyrics of the additional tenth stanza he composed for Van den Heever’s poem. But this tiny rational and humane musical moment is then overwhelmed by more frenzied screaming that tries to harness atavistic primitivist agencies:

“Oh Africa! Oh Africa! Oh Africa!”

Reception

Unlike the many enthusiastic appraisals of Hofmeyr’s *Sinfonia africana*, Muller’s review (21 August 2004) “Nuwe Africana wek kommer en vrae” (New Africana elicits concern and questions) was cautionary:

Die Sinfonia Africana bied baie van die dinge wat ’n mens bewonderend met Hofmeyr assosieer: die sensitiewe en tegelyk geil hantering van die stem in die tweede deel, verbeeldingryke orkestrasie van die musikale alchemie wat volg op Opperman se gespieëld nasie en die lenige soepel melodieë waarvan die lote vlak gewortel oor die werk rank (Muller 2004:10).

[English translation]

The Sinfonia Africana offers many of the things that one associates admiringly with Hofmeyr: the sensitive and simultaneously lush handling of the voice in the second part, imaginative orchestration of the musical alchemy that follows Opperman’s mirrored nation and the lithe supple use of melody, the rhizomes of which shoot shallow roots throughout the work.

After complimenting Hofmeyr’s compositional technique, Muller states that *Sinfonia africana* leaves him asking uncomfortable questions about its music and ideology. According to him its meta-narrative, lush orchestration, dramatic gestures and overall tonal plan (built on an ascending third) are all Romantic compositional devices, and he is troubled by the rhetoric that this Romanticism implies.

Ja, ’n mens kan hoor die werk is van ons tyd, maar miskien is dit juis hierdie gespletenheid wat my in hierdie simfonie bly hinder. My beswaar is nie soseer die Romantiese etos as die Romantiese retoriek nie. Die verskil tussen ’n idealistiese dromer in ’n T-hemp en jeans en een met ’n krawat, monokel, sy-onderbaadjie en goue sakhorlosie.

Kán hierdie musikale uitrusting vandag steeds sonder *ironie* aangebied word? Anders as van Hofmeyr se vorige werk, laat die Sinfonia Africana my hieroor twyfel. Wanneer die geykthede van die Romantiese dodemars in kleurryke clichés deur die eerste deel paradeer, hoor ek serieuze intensie. Ek is nie oortuig dat dit werk nie. ’n Pluraliteit van style in ons eeu het nie die konsep van anachronisme oorbodig gemaak nie. Alles is ons veroorloof, maar nie alles is heilsaam nie (Muller 2004:10).

[English translation]

Yes, one can hear the work is of our time, but maybe it is just this discrepancy that keeps bothering me in this symphony. My objection is aimed not so much at the Romantic ethos as at the Romantic rhetoric. The difference between an idealistic dreamer in a T-shirt and jeans and one with a cravat, monocle, silk waistcoat and golden pocket watch.

Can this musical wardrobe be presented without *irony* in this day and age? Unlike Hofmeyr's previous work, the *Sinfonia Africana* leaves me unsure of this. When the stereotypes of the Romantic funeral march parade through the first part in richly coloured clichés, I hear serious intent. I am not convinced that it works. A plurality of styles in our century has not made the concept of anachronism redundant. Everything is afforded us, but not everything is wholesome.

Muller's critique here is a music-stylistic one: he highlights how *Sinfonia africana* is un-ironically anachronistic, without the consciousness of pastiche that characterises other composers' use of earlier styles (e.g. Berio's *Sinfonia*). Near the end of his review, Muller turns to another area of critique where he questions the composition's ideology.

Dit is laastens ook onvermydelik dat vroe gestel sal word oor die komponis se ideologiese posisionering. Daar bestaan 'n paar ongelukkig historiese presedente van patriotiese koor- en orkeskombinasies op Afrikaanse tekste. Die *Sinfonia Africana* is 'n opdragwerk van die Vriende van Afrikaans, en is 'n toevoeging tot hierdie genre. Ons hoor verse met partikuliere geskiedenis in vreemde kontekste om 'n program te dien van Afrika as plek van geestelike vernuwning en hoop. Is dit ons droom? Was dit nie ons droom 15 jaar gelede nie? Het dit nie intussen verander nie, meer sinies geword, meer helder, meer aards en plekgebonden, meer nederig en beskeie? En dan: Kan Afrikaans – óú Afrikaans – hierdie program oortuigend bedien? In my opinie: nie in hierdie werk nie (Muller 2004:10).

[English translation]

Lastly it is unavoidable that questions will be asked about the composer's ideological positioning. A number of unfortunate historical precedents of patriotic choir and orchestra combinations with Afrikaans texts exist. The *Sinfonia Africana* is a commissioned work of the Friends of Afrikaans, and is an addition to this genre. We hear poems with particular histories in strange contexts to serve a programme of Africa as place of spiritual renewal and hope. Is that our dream? Was that not our dream 15 years ago? Has it not changed in the meantime, become more cynical, more bright, more earthy and place-bound, more humble and unassuming? And then: Can Afrikaans – old Afrikaans – serve this programme convincingly? In my opinion: not in this work.

These last statements caused astonishing outrage: not only because Muller stated questions about Hofmeyr's ideological positioning, but more so because he asked questions about the ideological content of an outdated cluster of Afrikaans poetry. The degree of offence taken because of Muller's criticism is disproportionate to the subtlety and provisional nature of his review. To the best of my knowledge, nobody else has published any analysis on why this extreme reaction was generated; except perhaps Muller (2009), who presents an overview of the reception discourse in the publication of a paper he presented at Stellenbosch University's

annual Afrikaans-Nederlands Colloquium, almost two months after the premiere of Hofmeyr's symphony.⁷ My introduction to this chapter suggests that animosity from the *Eerste Nasionale Taalberaad vir Afrikaans* – which the *Vriende van Afrikaans* helped organise and which took place in the week after Muller's review was published – spilled over into the reception of Hofmeyr's symphony. My discussion now presents a chronological account of the various newspaper responses to Muller's review. One member of the public was apparently so invested in the *Sinfonia africana* debate that he managed to publish three separate letters in *Die Burger* within the timeframe of a single week.

27 August 2004: “Hofmeyr se werk is monumentaal” (*Hofmeyr's work is monumental*)

Deon Knobel (2004a:19) quotes liberally from Muller's review, appearing to generate a parody of what Knobel terms Muller's “pseudo-intellectual” language. He declares as irrelevant Hofmeyr's “ideological positioning”, as well as the “unfortunate precedents” of patriotic choir and orchestra combinations; and then he also questions Muller's own ideological positioning. Knobel praises the monumental construction and profound message of *Sinfonia africana*, and he cites Opperman's “Gebed om die Gebeente” as proof that Hofmeyr's symphony has universal relevance – unconnected to time, place, country or politics:

“Gebed om die Gebeente” kon ewenwel 'n oorlogsverhaal beskryf in Russies, Joods of enige wêreld- en Afrika-taal, veral dié in Suid-Afrika – uit lande nou of voorheen geteister deur oorlog en verdrukking.

'n Geliefde se dood deur vyand of onderdrukkers van menseregte veroorsaak, is traumaties genoeg. Verdwyning waar “gebeendere” nooit gevind word nie – met die immer teenwoordige hoop dat die persoon wel lewend gevind mag word, met hartverskeurende gevolge – is aangeteken deur Antjie Krog uit talle aandoenlike stories voor die Waarheid-en-versoeningskommissie. “Die verse met partikuliere geskiedenis in vreemde kontekste” (sic) was inderdaad toepaslik “om 'n program te dien van Afrika as plek van geestelike vernuwing” en nie as “droom ... van 15 jaar gelede nie” (Knobel 2004a:19).

[English translation]

“Prayer for the Bones” could anyway describe a war story in Russian, Jewish or any world and African language, especially those in South Africa – from countries ravaged by war and oppression either now or previously.

⁷ Other authors who have published about Hofmeyr or *Sinfonia africana* have either only mentioned this difficult reception in passing (Claasen 2012 and Pooley 2008), ignored it altogether (Franke 2007), communicated their own brief critical overview of the symphony (Blake 2005), or created a positivistic and formalist analysis of *Sinfonia africana* that uncritically accepts its universalist narrative and delivers an apologia for its outdatedness (Von Geyso 2014).

A loved one's death, at the hands of an enemy or suppressors of human rights, is traumatic enough. Disappearance where "bones" are never found – with the always present hope that the person might be found alive, with heart-rending consequence – is documented by Antjie Krog from numerous poignant stories before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. "The poems with particular histories in strange contexts" (sic) were indeed suited "to serve a programme of Africa as a place of spiritual renewal" and not as "dream ... from 15 years ago".

Finally, Knobel complains that Muller only discusses the quality of the premiere performance in one short paragraph. He then steps in himself and praises the soprano soloist (Sabina Mossolow) for her "staggering" technique and musicality, which enabled her to master the difficult demands of the score. He nevertheless criticises the conductor for his unsympathetic treatment of the soloist and choir, and for not controlling the orchestra's volume to make them better heard.

Stating, as Knobel does, that the composer's ideological positioning is irrelevant ignores music's ability to communicate ideology (even without the composer's intent), and disbelieves that such matters could be more important than praising the soprano's ability to negotiate a high tessitura.

The unfortunate precedents of patriotic choir and orchestra combinations include:

- Arnold van Wyk's *Eufoeskantate* (Centenary Festival Cantata) (1938)
- Rosa Nepgen's *Die Dieper Reg* (The Deeper Right) (1943)
- Stephen Eyssen's *Ons Boerwording* (Our Becoming Boers) (1949)
- Hubert du Plessis's *Slamse Beelde* (Malay Scenes) (1959)
- Hubert du Plessis's *Suid-Afrika: Nag en Daeraad* (South Africa: Night and Daybreak) (1966)
- Hubert du Plessis's *Huguenote-kantate* (Huguenot Cantata) (1988)

27 August 2004: "Dié kritiek was ongevraag" (This criticism was unwarranted)

Janette Badenhorst (2004:19) questions the motive behind Muller's criticism, and asks whether he was "subtly influenced" to furnish such a negative criticism for a great local work, when others experienced the symphony with tremendous appreciation. Badenhorst writes that Muller's mention of "ideological positioning" makes her wonder about his own motive: does the fact that this work was commissioned by the *Vriende van Afrikaans* detract from this brilliant composer's contribution? She furthermore describes as "incomprehensible" (*gaan my verstand te bowe*) how Muller could derive such pleasure (*soveel behae daarin skep*)

from finding fault with historical precedents of choir and orchestra combinations with Afrikaans texts. If something more “earthy and place-bound” is longed for, then she suggests that Muller should confine himself to artists who bellow out “new” Afrikaans with shallow sounds. Presumably, she refers here to singers of the popular genre called *luisterliedjie* (listening song). She explains that this new symphony with “old Afrikaans” texts served the programme convincingly. It was greeted with thunderous applause and hailed with a standing ovation by an audience wearing jeans and T-shirts, as well as people without cravats and silk waistcoats. She expresses her pride in the composer of this great work.

28 August 2004: “‘Sinfonia’ was nie ’n feesviering nie” (‘Sinfonia’ was not a celebration)

Carmen Marchetti (2004:23) complains of her disappointment with *Sinfonia africana*. She explains how Thursday night symphony concerts are treasured events in her social calendar: Normally one can listen to beautiful music by an astonishing group of musicians, and experience strange musical worlds and long forgotten stories. Although, this is not the case for her with Hofmeyr’s symphony:

“Weersinwekkend” en “tragies” is woorde wat by my opgekom het. Die musiek en keuse van poësie het my met baie vrae gelaat en min bewondering vir die taakgroep onder wie se leiding die projek ontwikkel is.

Die musiek was swaar, en selfs sonder die onvanpaste keuse van poësie, het dit my geensins laat voel dat dit ’n feesviering is nie. Ek het in die musiek geen verloop van “smart en wanhoop” tot “hoop en geestelike vernuwning” gevind nie. Dit spyt my dat my tegniese kennis van musiek beperk is en dat ek nie met juiste vorm kan oordra hoe die swaar donkerte en rigiede ritmes my siel geteister het nie (Marchetti 2004:23).

[English translation]

“Repugnant” and “tragic” are words that occurred to me. The music and choice of poetry left me with many questions and little admiration for the task group under whose guidance the project was developed.

The music was heavy, and even without the unsuitable choice of poetry, it by no means made me feel as if this was a celebration. I found no progression from “sorrow and despair” to “hope and spiritual renewal” in the music. I regret that my technical knowledge of music is limited and that I cannot convey in precise form how the heavy darkness and rigid rhythms harried my soul.

As a young South African who only still speaks Afrikaans because of the beautiful literature written in this language, Marchetti is disappointed with the banality of the poems Hofmeyr chose to set to music. Although she respects Opperman’s stature as a poet, she does not understand Hofmeyr’s selection of

“Gebed om die Gebeente”. The use of C.M. van den Heever’s “Afrika” and its mention of “black hordes” also makes her very uncomfortable. She finds it ironic that this project originally began as a homage to women, since the resulting symphony does not set any female poet’s words to music.

Marchetti agrees with Muller that “old Afrikaans” is not suitable for this work’s stated programme, and she is vexed at the work’s obduracy and its entanglement in the historical past of a minority within a minority. She explains that the true friends of Afrikaans are people like Nelson Mandela, who quote relevant Afrikaans poetry at the correct time and in the correct context. This statement of hers references how Mandela recited Ingrid Jonker’s poem “Die Kind” (The Child) at his presidential inauguration. Jonker’s poem dates from the 1960s, and was composed in response to a child’s death at the Sharpeville Massacre.

28 August 2004: “Dis onverdraagsaamheid” (*It is intolerance*)

The Afrikaner poet Lina Spies was among the better known public figures who partook in *Sinfonia africana*’s reception discourse. Her first observation is that, reading Muller’s review of the symphony, one encounters the same prejudices that are prevalent in literary criticism; viz. that “romantic features” are identified and downplayed as “rhetoric” and “clichés”. She furthermore mentions her irritation with Muller for referring to himself in the third person in his review, since calling oneself “this listener” amounts to an annoying postmodernist convention that conceals venomous statements (Spies 2004:23). She also feels that Muller’s complaints about the romantic rhetoric in *Sinfonia africana*, along with another comment he made about Hofmeyr’s institutional influence (creative and pedagogic), paints the composer into a corner of supposedly being outdated, both in his choice of musical language and in his choice of poetry.

Conceding that C.M van den Heever’s poem “Afrika” is archaic, Spies nevertheless disagrees with Muller’s comment that “old Afrikaans” is unsuitable to communicate this symphony’s message. She finds no problem with any of the three poems that Hofmeyr selected for his libretto.⁸ Finally, she accuses Muller of intolerance towards the history of Afrikaners; an attitude she finds symptomatic of the provincialism that T.S. Eliot described in his essay, “What Is A Classic?”:

⁸ Lina Spies is an acknowledged expert on Opperman’s poetry.

It is a provincialism, not of space, but of time, ... one for which the world is the property solely of the living, a property in which the dead hold no shares... If this kind of provincialism led to greater tolerance... there might be more to be said for it; but it seems more likely to lead to our becoming indifferent, in matters where we ought to maintain a distinctive dogma or standard (Spies 2004:23).

My Second Chapter, which discusses Coetzee's formulation of Bach as a "classic" (using Eliot's essay "What Is Classic?" as a model) mentions George Steiner's (1971:33) dissatisfaction with Eliot for publishing about "classics" immediately after the Second World War, without mentioning how that conflagration's conspicuous barbarism unsettled the assumed sanctities and supposed "humanising value" of European culture. I maintain that Spies's argument is problematic on the same basis. Ascribing to Eliot's "dogmas" and "standards" constructs an alibi for Afrikaner "classics" – archaic poetry included – that denies their contribution to constituting a broader cultural narrative that tolerated and sanctioned apartheid. Moreover, the idea of the "classic" is inscribed with obsessions over survival.

Eliot's essay sits oddly within the context in which Spies quotes from it, which is to guard three "classics" of Afrikaans literature (along with Hofmeyr's symphonic setting of them) against pernicious postmodernist criticism. In "What Is A Classic?", Eliot traces the literary "classic" to Virgil's poetry, which is arguably more significant than the "old Afrikaans" poetry that features in Hofmeyr's libretto. Eliot (1945:31) writes that "no modern language can hope to produce a classic, in the sense which I [Eliot] have called Virgil a classic. Our classic, the classic of all Europe, is Virgil." Unless one believes, like C.M. van den Heever did, that Europe's culture is moribund and therefore needs transplantation and renewal on a new continent, Eliot's view about Europe's "classic" proves an inconvenience for asserting the unimpeachable artistic status of *Sinfonia africana*.

31 August 2004: "'n Grootse werk' ('Sinfonia' a majestic work)

Maryna Botha (2004:13) published a short letter in *Die Burger*, which states that Hofmeyr's *Sinfonia africana* is a majestic work and a unique moment in the history of music. She maintains that the symphony's meaning transcends the clichés and "–isms" of Muller's convoluted critical vocabulary. The symphony uses Afrikaans texts to communicate hope, she explains, meaning that it cannot be confused with any brand of nationalism. She concludes that Muller must remember that the work was commissioned by the *Vriende van Afrikaans* (Friends of Afrikaans), and not the *Vriende van Afrikaners* ("Friends of Afrikaners"). With this comment, Botha suggests a valid point that there are other groups in South Africa who also speak Afrikaans. Whether

she implies that the symphony was also written for them, and thereby invites them into the reception community, is not clear. Judging from the exchanges at the *Eerste Nasionale Taalberaad vir Afrikaans*, especially the one between Jonathan Jansen and Dan Roodt that I mention in this chapter's first footnote, including Afrikaans-speakers from other races would be anathema to the more conservative ideologues who participated in this symphony's reception.

31 August 2004: "*Lees Afrikaans korrek*" (*Read Afrikaans correctly*)

Deon Knobel's (2004b:13) second published letter rebukes Carmen Marchetti, who wrote a letter in support of Muller's criticism, and also added some further criticism of her own against Hofmeyr's symphony. In regard to Marchetti's complaint about the depiction of "black hordes" in Van den Heever's "Afrika", Knobel admonishes her to read Afrikaans correctly. He maintains that she confuses the poem's "dark hordes" – not "black hordes" – with the historical phenomenon of the *swart gevaar* (the so-called "black menace"). He explains that the dark entities described in the poem's text are ancestral spirits who transmit the gift of spiritual renewal to the mortal plane. He then states that her inability to read or quote Afrikaans correctly either looks like slovenliness, or else leaves one wondering if she understands things incorrectly on purpose in order to confirm her own presuppositions. (Knobel is possibly unaware that Van den Heever's enduring fascination with the slumbering and dark spiritual forces that support and awaken national cultures is pivotal to the idea of *die Afrikaanse Gedagte*: It is informed by Van den Heever's utopian commitment towards transforming, both spiritually and physically, the dark African continent into a homestead for a transplanted Western civilisation; i.e. "white" Afrikaners. Marchetti's instinctive interpretation may thus not be as wrong as Knobel suggests.)

Because Marchetti wrote that she almost left *Sinfonia africana*'s premiere performance midway, Knobel now offers himself to hold open the concert hall's door any future time she should want to leave a concert because the music being performed upset her. Finally, he thanks another music reviewer for her persistent high standards in reviewing concerts, most recently demonstrated with the Nobilis Trio.

2 September 2004: “Taal het nie vyande nodig” (*Language does not need enemies*)

Chris Walton (2004:12) writes from Pretoria, far removed from the Western Cape’s cultural surrounds, where the ongoing dispute about *Sinfonia africana* is taking place. He congratulates the newspaper’s editors for employing the only Afrikaans-speaking reviewer of international standing to assess the composition and performance of new South African art music, and furthermore for providing the necessary column space to sustain a debate on such concerns. He then comments on the unfolding reception discourse:

Ek is nietemin verbaas oor die feit dat ’n gematigde resensie soos hierdie so ’n ongematigde reaksie uitlok. Die argumente van Muller se kritici – Lina Spies se kommentaar ten spyte – is nie net provinsiaal en onverdraagsaam nie, maar ook latent anti-intellektueel. Die begeerte om buite die geskiedenis te leef is nie ongewoon vir burgers van ’n post-totalitêre staat waarin taal en kultuur deur ’n ideologie gekompromitteer was nie. Die verontwaardiging van die briëfskrywers verrai net hul onsekerheid en benoudheid oor die huidige en toekomstige posisionering van Afrikaans (Walton 2004:12).

[English translation]

I am nonetheless surprised that a moderate review such as this one should provoke such an immoderate reaction. The arguments of Muller’s critics – the comments of Lina Spies notwithstanding – are not only provincial and intolerant, but also latently anti-intellectual. The desire to live outside of history is not uncommon for citizens of a post-totalitarian state in which language and culture were compromised by an ideology. The indignation of the letter-writers merely reveals their uncertainty and anxiety over the present-day and future positioning of Afrikaans.

By mentioning that South Africa is a post-totalitarian state – a characterisation which most Afrikaners would deny emphatically, because they do not recognise that it ever was a totalitarian state – Walton opens up a register of dystopian anxiety. Of everyone participating in the *Sinfonia africana* discourse (except Muller), he makes the most explicit link between the symphony’s public reception and general anxieties that Afrikaners have over the future survival of their language and identity. While confessing his absence at the symphony’s world premiere performance, Walton nevertheless remarks that this work seems to have been regarded a “classic” even before Hofmeyr set its libretto to music. He voices his respect for Hofmeyr as a composer, but adds that when contemporary “friends” of Afrikaans commission a work that sets C.M. van den Heever’s “Afrika” to music, then Afrikaans hardly needs enemies.

2 September 2004: “’n Verruimende boodskap” (*An expansive message*)

John and Collena Blanckenburg (2004:12) respond to Carmen Marchetti’s letter, and criticise her for demonstrating the very short-sightedness she claimed to perceive in Hofmeyr’s symphony. They argue that her references to Mandela and Ingrid Jonker represent her own subjective view of South Africa’s democracy. For them, Marchetti’s ideological discomfort infers that poetry celebrating Africa must correspond with the sanctioned discourse of apartheid’s victims – i.e. the majority of the democracy. They maintain that this subjective attitude – also evident in Muller’s review – dooms to obsolescence three Afrikaans-speaking minority poets from the apartheid era.

Judging that Marchetti does not read “old Afrikaans” poetry, the Blanckenburgs enquire about her reading habits concerning old poetry in other languages. This segues into an opinion that her ideological predisposition blinkers her from the meaning in Opperman’s “Gebed om die Gebeente”. Whereas the Blanckenburgs’ entire correspondence thus far relies on an argument that Afrikaners – who are a minority – cannot be expected to identify with the worldview of apartheid’s victims, they now summon *universality* to argue that other groups should nevertheless identify with the Afrikaner worldview:

Sy is werklik onnodig ontsteld oor die afwesigheid van ’n vrouedigter, want Opperman transformeer deur vernuftige beeldspel die histories-gesitueerde Afrikanermoeder, ingeperk deur eie bitterheid en vernedering, tot universele simbool – ’n kragtige vrouefiguur wat versoenend bid dat “ons as een groot nasie in dié gramadoelas met elke stukkie sinkplaat en met elke wiel, en wit en bruin en swart foelie agter skoon glas” ewig God se sonlig “vang en na mekaar toe spieël”.

Aardgebonde engte van ideologie (hier dié van die Afrikaner) word getransformeer tot die geestelike ruimtes van ware demokrasie. In die vokale sluitsteendeel van die simfonie is dié versoeningsboodskap duidelik hoorbaar in die ontroerende en meesleurende ritmes waarin vrouesolostem en koor dit uitjubil. Juis Afrikaanssprekende digters mag hierdie geestesverruimende boodskap bring “op die regte tyd en konteks” (Blanckenburg 2004:12).

[English translation]

She is really unnecessarily dismayed over the absence of a female poet, since Opperman transforms, with an inventive play of imagery, the historically situated Afrikaner mother, constricted by own bitterness and humiliation, into a universal symbol – a powerful propitiatory female figure who prays that, “as one great nation in this wasteland” we everlastingly “catch and mirror to one another” God’s sunlight, “with every scrap of sheet-iron and with every wheel, and white and brown and black foil behind clear glass”.

The earthbound narrowness of ideology (in this case that of the Afrikaner) becomes transformed into the spiritual expanses of true democracy. In the vocal omphalos [*vokale sluitsteendeel*] of the symphony this message of reconciliation is overtly audible in the stirring and absorbing rhythms through which the female solo voice and choir rejoice in it. It is precisely Afrikaans-speaking poets who are allowed to bring this spiritually expansive message “in the right time and context”.

The Blanckenburgs' idea that Opperman's poem about a historically situated degradation is transformed, by the sheer power of his language, into a *universal* expression relies on a great deal of utopian thinking. First, there is the ethnocentric assumption that, although oneself does not identify with the poetic narratives of the "black" majority, one's own poetry transcends its specificity through inventive language, and is therefore *universalised* into an expansively human narrative with which the "black" majority is summarily assumed to identify. Second, there is the redolence of German Romanticism in Opperman's language: specifically the luminescent imagery – itself utopian – that requires *everyone* in the nation to mirror God's sunlight to one another – in a multicoloured tinfoil metaphor!

(Meanwhile, black foil does not reflect light.)

After the Blanckenburgs explicitly rejected the "black" approach to reconciliation (the Ingrid Jonker poem at Mandela's inauguration), their proposed approach to reconciliation demonstrates ethnocentrism, by requiring everyone to reconcile (become more human/humane) in a uniform manner chosen by Afrikaners. The *universalisation* of one's own culture thus becomes the ultimate way in which to try and assure ethnic survival: Images of light in Opperman's poem suggest God's approval of a specific culture, and his expansion of their worldview is confirmed because he apparently shines unto the world through them. History has judged harshly the expansion and universalisation of an Afrikaner worldview, reflected in the Kuiperian methodology (apartheid) that Afrikaners chose to reconcile diverse cultures. Opperman's insistence on naming and maintaining different colours of foil is not reassuring.

If Afrikaners were previously too selfish to allow others an equitable survival, then why should their poets now have the ultimate say in how to achieve reconciliation? And when it becomes "subjective", "undemocratic" and "short-sighted" to now state that Afrikaner heritage is ideologically suspect, then why must one ignore that Afrikanerdom's heritage propped up the undemocratic worldview of apartheid? The onus of cultural sensitivity and insensitivity should not be placed on Marchetti who identifies with the more accommodating ideological constellation of Mandela and Jonker, but rather on those utopians who were the benefactors of apartheid and nonetheless continue to purify themselves with rituals of light.

3 September 2004: “*Trant van resensie verbaas*” (*Manner of review surprises*)

Jozua Serfontein (2004:19) presents an alternative review to Muller’s, praising the quality of Hofmeyr’s music, as well as congratulating all musicians involved for their enthusiasm and discipline. He expresses an opinion that *Sinfonia africana* asks for the marshalling of even bigger forces. Lastly, he criticises Muller for the obscurity and incomprehensibility of his vocabulary. He explains that readers want to be informed of the live performance of new works, and not read about ideological problems.

3 September 2004: “*Roerende luisterervaring*” (*Affecting listening experience*)

Veranza Joubert (2004:19) publishes a letter that describes *Sinfonia africana* as an important musical work, and a listening experience greeted with great enthusiasm. She calls the symphony “spellbinding” – a brilliant work with timeless qualities that integrates music and poetry in a pure and sensitive expressivity. For her, the audience’s spontaneous enthusiasm contrasted starkly with the image of a pretentious, irrelevant and “unwholesome” work that Muller communicated. Joubert acknowledges that great works of art (“classics”?) are evaluated and invite commentary, but she nonetheless thinks that the malice (*venyn*) in Muller’s review was out of place: He had the privilege to review a performance of historical importance, but apparently abused the opportunity to advance his own agenda. It therefore appears to Joubert as if Muller is bogged down in a trend of political discrimination (*tydsgees van politieke diskriminasie*), where certain circles regard Afrikaans-usage as an indication of narrow-mindedness. Thus Muller ignores the prayer for reconciliation between “white”, “brown” and “black” cultures at the end of Opperman’s poem.

Joubert maintains that Muller’s music-technical criticism was misleading, since a tonal plan based on thirds is insignificant in a work where neither the initial A nor the eventual C# are tonal, and where material based on thirds is a lesser compositional ingredient. The second movement contained much of the thorough continuous melodic variation that Muller could not or did not want to hear. Joubert announces that a CD will be released shortly, which listeners will appreciate in spite of Muller’s review.

4 September 2004: “Kritiek berus op hoorsê” (*Criticism is founded on hearsay*)

Deon Knobel (2004c:15) publishes a third letter, this time mostly in reaction to Chris Walton’s comments. He begins by stating that the polemic surrounding *Sinfonia africana* remains surprisingly interesting, and that the amount of discussion it has invited is heartening. Before criticising Walton, he first imparts one more response to Carmen Marchetti’s complaints, which provoked his previous letter to *Die Burger*:

Oudpres. Nelson Mandela, vir wie ek die grootste respek het, het die Ingrid Jonker-gedig waarna verwys word, ongelukkig in Engels voorgelees al is hy Afrikaans uitstekend magtig. En hy het, sover ek weet, tydens sy verblyf op Robbeneiland selfs eksamens daarin geskryf (Knobel 2004c:15).

[English translation]

Former president Nelson Mandela, for whom I have the utmost respect, unfortunately recited the Ingrid Jonker poem to which is being referred in English, even though he has an excellent command of Afrikaans. And, as far as I know, he even took exams in the subject during his stay on Robben Island.

Using the word “stay” (*verblyf*) to describe Mandela’s “imprisonment” or “incarceration” firstly obscures the reason why Mandela was on Robben Island. Additionally, Opperman’s message of reconciliation seems not to have made the desired impact on Knobel. These irrelevant comments, which only detract from Mandela’s gesture of reconciliation in reading Jonker’s poem at his inauguration, indicate clearly that the discourse surrounding *Sinfonia africana* is about the survival of Afrikaans and Afrikaners, and not so much about the merits and failings of Hofmeyr’s symphony.

Using a similar quotation-parody method as before, Knobel questions Walton’s source of information and motives, since Walton did not attend the symphony’s performance and did not have access to its score. He further dismisses any accusations of anti-intellectualism, provincialism and intolerance:

Dat “burgers van ’n post-totalitêre staat, wat buite die geskiedenis wil leef”, hul “onsekerheid en benoudheid oor die huidige en toekomstige posisionering van Afrikaans verraai” is eweneens belaglik en beledigend teenoor vele van ons wat hart en siel in die nuwe Suid-Afrika opgaan, en wel ook die behoud en bevordering van Afrikaans wil handhaaf.

Walton verraai onsekerheid. Dit mag dalk dui op “politieke korrekte” uitsprake om persoonlike “posisionering” vir die toekoms te probeer verseker.

Soos in die resensie van ons “enigste Afrikaanssprekende musiekwetenskaplike van internasionale gehalte” (demokraties of eensydig, provinsiaal of totalitêr verklaar – deur wie?), word die gebruik van sekere hoogdrawende en “hogere” woorde steurend gevind en bevraagteken dit die bedekte doelwit van die skrywe. Vir ’n departementshoof om sterk en selfs vernederende uitsprake te maak oor briëfskrywers en musiekliefhebbers wat van sy “hoorsê”-opinie verskil, is hoogs onindrukwekkend (Knobel 2004c:15).

[English translation]

That “citizens of a post-totalitarian state, who want to live outside of history”, reveal their “uncertainty and anxiety over the present-day and future positioning of Afrikaans” is likewise ridiculous and insulting to many of us who are immersed heart and soul in the new South Africa, and still want to maintain the preservation and advancement of Afrikaans.

Walton reveals [his own] uncertainty. It may well be indicative of “politically correct” statements to ensure personal “positioning” in the future.

As in the review of our “only Afrikaans-speaking musicologist of international standing” (declared democratically or unilaterally, provincially or [through] totalitarian [means] – by whom?), the use of certain grandiloquent and “lofty” words are disturbing and raise questions about the covert objective of the letter. For a head of department [Walton was then head of the Music Department at the University of Pretoria] to make strong and even humiliating pronouncements about correspondents and music lovers who differ from his “hearsay”-opinion, is most unimpressive.

Knobel states that Walton took the Van den Heever poem out of context by not adjudicating its *universal* application within the symphony as a totality. He finds it hardly worth commenting on Walton’s statement that most correspondents thought of Hofmeyr’s symphony as a “classic” even before it was composed. He adds that at least all the previous letter writers attended the premiere or the highly successful second performance of the work, and did not base their comments on hearsay.

7 September 2004: “Komponis had vrye opdrag” (*Composer had unconditional commission*)

Pierre Joubert (2004:19) also writes in reaction to Chris Walton’s comments. To begin with, he dismisses Walton’s claim that Stephanus Muller is the only Afrikaans-speaking musicologist of international repute, saying that such a claim is subjective and far-fetched. He does not mention any other Afrikaans-speaking musicologists who are of a similar standing.

Joubert is dismayed at Walton’s criticism of the *Vriende van Afrikaans*, and he explains that this organisation functions outside party politics to step into the breach for Afrikaans and other languages. Moreover, he states that Hofmeyr enjoyed the utmost freedom in his commission. There were only three requests made to the composer: that the composition should have Africa as its theme, that Afrikaans should be the language of its textual programme, and that it should contain reference to the suffering of women. Joubert then finds fault with Walton’s “uneducated” statement that Van den Heever’s “Afrika” is an ideologically compromised poem:

Die “Afrika”-gedig is nie tydgebonde of aanstootlik nie. Dit is stemmingsvol, romanties – en sien, teen simboliek van die Afrika-natuur, met heimweë uit na skoonheid en suiwerhied. Dit beklemtoon universele waardes en bepleit oper visie in Afrika tot voordeel van almal wat die vasteland bewoon: “... O sing deur ons en maak ons menslik, ruim, ons oë sag om ver die blou te meet, dan breek gebrek in ruising van die skuim en word ons suiwer deur te glo en weet! O Afrika! jou naam dreun soos die see! ...” (Joubert 2004:9)

[English translation]

The “Africa” poem is not time-specific or offensive. It is atmospheric, romantic – and anticipates beauty and purity, cast in the symbolic relief of Africa-nature, with nostalgia. It underscores universal values and pleads for a more open vision in Africa to the benefit of all who live on the continent: “Oh sing through us and make us human, ample, our eyes soft to gauge the blue afar, then paucity breaks in tempering the dross and we become pure by believing and knowing! Oh Africa! your name thunders like the sea!...”

Having demonstrated the poem’s meaning and benevolence, Joubert asks whether Walton’s criticism of Van den Heever’s poetry is actually aimed at the Afrikaans language itself:

Walton kritiseer ’n gedig wat in 1945 gepubliseer is, maar sê nie deur watter “ideologie” van dié tydvak dit “gekompromitteer” is nie. ’n Mens sou darem wou sien dat ’n professor grondige redes (met aanhaling van reëls) verstrek waarom hy ’n gedig onvanpas vind.

Het hy dit teen Afrikaans as taal? Sou die gedig vir hom aanvaarbaar wees in Frans of Xhosa? Insinueer hy dat skrywers uit ’n sekere tydvak nie aangehaal behoort te word nie? Dan behoort kunstenaars seker ook nie vir Shakespeare, geskryf tydens ’n monargie (en trouens ’n hele boel hedendaagse Britse skrywers), aan te haal nie (Joubert 2004:9).

[English translation]

Walton critiques a poem that was published in 1945, but does not indicate by which “ideology” of this period it was “compromised”. One would at least want to see that a professor furnishes cogent reasons (with citation of lines) on why he finds a poem inappropriate.

Does he have it against Afrikaans as language? Would the poem be more acceptable to him in French or Xhosa? Does he insinuate that writers from a certain period are not supposed to be quoted? Then artists are probably also not supposed to quote Shakespeare, written during a monarchy (and for that matter a whole box and dice of present-day British writers).

In conclusion, Joubert asks whether Walton suggests that composers and poets not be allowed to create in soulful and romantic ways; asking that if this is so, then must artists only channel their feelings into physics or mathematics? The overall trajectory of Joubert’s questions is difficult to respond to, mainly because the arguments move nearer and nearer towards the absurd. Joubert’s last question about physics and mathematics is bizarre, seeing that it apparently contains an assumption that “romantic” and “soulful” modes of artistic expression are the only ones worth pursuing, and that rational and intellectual domains like physics and mathematics constitute the polar opposite of an artistic sensibility. This is an interesting

argument to advance considering the already mentioned connection between Gideon Joubert's science book *Die Groot Gedagte* and Hendrik Hofmeyr's *Sinfonia africana*.

Pierre Joubert's statement that "Afrika" was published in 1945 appears to argue that this poem could not have been compromised by apartheid, since apartheid's ideology only began officially in 1948. If one wants to insist that political ideologies take shape overnight and have no back-story, then such reasoning seems tenable. Joubert is nevertheless wrong in his stated publication date for this poem, since "Afrika" forms part of the 1938 collection *Aardse Vlam* (Earthly Flame).

I propose that Van den Heever's poem would indeed be unacceptable performed in French, not only because of France's colonial history, but also because French signifies an Afrikaner cosmopolitanism that has little to do with Africa, and here I think specifically of a CD bestseller called *AfriFrans*, which translates Afrikaans popular songs into French and performs them with a homogeneous cafe culture sound. Performing the symphony in Xhosa could have signalled an invitation to a multiracial audience to attend normally "white" South African concert halls. Of course, this is if Xhosa speakers would be comfortable with a musical performance of this poem in their language, since such a gesture runs the risk of appropriating and abusing the cultural capital of the historically oppressed for the benefit of the historical oppressors. This idea would also make little sense if one did not consider the possibility of including still other groups by using a musical language other than Western art music.

Joubert's comments about Shakespeare indicate the obvious reality that Shakespearian language – along with Elizabethan culture in general – is a much abused signifier of British exceptionalism. It is nonetheless pointless to make such a blunt contextual comparison between Van den Heever and Shakespeare, and then categorically to extend problematising Shakespeare into automatically problematising present-day British authors, who actually live in a completely different type of constitutional monarchy.

Summary

Newspaper correspondence described *Sinfonia africana* with various phrases of exceptionalism as having "timeless qualities" (Veranza Joubert), as a "great work" and "unique moment in the history of music" with a "message of hope" (Maryna Botha), and as having a "monumental construction" coupled with a profound message and a "universal relevance unconnected to time and space" (Deon Knobel). Invoking the "standards

and dogmas” of T.S. Eliot’s essay “What Is A Classic?”, it was furthermore suggested – barely a week after the world premiere of *Sinfonia africana* – that the work was a “classic” and that Muller’s negative criticism of it was therefore “parochial” (Lina Spies).

It was asked whether Muller had been “subtly influenced” (by what? by whom?) in his critique of the symphony, and it was also suggested that “a more earthy place-bound aesthetic” could be sought out in reviewing Afrikaans popular music (Janette Badenhorst). Even when “strange worlds and long forgotten stories” (fantastical utopian romances?) were longed for in attending symphony concerts, Hofmeyr’s music disappointed because it was possibly anti-feminist and also represented a narrative that was not compatible with the new political dispensation’s rainbow nation utopia (Carmen Marchetti). Two anti-utopian appeals were made against the highfalutin academic nature of Muller’s review (Maryna Botha and Jozua Serfontein). One of these respondents argued, contrary to Muller, that *Sinfonia africana* is an ideologically sound work that requires “even bigger musical forces” than Hofmeyr used (Jozua Serfontein).

The *universality* of Opperman’s poem “Gebed om die Gebeente” was pointed out by quoting a supposedly multicultural and reconciliatory passage from its text. This was argued to constitute a prophetic “vision of South Africa’s future democratic society”, communicated at “the vocal omphalos of the symphony” and therefore indicative of Afrikanerdom’s “earthbound narrowness being transformed into the spiritual expanses” of true democracy (John and Collena Blanckenburg).

Similarly, the *universality* of Van den Heever’s poem “Afrika” was pointed out through an explanation of its symbolism. This poem, it was explained, is “not time-specific” and – therefore? – not offensive. Observing the panoramic landscape of African nature, Van den Heever “anticipated beauty and purity with nostalgia” (*anticipating* something with *nostalgia* is an Arcadian impulse) and consequently advocated a more open vision in Africa to the benefit of all Africans (Pierre Joubert). *Sinfonia africana* was criticised for perceived neo-primitivist qualities in its music, which contributed to an unsettling feeling of “heavy darkness” and “rigid rhythms” (Carmen Marchetti).⁹ In response to this letter, which hinted at the racist historical trope of the “black menace” (*swart gevaar*), it was explained that people should “read Afrikaans correctly”: The *dark hordes* mentioned are actually “ancestral spirits who transmit the gift of spiritual renewal” to the living (Deon Knobel).

⁹ Taruskin (2009:164-6) has criticised *Carmina Burana* for the animalising and propagandist qualities inherent in its neo-primitivist musical aesthetic. Calling it “the original *Springtime for Hitler*”, he has dismissed those who subscribe to the innocence of its music “as an article of faith” (Taruskin 2009:164). Although Muller never said anything as outrageous about Hofmeyr’s *Sinfonia africana*, similar concerns can be raised about those who summarily reject his measured critique of this work’s problematic ideology.

Dystopian survival anxiety was diagnosed in the way that “white” South Africans evidently cope with the difficulties of living in the new South Africa. In this regard, a desire to “live outside of history” was explained to be not uncommon for “citizens of a post-totalitarian state” (Chris Walton).

The published discourse created by the respondents to Muller’s review of *Sinfonia africana* was instrumental in determining the perceived social meaning of the work. The outright “incomprehensibility” expressed with regard to opposing paradigms and points of view, the dismissal of Muller’s critique as “uncalled for” and “irrelevant”, and the multiple expressions of *universality* are all indicative of the isolated cultural behaviours and expectations that have shaped the way art music is received in South Africa. In the overall volatility of the correspondence, one also sees something delicate about the collective cultural position that “white” South Africans (especially Afrikaners) occupy in post-apartheid South Africa.

These matters were discussed further on two important public platforms, which were an online interview panel, in which Lina Spies, Hans Huyssen and Coenraad Walters each interviewed Hofmeyr about *Sinfonia africana*, as well as a colloquium in the Jannasch Hall of Stellenbosch University’s Music Department at which both Hendrik Hofmeyr and Stephanus Muller discussed artistic issues pertaining to the aesthetics and ethics of setting Afrikaans to music.

Interpretation

By now it should be clear that Hofmeyr’s apparent conservative ideological positioning was imposed upon the composer by adherents and critics alike, but that it is also something for which Hofmeyr is responsible himself. Admittedly, the volley and content of the letters published in Hofmeyr’s defence illustrate that artists have limited control over the interpretations of those who identify with their work; but it is also important to note that Hofmeyr at no time distanced himself publicly from supportive comments made on his behalf. Instead, he appears to have sought refuge in the apolitical concept of musical autonomy.

Hofmeyr rejects any compositional approach – or academic interpretation – that incorporates politics into the referential framework of musical works (Van der Mescht 2007:51). He does not believe that music can or should be a medium for communicating political ideals, since he argues that music is “at its core a universal medium which appeals to the senses and emotions beyond any agenda” (Cupido 2009:7). Because Hofmeyr enjoys a considerable profile in South Africa’s art music scene – both shaping and being shaped by its environment – one could nonetheless impute politics on his purportedly non-political

compositions. The most pertinent question in this regard is whether, in a highly politicised country like South Africa, a composer's choice *not to be political* actually has *profound political consequences*.

One of the facts in Hofmeyr's biography that complicates his dismissal of any relation between music and politics is a decade of self-imposed exile in Italy, between 1981 and 1991, which he embarked on after completing his Bachelor of Music studies at the University of Cape Town (Roos 2000:10-7). His decision to leave South Africa during the 1980s should be regarded in light of a sincere desire to learn more about Western art music within a more immediately European cultural environment, but it also followed on a personal and *political* conviction to avoid military conscription (Hofmeyr 2009:9).¹⁰ Although Hofmeyr has framed this decision apolitically – by way of an explanation that his parents never forced the politics of a particular political party on their children – it remains significant that Hofmeyr refused to be conscripted into the apartheid military machine. Unlike most other young “white” men during that time period, he did not fight against communist insurgents in the South African Border War. This means that, even though politics may not constitute an active component of Hofmeyr's artistic credo and aesthetics, politics must have occupied his mind, impacted on his life and influenced his choices. And in spite of Hofmeyr's apolitical stance, his composition *Sinfonia Africana* has done more than any other post-apartheid South African musical composition to raise awareness of the ideological problems that continue to link contemporary practice of Western art music with apartheid's cultural worldview.

Hofmeyr's musical aesthetic favours Western art music's putative *universal* relevance. This was confirmed in a public colloquium-interview where Hofmeyr spoke, on 16 July 2011, at the Stellenbosch International Chamber Music Festival. During that evening's presentation, Hofmeyr dismissed the notion that Western art music is tainted by apartheid, by invoking the supposed *universal* value of the Western art music canon.¹¹ This point of view implies that a universally valued music cannot perpetuate apartheid's musical thinking, because apartheid is geographically and historically specific, and not universal. Hofmeyr referenced Bach's continuing international relevance (discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Two) as part of his reasoning at the Chamber Music Festival colloquium, and thus refuted the notion that “classical music

¹⁰ The discourse on “white” South African exiles is necessarily fraught with suspicions over authenticity of experience and sincerity of motives. In Hofmeyr's case, there are inevitable questions about his 1988 visit to South Africa to receive a national opera prize (for *The House of Usher*), when the militaristic political climate he avoided only changed at the beginning of 1990 and when his self-imposed Italian exile lasted until 1991.

¹¹ The discussion that night covered a range of issues as part of what amounted to a retrospective of the composer's life, career and works. Most notable among the topics discussed were Hofmeyr's exile in Italy during the 1980s, his enthusiasm for composing operas (regardless of performance opportunities), his understanding of South Africa's apartheid and post-apartheid musical environments, and his own perspective on the “hurtful” ideological critique that Stephanus Muller published of *Sinfonia africana*.

could be considered elitist and Western (and therefore inappropriate within the context of South Africa)” (De Roubaix, in Fuchs 2013:125). To this statement he added that, “[j]ust as pop music is the same all over the world, the appreciation of classical music is universal”.

Primarily, Hofmeyr regards music as an escape mechanism from the material world; as something that grants access to worlds (i.e. the numinous) that exist nowhere else but in music (Winterbach 1997:39; Roos 2000:23). According to this view, whereas other art forms must refer to material realities inside this world, music is unbound by such restrictions. This Romantic philosophical outlook ascribes to the Schopenhauerian model that positions music at the apex of the fine arts. By stressing the abstract nature of Romantic instrumental music, this epistemology promulgates Walter Pater’s dictum that music is the art to whose condition all other arts aspire (Taruskin 2006:164-6, esp.165). Because this type of music is supposedly non-referential, or otherwise considered to be the art form least specific about its content, this epistemology also thinks about music as the most abstract of all art forms. Abstraction is then equated with aesthetic autonomy, and often – as in the case of *Sinfonia africana* – extended into additional arguments about *universality* as well, thus enabling a constellation of aesthetic dogmas and standards that free composers and compositions from social responsibilities and ethical constraints.

Taruskin (2009:301-29) has linked this musical/musicological epistemology directly to musical utopianism, most notably in his formulation of the “poietic fallacy”. He writes that, instead of being the music of everywhere (as universalism claims), Western art music actually became “the music of noplacé” during the twentieth and twenty first centuries (Taruskin 2009:xv).¹² Linked to this there is Hofmeyr’s decision to give an Afrikaans-language symphony about Afrikaners/Africa an Italian name, and making its score replete with Italian terminology that is too advanced for most South African orchestral musicians and singers to understand.¹³ This Italianisation is indicative of a phantom presence of place that is not Africa. One might even consider such an Italianisation as a neoclassical impulse, in the sense that Taruskin (2009:202-16; 382-405) employs the term to highlight the authoritarian aesthetic inherent in e.g. Stravinsky’s music, Toscanini’s conducting, and the early music movement. Blake’s (2005:133) comment that contemporary listeners “might balk at the level of control, structural pre-planning and dense orchestration” in *Sinfonia africana* is relevant to this observation. He further explains that Hofmeyr’s compositional choices in this work are “shackled” to the “classic”, because of the symphony’s multiple

¹² Etymologically, the word “utopia” literally means “non-place”.

¹³ Roos (2000:11) explains that, owing to Hofmeyr’s affinity with Italy (a result of his student years there), all of his scores are consciously adorned with complex Italian musical terminology.

references (e.g. Mahler's idea of a resurrection symphony) and allusions (e.g. a titular allusion to Ralph Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antarctica*) that involve an already exhausted neoclassicism.

An important aspect of *Sinfonia africana*'s referential framework is Hofmeyr's adaptation of this symphony's second and third movements from two of his own previous compositions. There is nothing illegitimate about reusing one's own existing music for a new composition. However, this detail detracts from any impression that Hofmeyr chose three specific poems because of crucial correspondences in their universal literary themes and only then began composing *Sinfonia africana*'s music. This pre-existing textual and musical framework explains in part why the symphony's meaning drifted from the original commission's exploration of women's suffering into a celebration of Afrikanerdom's transcendence.

Hofmeyr's compositional aesthetic is contradictory, since even though he embraces the Schopenhauerian epistemology that exalts music by emphasising its abstract qualities, he nevertheless remains committed to composing music that communicates to an audience (Roos 2000:24-8). In the wake of Muller's criticism, Lina Spies conducted an interview with Hofmeyr, in which he explained his own preference for composing music that evokes specific narratives rather than composing absolute music (Hofmeyr et al 2004). This confusing statement about specific narratives partially overturns the rationale that *Sinfonia africana* has a *universal* relevance. I say this not only because the symphony's Afrikaner narrative is patently *specific* to one culture, but also because Hofmeyr's argument about specific narratives is incongruous with the rest of his compositional ideology – which is to think about Western art music in the Romantic tradition as “classics” with universal relevance. Also, the immaterial worlds that can supposedly only be accessed by music seem substantially less numinous, and substantially less distant, when musicians have been sounding them out in other Romantic compositions for more than a century.

Conclusion

Even though *Sinfonia africana* is an opera in miniature – mad scene, chorus and orchestra included – the work's lengthy reception discourse focused overwhelmingly on its literary programme, predominantly because of Muller's probing and unsettling questions about “old Afrikaans”. Although this was perceived as a categorical attack on Afrikaans, Muller was not making any argument that threatened the survival of Afrikaans as an academic and cultural language. His review was written in Afrikaans. He regularly publishes in Afrikaans. He thus makes sure that Afrikaans – good quality Afrikaans – features prominently within South Africa's post-apartheid cultural landscape. Unlike Knobel, however, Muller did not admonish anyone

to read Afrikaans correctly. He also did not diminish Mandela's gesture of reconciliation by complaining that Jonker's originally Afrikaans poem was read in an English translation (which made it understandable to a much larger local and an enormous international audience). Unlike the Blanckenburgs, he did not insist that the sheer inventiveness of the Afrikaans language transforms its stories into universal narratives that are applicable to all South Africans. His criticism was one of determining functional and ethically responsible boundaries for setting Afrikaans to music (Muller 2009:22). For this he suggested that composers should find "more humble ways" of composing music – i.e. an aesthetics of musical composition that acknowledges being politically and socially situated in post-apartheid South Africa.

At a SASRIM conference where I presented a paper on *Sinfonia africana*, I realised that some musicologists maintain that Hofmeyr's symphony does not have a musicological reception discourse, since Muller's critique is perceived to have limited itself to the non-musical realm of sociological criticism. This is an odd observation, considering that Muller's review is saturated with technically proficient musical terminology, and especially bearing in mind the limited column space that was available to him.¹⁴ It is surprising, though, that there was only one musicologist (Chris Walton) and one composer (Hans Huyssen) who participated in the symphony's immediate reception discourse. Musicologists who now mourn the lacuna of an authentically musicological reception discourse could perhaps have felt a greater sense of civic duty in steering the discourse that happened in their absence. *Sinfonia africana* is a significant South African composition and its interpretation should not be left to the self-appointed *Vriende van Afrikaans*.

For example: While Lina Spies appears to have understood that Muller attacked Afrikaans and its "white" speakers because of apartheid, she seems not to have recognised that Muller's comments related to how Hofmeyr's atavistic music *activated* the cultural, political and historical meaning of three "old Afrikaans" poems. Spies could only argue about *Sinfonia africana*'s words when she tried to redeem it, and therefore persisted that at least two of the three poems in Hofmeyr's symphony – those by Marais and Opperman – were as "contemporary" and "timeless" as when first composed (Hofmeyr et al 2004).¹⁵ The ideological

¹⁴ When Muller was invited to expand on his review for the LitNet Paneelklopper debate (Hofmeyr 2004 et al), the musical score that had been made available for the original review was not made available again, and he thus declined to participate in that discussion in lieu of being able to make detailed musicological observations from the score.

¹⁵ Interestingly, Spies does not pursue the T.S. Eliot definition of the "classic" in her online interview with Hofmeyr. In her second defence of Hofmeyr, published on the online Afrikaans literary platform LitNet, Spies instead compares *Sinfonia africana* to Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, saying that the critics who responded negatively to Whitman's famous anthology are forgotten, while its author has stood the test of time. Also, Eugène Marais is mentioned almost nowhere in the discussion around Muller's statement about "old Afrikaans", which may be due to Marais's dualistic legacy as maverick iconoclast and as a mainstream nationalist icon (Swart 2004:847). The poems by Opperman and Van den Heever were defended much more vehemently, and probably because they are more susceptible to ideological critique.

problems or not in the monumentality of Hofmeyr's symphony are perhaps best discussed by musicologists, and thus far there has been little willingness on the part of established musicologists to join publically into a discussion that has tremendous importance for them. Might it be that professional and institutional survival encourages them in their silence?

Finally, it is embarrassing, ironic and even painful that Afrikaners, in sharing their particular (as opposed to universal) suffering with a wider African demographic, did so in this instance through a conservative composition of Western art music, and by once again insisting that their particular story has universal application. The time is ripe to stop linking Afrikaans with the myth machine that glorified it during the 1930s (discussed in Chapter Three and Chapter Four). The durability of the Anglo Boer War's legitimate narratives of suffering is also surprising, considering that it has been transformed and de-authenticated into a self-reflective condition of anxiety for present-day Afrikaners who actually have no specific experience of that pain. As Muller (2009:22) writes, the trauma referenced in *Sinfonia africana* belongs primarily to people who are long already dead, while the wound being cosseted with emphatic and monumental Romantic music belongs primarily to people who are alive. Despite Hofmeyr's apolitical intentions, my argument is that *Sinfonia africana* sustains an already exhausted cultural narrative that feeds on historical Afrikaner survival concerns. Even though Hofmeyr eschews politics, and to an inevitable extent history as well, it is odd to think that he would not have understood how the poetry he chose for *Sinfonia africana* informs the triumphal register of Afrikaner nationalism. The place Afrikaners occupy in Africa is too historically compromised and vulnerable to insist that an Afrikaans symphony offers a *universal* message to the entire continent.

Gobbet 33: Profoundly necessary for human survival

In a world such as ours, in this world of cruelty and exploitation in which the tawdry and the mediocre are proliferated endlessly for the sake of financial profit, it is necessary to understand why a madrigal by Gesualdo or a Bach Passion, a *sitar* melody from India or a song from Africa, Berg's *Wozzeck* or Britten's *War Requiem*, a Balinese *gamelan* or a Cantonese opera, or a symphony by Mozart, Beethoven, or Mahler, may be profoundly necessary for human survival, quite apart from any merit they may have as examples of creativity and technical progress. It is also necessary to explain why, under certain circumstances, a "simple" "folk" song may have more human value than a "complex" symphony.

John Blacking (1973:116)

How Musical Is Man?

Gobbet 34: The passionate and forceful declaration that opera must survive in Cape Town

I vividly remember the emergency meeting held at Angelo Gobbato's home in 1996 when members of the Friends of the Opera and others interested in the idea of opera gathered to discuss a future beyond the sinking ships of the arts councils. The lounge might have been too small to accommodate the many people who gathered there, but no room would have been big enough for the passionate and forceful declaration that opera *must* survive in Cape Town. No one felt more strongly about this crisis than Angelo Gobbato, who spoke at length about the trajectory of the history of opera singing in South Africa and its contribution to the city's cultural history.

Michael Williams (in Roos 2010:201-2)

"Cape Town Opera: tradition and change as strategies of survival"

Opera Production in the Western Cape: strategies in search of indigenisation

Gobbet 35: Unless we allow it to die

The lavish and often exquisite productions of opera and classical ballet we were privileged to have while the regional arts councils had enough money, will be remembered with gratitude and nostalgia. But there was opera before, and there will be opera under new conditions – unless we allow it to die.

Reino Otterman (1997:28)

“Is Music a luxury or a necessity?”

South African Music Teacher (Jul 1997)

Gobbet 36: Let's face it, the orchestras are battling to survive

In terms of opportunities, perhaps things aren't as ideal as they could be. During the Apartheid era, pre-Democracy, organisations like the SABC, the Council for the National Arts, and others, used to commission works from art music composers, so speaking personally, I had a lot of opportunities then. I'm not saying that I don't have them now; an organisation like SAMRO is still supporting and sponsoring new composition and music to a large degree in this country. The pendulum has however swung the other way – popular music is much more important today, whether it is the African Kwaito or rock or pop or whatever, and that is what sells. So there isn't a demand, and let's face it, the orchestras are battling to survive. They also have to play the popular classics, and not contemporary new works.

I've just marked an interesting piece of work by a black student who is a very good composer, and he says that he and some of his composer colleagues survive outside the country far better than inside the country. They are writing art music which is not of the popular choral genre, therefore they have to find new platforms for their work abroad.

Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph (in Van Wyk 2008:67)

“Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph at Sixty”

Musicus 36 (2)

Gobbet 37: Does classical music have a future in South Africa?

Die negatiewe siening van klassieke musiek kan waarsynlik toegeksryf word aan die persepsie dat dit eksklusief, elitisties en ontoeganklik is.

[...]

Onsekerheid oor die funksionering van die Provinsiale Kunsterade het baie musici na 1994 bekommerd gemaak oor die toekoms van klassieke musiek in Suid-Afrika. Die feit dat 'n mens nie meer op regeringsteun vir die kunste en meer spesifiek, klassieke musiek, kan staatmaak nie, beteken dat die bevordering van hierdie musiek oorgelaat word aan privaat inisiatief, hetsy van 'n individu of van 'n groep. Deur die toewyding en harde werk van talle entoesiastiese mense huisves groot stede soos Kaapstad, Port Elizabeth, Durban, Bloemfontein en Johannesburg egter die simfonie-orkeste vir hulle betrokke provinsies, om nie eers die orkeste by skole en universiteite te noem nie. Verder dink mens ook aan die suksesverhale van ondernemings soos *Cape Town Opera* wat reeds in die twintigerjare van die vorige eeu ontstaan het, *Opera Africa* (sedert 1994) en *Salon Musiek* (in Pretoria, ook sedert 1994) wat 'n groot bydrae tot die voortbestaan van klassieke musiek lewer.

Bertha Spies (2010:21)

“Het klassieke musiek 'n toekoms in Suid-Afrika?”

(transl. “Does classical music have a future in South Africa?”)

Woord en Daad 50 (414) Somer 2010

Translation:

The negative view of classical music can probably be ascribed to the perception that it is exclusive, elitist and unapproachable.

[...]

Uncertainty over the functioning of the Provincial Arts Councils made many musicians worried over the future of classical music in South Africa after 1994. The fact that one can no longer rely on government support for the arts, and more specifically, classical music, means that the advancement of this music is entrusted to private initiative, whether of an individual or a group. Through the commitment and hard work of many enthusiastic people, big cities like Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Durban, Bloemfontein and Johannesburg however house the symphony orchestras for their respective provinces, not to even mention the orchestras at schools and universities. Furthermore one thinks of the success stories of enterprises like *Cape Town Opera*, which originated in the twenties of the previous century, *Opera Africa* (since 1994) and *Salon Musiek* (in Pretoria, also since 1994), who have made an enormous contribution to the survival of classical music.

Gobbet 38: To ensure that the arts stay alive in South Africa

I feel a pressure group should be formed to ensure that the arts stay alive in South Africa, especially now with the government giving less and less to the arts. Something must happen soon, because the future for arts in this country is looking bleak.

Hendrik Hofmeyr (1997:5)

Vuka 2 (4)

Gobbet 39: Where art music is involved in a struggle for survival

Die konteks waarin Mann se *Doktor Faustus* af speel, is 'n burgerlike een. Daarom ontstaan die vraag of die verhaal enige relevansie hoegenaamd vir 'n leser in die "nuwe Suid-Afrika" het, waar die burgerlike komponent van die samelewing relatief klein is en waar kunsmusiek in 'n oorlewingstryd gewikkel is.

Winfried Lüdemann (2003:270)

"Diabolus in Musica: In dialoog met Thomas Mann se *Doktor Faustus*"

Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe 2003 (43/3 & 4)

Translation:

The context in which Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* takes place is a bourgeois one. Therefore the question arises whether this story has any relevance whatsoever for a reader in the "new South Africa", where the bourgeois component of society is relatively small and where art music is involved a struggle for survival.

CHAPTER SIX

Multiculturalism and the survival of Western art music

Introduction

Winfried Lüdemann presented his professorial inaugural lecture at Stellenbosch University, in April 2009, under the title “Musiek, kulturele diversiteit, menswaardigheid en demokrasie in Suid-Afrika”.¹ In it he proposes an *irenicon* for the harmonious co-existence of diverse musical cultures in South Africa.² Using a modernist framework that effectively amounts to a petition for the survival of musical diversity, the lecture participates in what was already then an increasingly fatigued national discourse of reconciliation that preoccupied South Africans in the immediate years leading up to and after apartheid’s disbandment.³ At the time of Lüdemann’s writing, South Africa had already been a democratic state for fifteen years, so that the erstwhile euphoria of Nelson Mandela’s (and Desmond Tutu’s) “Rainbow Nation” had begun to fade. The ideology most responsible for this breakdown of cultural goodwill was Thabo Mbeki’s programme of an “African renaissance”. Lüdemann (2009a:5; 2009b:642) characterises the latter as an exclusive Africanist paradigm that hamshackles multiculturalism, apparently by marginalising and threatening cultures and musics (especially art music) that are dissimilar from the political majority’s culture and music.

This threat of marginalisation by an African political majority – i.e. a “black” monoculture – is explained to be especially acute in the case of music, because, unlike the constitutional guarantees afforded in South Africa to eleven of the country’s official languages, Lüdemann (2009a:10; 2009b:647) finds it impossible that similar protections could be secured for eleven (or any number) of the country’s different musical styles. Apparently, this inability of the constitution to entrench and safeguard essentialised musics amounts to a severe problem, threatening not only the maintenance of South Africa’s cultural diversity, but also for that very reason the survival of South Africa’s multicultural democracy.

¹ “Music, cultural diversity, human dignity and democracy in South Africa.” Lüdemann’s inaugural address is a multilingual essay. Therefore some quoted extracts appear in original English and others with original Afrikaans and my English translation. An entirely Afrikaans version of the essay (with slightly adapted content) appears in Lüdemann’s article “Musiek en kulturele diversiteit in Suid-Afrika” for the *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 2009, volume 49(4), pp. 639-57. This chapter references both of these documents as an integrated whole.

² An *irenicon* (or *eirenicon*) is a proposal that attempts to create harmony between conflicting viewpoints and thus achieve peace.

³ Reference is made here to the cultural and political efforts associated with South Africa’s groundbreaking Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

Consequently, Lüdemann searches for a methodology that can harness music to assuage an overall condition of South African cultural crisis – evident in social problems like xenophobia – and, in so doing, also to help salvage the country’s floundering multicultural democracy. He adopts a methodology that pivots on a syllogism, the reliability of which is brought into question by various implicit assumptions that contribute to its premises and conclusion:⁴

Major premise:

human dignity (menswaardigheid) {1}, a concept Lüdemann uses interchangeably with humanity (menslikheid) {1}, is the only characteristic that supervenes universally from every possible type of musicality and music making {2}

Minor premise:

the success of South Africa’s multicultural democracy depends on a dialogue of reconciliation {3}, in which all cultures need reciprocally to acknowledge one another’s human dignity and humanity {1}

Conclusion:

observing and acknowledging another culture’s musicality and music making {2}, out of which automatically supervenes that culture’s human dignity and humanity {1}, is the only possible musical dialogue of reconciliation {3} that can strengthen South Africa’s multicultural democracy

The often implied, and sometimes contradicted, idea that a “race” or “ethnicity” listens to one particular style of music that defines their cultural identity is one of the problematic assumptions in Lüdemann’s theorisation. Because South Africans have historically had such an obsession with racial classification, cultural essentialism (tied to racial constructs) became an important paradigm of South African musicology.⁵

⁴ Lüdemann does not define his overall line of reasoning explicitly as a syllogism; however, I criticise it as one.

⁵ Yvonne Huskisson has, for example, used the Afrikaans expression “Elke voël word geken aan sy lied” (Every bird is recognised by its song) to explain that different racial groups each give expression to their own aesthetic sensibility, using musical sounds that differ to those used by other racial groups. My thanks to Willemien Froneman (2014:438) for making me aware of this quotation.

While Lüdemann's framework presents a broadly democratic appeal for the survival of many diverse musical styles in South Africa, it simultaneously makes a more explicit patrician appeal for the survival of Western art music specifically. When he refers to the category "art music", he means "Western" classical music, as well as a "South African" classical music broadly derivative of the conventions of the "international" (so-called "Western art music") style.⁶ Lüdemann's theorisation tries to redeem art music from its South African history of perceived elitism, hegemony and indifference to democratic ideals by positioning it instead as one among a diverse variety of musical voices (he calls them "styles" or "value systems") that could participate in the country's multicultural landscape.

According to Lüdemann (2009b:648), art music could play an especially important role in helping to nurture constitutional democracy in South Africa: Because symphonic art music and nineteenth century opera apparently find their origins within the same enlightened bourgeois ethos as South Africa's constitution, Lüdemann reasons that works like Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony" and his opera *Fidelio* give voice to the same aspirations as the constitution and bill of rights that represent this country's most sacred instruments of governance. Consequently, he also finds it ignorant that "black nationalists" (and their "white hangers-on") have closed symphony orchestras and opera houses since 1994, based on a premise that Western art music has no place in South Africa because it is "elitist" and "imported". In repudiation of this latter charge, Lüdemann reasons that Western art music, in the form of the Genevan psalms for instance, is one of the oldest kinds of music practice in South Africa today. For him this gives Western art music a much greater entitlement to be considered indigenous than, for example, jazz, pop music, or kwaito, all of which (he explains) were imported to South Africa at a much later stage.⁷

Lüdemann's (2009a:10-2; 2009b:643-8) lecture generates a sense of crisis on two fronts. First, there is an explanation that diverse musical cultures are vulnerable to extinction or severe marginalisation. This includes an alarmist agitation that the survival of art music hangs in the balance. Because the endangered art music style is assumed to have benevolent social applications, which include shoring up energies that resist the formation of a *musical one-party state*, the second front of an impending crisis opens up. The survival of art music is escalated into a cause that determines the overall balance of cultures, so that South Africa's multicultural democracy becomes endangered when art music is threatened. To argue this, Lüdemann follows a line of reasoning that projects outwards from the lecture's principal syllogism:

⁶ Mareli Stolp (2012:30) explains that, in South Africa, the way in which "art music" is generally defined is exclusionary for not bringing into play *other* art music forms, such as Indian art music or the ethnic art musics of South Africa's "non-European" population.

⁷ Kwaito is not an imported musical tradition, but rather one that originated in Johannesburg.

- Multiculturalism is presented as something that faces an increasing threat from cultural uniformity (*einörmigkeit*), viewed as destructive towards multicultural democracy
- art music is proposed as a musical style whose “critical impetus” is adept at averting the erasure of cultural uniformity

It is in this last context that Lüdemann’s (2009a:5, 12-3) lecture reads like a policy document arguing for the prioritised safekeeping and advancement of “Western” and “South African” art music at Stellenbosch University’s Music Department. The arguments he puts forward, together with his influential position as chairperson of this thriving music department, makes his inaugural address relevant to most of the stakeholders in South Africa’s art music tradition.

Gobbet 40: Cheesecake has not been seen as instrumental to human survival

[Stephen] Pinker went as far as to claim that music was “auditory cheesecake” and would not even be missed by humans if it were not there, in the way in which cheesecake has not been seen as instrumental to human survival.

Barry Ross (2010:154)

A Fundamental Explanation of Musical Meaning in Terms of Mental States

Gobbet 41: Diverting time and energy to making plinking noises

What benefit could there be to diverting time and energy to making plinking noises? [...] As far as biological cause and effect are concerned, music is useless. It shows no signs of design for attaining a goal such as long life, grandchildren, or accurate perception and prediction of the world. Compared with language, vision, social reasoning, and physical know-how, music could vanish from our species and the rest of our lifestyle would be virtually unchanged.

Stephen Pinker (1997:528)

How the Mind Works

Gobbet 42: A new spiritual world on the humble foundations of survival values

The whole is itself an active factor, and its activity as such explains phenomena which it is difficult if not impossible to account for in any other way without very forced interpretations. The inner sources of wealth and beauty in Nature are inexhaustible, and they are poured forth with a lavish hand in the creative process of Evolution. Not merely survival values on Darwinian lines count; on the foundation of variations with survival value is raised a superstructure of development which far transcends that narrow basis. Mind in its marvellous human efflorescence rests no doubt on a basis of survival value; but how much more it is than that! The glories of art and literature, the peace of the mystic religious experience, the creative Ideals which lift this life beyond the limitations of its lowly origin – all these experiences and developments have built a new spiritual world on the humble foundations of survival values. In the kingdom of life is visibly arising its capital, the City of God.

Jan Christian Smuts (1926:222)

Holism and Evolution

Gobbet 43: With progress undefined save tautologically as the survival of those fittest to survive

Thus it is not strange that anthropology, as it grew to be a respectable academic discipline – that is to say, as it became institutionalised – should have centred on the study of race. One of the great tasks it set itself was to produce a taxonomy of human races within an evolutionist framework, to decide which were superior and which inferior and thus to predict what future might be expected for each. Nor is it strange, on the other hand, that the biologised history created by anthropology, a history whose ideological function was after all to justify the triumph of the West to itself, should in certain quarters have gone hand in hand with a pessimistic, fin de siècle outlook. For with the key term *progress* undefined save tautologically as the survival of those fittest to survive, why should one not foresee and even look forward to the triumph of the barbarian, rather than the reign of universal light?

John Maxwell Coetzee (1988:144-5)

White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa

An irenic musicology

Lüdemann posits the idea of *diversity* as a theoretical point of departure. Within a contextual exposition of South Africa's diverse cultural environment, he extrapolates ideas for the possible ways in which music could participate in the restoration and consolidation of human dignity. From the outset, natural and cultural phenomena are compared with one another, ostensibly to gauge the contrasting positions that human beings sometimes hold when confronted with different kinds of diversity:

Diversity is a feature of life on this planet. It occurs in the physical, biological and cultural spheres and is a natural consequence of the evolution that has taken place here over billions of years. Nowadays we are very concerned with protecting diversity; in fact, biodiversity is even regarded as crucial for our survival.

However, a completely different scenario emerges when it comes to cultural diversity. On the one hand, humankind has created a vast array of different cultures over the long course of its history. On the other hand, humans exhibit an astonishing lack of tolerance for cultural difference, be it in the area of language, religion, philosophy or music, not to mention ethnicity or even race (Lüdemann 2009a:6).

According to him, cultural intolerance has historically been addressed through violence: as examples, he names the holocaust, apartheid in South Africa and British imperialism. The violent methods these societies used to control diversity include grand scale annihilation of that which is *other*, consistent oppression, cultural imperialism, absolute separation between diverse groups, assimilation of the *other* inside the own and the melting-pot approach (*smeltkroes-benadering*) (Lüdemann 2009b:641).⁸

Lüdemann (2009a:6; 2009b:641) describes the new South Africa as an *extraordinary* experiment in engaging with cultural diversity through peaceful means. He portrays this experiment as an unfulfilled historical brief, which could be discharged by striving for reconciliation in the country's social, educational and cultural spheres with a similar amount of effort as was invested in the seedier realm of politics during South Africa's transition to democracy. For, there was not enough thought given then to the likely appearance, structure, functionality and establishment of a diverse (rainbow) cultural landscape (Lüdemann 2009a:6; 2009b:643). Lüdemann explains that culture has different dynamics to politics, legislation or business, so that the models and solutions used in those spheres have failed when applied to culture. This contradicts his immediately subsequent argument that the *political* model of CODESA should have been applied to culture, and that the *unfinished business* of such a negotiated rapprochement is already showing its

⁸ The melting pot-approach is especially relevant to this chapter's discussion of *uniformity* and Lüdemann's hypothetical musical style based on the *lowest common denominator*.

detrimental effect on the polis (Lüdemann 2009a:7; 2009b:643).⁹ He considers this lack of negotiated cultural settlement as an abrogation that has the potential to undo South Africa's successful political negotiations.

After this initial exposition of *diversity*, Lüdemann (2009a:7; 2009b:644) introduces *human dignity* into his argument. One of the primary reasons for South Africa's successful political settlement, he writes, is because it was negotiated through mutually shared tenets of Christianity. Searching for a similar secular common denominator, he settles on collective *human dignity* as an underlying principle that helped foster democratic ideals in South Africa. One would expect a discussion that connects *human dignity* with *democracy* to be political in its content. However, instead of discussing human dignity as a political (*staatkundige*) concept, Lüdemann repositions it as an ethical concept. He specifically uses music as a hinge with which to achieve this. Discursively relocating human dignity from the political realm into the ethical, gives an important first indication of the Apollonian, or perhaps even Platonic, ways in which Lüdemann seems to think about music.¹⁰ So, even though politics features at the beginning of his inaugural lecture, he nevertheless elevates the discussion to a higher moral or ethical plane (which is an anti-political plane) as soon as the dialectical relationship between music and society becomes the main focus of his discussion. Furthermore, the ethical manoeuvre gives an intimation of how Lüdemann's unfolding disquisition will touch on precepts of axiology.¹¹

In the lecture's next section on *human dignity and music*, Lüdemann (2009a:7; 2009b:644) consolidates his discourse within an ethical domain by discussing the paleoanthropological dimension of human dignity. He

⁹ CODESA refers to two Conventions for a Democratic South Africa that were held in the Kempton Park World Trade Centre in December 1991 and in May and June 1992. Negotiations at these conventions were concerned with determining possible avenues towards achieving a democratic transition, as well as the eventual balance of power in the political structures that would underpin post-apartheid South Africa.

¹⁰ Reference is made here to the cultic dichotomy of Apollo and Dionysus, used, for example, by Nietzsche in his theorisation of Wagnerian musical tragedy (1872), and by Stravinsky in his Norton Lectures on the *Poetics of Music* (1942). Apollo represents consistent theoretical reasoning and harmoniously ordered structure, all of which imply nobility, (human) dignity and serenity. Dionysus, in turn, represents spontaneous and passionate creative energy, associated with ecstatic and orgiastic irrationality.

¹¹ My insight regarding axiology is borrowed from Taruskin (2009:344), who formulates it in a context suggested by George Steiner, where Nazis who listened to Schubert nevertheless also murdered Jews. Steiner mourns the fact that a supposedly humane corpus of Western art music could schizophrenically exist in the same physical and temporal spaces as Treblinka and Auschwitz. "Why," asks Steiner, "did the humanities not humanise?" For Taruskin this is an obscene question: "It is all too obvious by now that teaching people that their love of Schubert makes them better people teaches them nothing but vainglory, and inspires attitudes that are the very opposite of humane." See Stolp (2012:91-106) for a more thorough discussion of axiology in the context of South African art music.

writes that the ability to think symbolically is one of the achievements that distinguishes *Homo sapiens* from previous generations of the *Homo* genus. Music is one of these symbolic forms of thought, meaning that the ability to make music is arguably a basic characteristic of being human.¹²

Researchers in various fields have asked why human beings possess musicality. Paleomusicologists find the answer in one of two scenarios: either music is an evolutionary adaptation (meaning that human beings have an innate ability to make music), or else it is something that is a learnt cultural construct (Lüdemann 2009a:7; 2009b:645). Among those researchers who adhere to the first scenario, and believe that music should be studied in terms of evolution, there is an added divergence of opinion over whether musicality would have been an evolutionary adaptation that had *survival value*, or whether it was an unintended by-product or spandrel of other adaptations that had *survival value*.¹³ Opinions put forward in favour of the former position include points of view that music helped with mate selection, social cohesion, group effort, perceptual development and conflict reduction, while opinions put forward in favour of the latter position subscribe to Stephen Pinker's famous dictum that music is "auditory cheesecake" (i.e. like cheesecake it has no survival value) (Lüdemann 2009a:7).¹⁴

Within this complicated field of discourse, Lüdemann (2009a:8; 2009b:644-5) holds fast to the idea that, just like language, music too is a symbolic form of thinking that differentiates human beings from animals. He even introduces an additional spiritual element into his essay: because music has an ecstatic mode through which humans express the numinous, he finds it ideally suited as a medium for communication with the metaphysical world. In making music, the argument goes, human beings engage with, illuminate and demonstrate the realities of an otherwise inaccessible metaphysical world and, in so doing, shift the boundary limits of what it means to be human.¹⁵ On the back of this statement, whose depiction of animism and prayer is itself evocative of human dignity, Lüdemann endeavours to justify a

¹² As will become apparent throughout this reading, Lüdemann's aim in formulating this link between paleoanthropological speculations about music making and human dignity is to find one unifying musical principle that is common to every kind of music making. He needs this *universal* characteristic in order to postulate an acceptable mode of dialogue through which South Africans can negotiate a peaceful cultural settlement.

¹³ Evolutionary adaptations are said to have "survival value" when they contribute to an organism's chances of survival, thus also contributing to that organism's ability to propagate its genetic code. As an example, the cognitive facility to tell stories would have helped *Homo sapiens* to relay learnt expertise of coping with environmental dangers to succeeding generations. This would facilitate the continued survival of the species.

¹⁴ Even though Lüdemann does not state a preference for either of these two viewpoints, the overall tenor of his discussion indicates that he nevertheless makes a conceptual link between music and survival.

¹⁵ My observation here is borrowed from George Steiner's (1997:63) justification for his own nostalgic agnosticism, which depends on a sincere argument that music may very well be the best proof of God's existence, seeing as it operates (talks, signifies, finds meaning) at the "outermost reaches of lexical-grammatical discourse".

premise that human beings already revealed their inherent human dignity in a specific antediluvian moment, when their own evolution facilitated the necessary cognitive faculties for speech and music-making.

Om te kan praat en om musiek te kan maak, is van die gedragsvorme waardeur die mens waarlik mens word, waardeur hy sy menslikheid uitleef en waardeur hy hom eintlik eers onderskei van die dier. Hierdie verband tussen menswaardigheid en musiek stel nou 'n grondslag beskikbaar waarop musikale diversiteit ook in ons tyd bespreek en weë tot kulturele versoening gevind kan word (Lüdemann 2009a:8).

[English translation]

To be able to speak and to be able to make music are some of the behavioural forms through which human beings become truly human, through which they live their humanity to the full and through which they actually first differentiate themselves from animals. This nexus between human dignity and music affords a foundation from which to discuss musical diversity in the present day and find ways towards cultural reconciliation.

Having established this tenuous and mystical paleoanthropological connection between *human dignity and music*, the inaugural lecture's discussion then moves on to consider *music and reconciliation*.

This is by far the biggest and most important section in Lüdemann's irenicon. He discovers the possible ways in which music can contribute to the realisation of cultural reconciliation, and then whittles them down to his preferred only way (Lüdemann 2009a:8-11; 2009b:646-55). The section commences with a comparative assessment of language and music that accentuates their differences as communication systems. Probably the most important reason to address these dissimilarities is to discredit the misguided popular cliché that "music is a universal language", and that it automatically facilitates intercultural understanding and tolerance. Another possible rationale for comparing language and music could be that paleomusicology is the most important theoretical pin in Lüdemann's discourse.¹⁶

Given the structural importance that the paleoanthropological dimension of human dignity holds for his irenicon's successful outcome, it is odd that Lüdemann's speculation on the evolutionary networks between language and music is somewhat perfunctory. This might be because his line of reasoning depends on emphasising fundamental differences between language and music. Over the last decade or more, language policy has been a volatile issue at traditionally Afrikaans-speaking universities like Stellenbosch University and North-West University in Potchefstroom (Scholtz & Scholtz 2008). Among those who

¹⁶ There is a significant body of scholarship on the evolutionary links between language and music. Some argue that language was an evolutionary adaptation and that music was its by-product. Others believe that language and music share a common precursor called "musilanguage", a communication system which, at some point during human evolution, split into two separate systems (Mithen 2005:26).

campaign that these two universities should retain their traditional Afrikaner heritage (i.e. retain Afrikaans as either the sole or parallel medium for instruction), one of the predominant arguments is that languages articulate unique cultural content that contributes to the overall diversity of a multicultural democracy. A further claim is that languages are not neutral mediums of instruction, so that the substitution of Afrikaans with English as a linguistic system for the communication of academic information necessarily erases an entire worldview. Even though Lüdemann's approach accentuates core differences between language and music, he makes the claim – identical to that of Afrikaans-language advocates – that music cannot be regarded as a neutral medium for communication. Explaining that music is even less neutral than language, Lüdemann (2009a:10) introduces a Whorfian paradigm which holds that different musical styles each constitute a different worldview.¹⁷

The reason for music's non-neutrality, Lüdemann (2009a:9-9; 2009b:646-7) writes, is that musical utterances are always multi-layered, so that the different levels that communicate meaning in a piece of music are *individual profile*, *style*, *context* and *ethos*:

Lüdemann's four levels that communicate musical meaning

Individual profile

The nominal and structural differences between "Sarie Marais" and "Jan Pierewiet", or those same differences between Beethoven's third and fifth symphonies

Style

The different idiomatic ways of musical utterance: baroque music, for example, speaks another stylistic language than rock & roll does, or than the avant-garde does¹⁸

Context

Determined by a musical performance's social setting: for example, the Afrikaner anthem "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika" has different meanings depending on when and where it is performed

Ethos

Refers to how listeners should form a critical judgement about, among other things, the apparent value system articulated through a piece of music¹⁹

¹⁷ Lüdemann does not refer explicitly to the linguistic theories of Benjamin Lee Whorf. My contention that his theorisation nevertheless embraces something similar to Whorfianism is expanded on later in this chapter.

¹⁸ This view can be challenged on the grounds that it does not make much sense to reduce music from, say, the entire baroque era (roughly 150 years of music) to one distinctive stylistic language.

¹⁹ Although it is not stated as such, *ethos* seems to relate to the already mentioned "ethical" dimension in which human dignity is an upshot of the evolved human ability to make music.

According to Lüdemann, these four levels of meaning are interwoven, and they cannot be separated from one another when trying to determine the complete meaning of a musical utterance.²⁰ To demonstrate this indissoluble integration, he makes use of an argument about the translation of music:

No one would deny that it is possible to translate an English newspaper report into Japanese for re-use in a Japanese publication. However, trying to translate a piece of music written by an English composer into a Japanese musical idiom would be an absurd undertaking. The reason is that in verbal language the distance between its formal elements (i.e. its vocabulary, grammar, etcetera) and the information it conveys is greater than in music. Linguists describe this referential link between a word and its meaning as arbitrary. In music this link is not arbitrary, musical sounds and their meaning cannot be separated from each other (Lüdemann 2009a:9).

The assertion that it would be *absurd* to translate music from one musical idiom or from one cultural context into another is pivotal to an appeal, made throughout the remainder of Lüdemann's inaugural address, for Western art music's (also, South African art music's) survival in the broader "new" South African social environment. This is because his statement contains the following tacit conclusion: If one cannot translate music, or if it is absurd to translate music, then it seems reasonable and logical that art music should continue to receive preferential institutional backing at Stellenbosch University, so that it can survive inside this music department to ensure the survival of overall diversity.

Lüdemann (2009a:9-10; 2009b:647-8) explains how *context* and *ethos* complicate matters when listeners move beyond the cultural confines of their specific musical *style*. This is because different styles apparently celebrate different ideals or worldviews, so that they are imbued with distinct value systems. He argues that one would necessarily want to subject diverse types of music (with their disparate value systems) to academic analysis, and he frames these analyses in three possible ways (Lüdemann 2009a:10). First, one could class different types of music as superior or inferior to one another or, second, stylistic diversity could be accepted in an indiscriminate way. Both of these options are however rejected – the former because it would either be uninformed, or else elitist and hegemonic; and the latter because it would only ever manage to give a cursory explanation of musical value systems, so that it would be an approach lacking scholarly rigour. Instead, Lüdemann opts for a third starting point, which he develops until it becomes a crucial element in the denouement of his inaugural lecture:

²⁰ Lüdemann does not explain it as such, but his first two categories of musical meaning involve "poietics" and the "musical trace" (i.e. the building blocks and codified, written structure of a piece of music), while the latter two categories of musical meaning involve "aesthetics" (i.e. the reception of performed music by an audience within a given social environment).

A third, scholarly justifiable position would be to accept the fact that various styles celebrate different social contexts and value systems and to confront this as a phenomenon worthy of attention and therefore inviting closer study, not *despite*, but *because* of these differences. Only in that way can a better understanding be gained of the kinds of meaning these diverse styles articulate, of the discourses that underlie them or of the triviality that characterises their utterances (Lüdemann 2009a:10).

Subsequent to the statement of this only “justifiable” comparative musicological position, the three following questions are posed (Lüdemann 2009a:10): How should such an investigation be approached? Is it possible to move beyond mere comparison between obvious differences? Is a dialogue or perhaps even reconciliation possible?

This last question about the possibility of dialogue stands central to the theme of reconciliation, and Lüdemann’s discussion sashays from *academic* analyses of cultural difference into an *academic* (not *practical*) approach to dialogue and reconciliation. Such an intellectualised method of initiating intercultural rapprochement is passive, because it accepts the inherited diversities of apartheid’s social engineering. Being fettered to these phenomena through their protection and scholarly description, the proposed framework for reconciliation contains no meaningful advocacy for *transformation*. Unsurprisingly, Lüdemann’s (2009a:10; 2009b:648) theorisation approaches a deadlock:

Is a multicultural dialogue, not to mention cross-cultural reconciliation, at all possible? Is the inevitable way out not a uniform kind of music on the lowest common denominator, a road on which, arguably, we have already begun to travel? (Lüdemann 2009a:10).

Linking with his earlier statement that a shared Christian value system helped cement South Africa’s political accord during the early-1990s, Lüdemann puts forward, but then immediately dismisses, the miscegenetic concept of a homogeneous music on the *lowest common denominator*.

Die erkende manier om ’n dialoog te voer is om dit op een of ander gemeenskaplike idee of belang te baseer. Hierdie benadering is egter baie meer problematies as wat dit op die oog af mag lyk. Die vraag is of daar in die geval van musiek hoegenaamd so iets soos ’n gedeelde basis bestaan, waarop dialoog en versoening gebou kan word. Daar is naamlik ’n wydverspreide opvatting, veral in die werk van meer onlangse musikoloë, dat daar geen universeel aanwendbare kriteria is wat vir alle musiek geldig is nie en dat daar dus geen fundamentele gemeenskaplikhede op alle musiek van toepassing gemaak kan word nie (Lüdemann 2009b:649).

[English translation]

The acknowledged way of implementing dialogue is to base it on some or other collective idea or interest. This approach is however much more problematic than all outward appearances may suggest. The question is whether, in the case of music, there exists in any way whatsoever a common basis upon which dialogue and reconciliation can be constructed. There is viz. a widely held belief, especially in the work of more recent musicologists, that there are no universally appropriable criteria that are valid for all music, and that there can consequently be no application of fundamental commonalities on all music.

Some might consider this transformative embrace of commonalities in South African musical style as a desirable response to the problems of diversity. However, the irenicon's theorisation disallows this cross-cultural musical style. In citing the apparent widespread consensus on "there being no musical universals", Lüdemann (2009a:10; 2009b:649-50) makes two interrelated claims. First, the absence of universally valid musical criteria means that a uniform music on the *lowest common denominator* is a conceptual impossibility; second, it means that there is no musical common ground on which to ground dialogue and reconciliation.

Strangely, even though Lüdemann (2009a:10; 2009b:650) maintains a position that there are no universally shared criteria applicable to all musics, he nevertheless insists on locating such a criterion.²¹ Executing another Apollonian manoeuvre into the realm of ethics, Lüdemann (2009a:10; 2009b:650) escapes his theoretical deadlock by repositioning the search for a common denominator. His investigation shifts from a cultural perspective to a biological one, meaning that a universal means to initiate musical dialogue and reconciliation is unexpectedly not found in the music itself, but rather in the evolved biological aptitude that human beings have to create and understand music:

This is the only musical characteristic that is universal, and therefore it represents the only possible basis on which a discussion about the reconciliation of musical diversity and conflict in our time can take place (Lüdemann 2009a:10).

Presenting this biological common denominator as the only musical universal displaces the search for dialogue into prehistory. Because Lüdemann understands this evolved musical aptitude as a form of symbolic thinking that separates humans from animals, and because he accentuates the spiritual dimensions

²¹ He even dismisses universals and common denominators as a symptom of modernism, in that they underscore a diagnostic technique used to try and organise diverse value and belief systems into components of "a unified field, explicable by a single explanatory system" (Lüdemann 2009b:650). In contrast, a postmodernist worldview resists the absolute conviction of these methods of classification. It is confusing that he invokes postmodernism to invalidate universally applicable criteria when his entire irenic blueprint actually embraces the structural and unifying certainties of modernist compartmentalisation. By insisting on locating a universally shared criterion, his irenicon makes use of the very modernist diagnostic impulse that it dismisses.

that some people associate with music, he consequently argues that humans who make music automatically express their *humanity* and *human dignity*. In attaching human dignity to a common biological denominator, Lüdemann effectively insists that human dignity is the only universal musical characteristic.

On the back of this Apollonian universalism, he foresees two immediate levels on which dialogue between musical cultures can take place. The first level of dialogue consists of recognising the “overriding importance of the other’s humanity or human dignity,” regardless of whichever type of music they choose to express themselves (Lüdemann 2009a:10): “This level is not about my opinion. I listen to what the *other* chooses to say to me through his/her music. In the other’s music I am free and willing to recognise his/her humanity.” There is then a second level of dialogue, which Lüdemann (2009a:10-1; 2009b:652-3) borrows from ecumenical theology. It entails recognising the aesthetic or ethos that the *other* expresses in their music without simultaneously losing sight of one’s own value system. To avoid mindless bigotry, he factors in a precondition of constant self-criticism, so that one should always ascertain what the values expressed in one’s own music are, as well as whether those values are actually always conformed to.²² With these two levels of dialogue firmly entrenched, another third and culminating level becomes possible: the dialogue of reconciliation (Lüdemann 2009a:11; 2009b:653).

The point of reconciliation is reached when there is recognition of everyone’s right to the music that he/she finds meaningful, recognition of the right to criticise, and agreement on the right to differ, provided the dignity of the other is respected (Lüdemann 2009a:11).

Collectively, these multiple assurances propose static musical identities. Moreover, if individual human dignity is *encapsulated* in being able to make and understand a particular style of music, then any criticism of music would amount to an ad hominem attack against someone. This fatally compromises Lüdemann’s third level of dialogue (the dialogue of reconciliation), which he proposes should take place on neutral territory, where observance of the *other*’s essentialised humanity and human dignity can contribute to the reconciliation of extant diversities. More transformative alternatives are avoided:

What I have in mind is not a uniform “South African” musical style, but the creation of a strong artistic (and intellectual) middle ground where diverse kinds of music each have a place and can challenge each other without sacrificing their own unique voice. In this respect music has a potential for reconciliation that far exceeds the potential of any language policy (Lüdemann 2009a:11).

²² Both Lüdemann’s first and second levels of dialogue are discussed at length in a subsequent section of this chapter.

Lüdemann never states where in the real world his strong artistic (and intellectual) middle ground can be located. Not the university, it seems. Tertiary music departments, he holds, should each specialise in the practice and study of one particular musical type.²³

In a deductive synthesis, Lüdemann (2009a:11-2) then applies his protracted theoretical framework to the position of classical music in the “new” South Africa.²⁴ To begin with, he notes how little research is available on the topic of music and (multicultural) democracy, and explains that this paucity of scholarship may well underscore naive assumptions that “music in a democracy” should by definition be “democratic music” (i.e. music that has a broad mass-appeal). However, Lüdemann (2009a:12; 2003:271) insists that democracies guarantee the legitimacy of minority musics and more popular musics. What is more, he considers it inevitable that some types of music will aim to transcend the artistic needs of a democracy’s majority. He states explicitly that he speaks as the representative of a music department that prioritises the furtherance of “art music”; a category in which he especially includes “South African art music”. For Lüdemann, art music finds itself in a *niche* where it maintains a critical distance from the majority: like science, apparently it too can only develop from a position of criticism, and cannot be determined or fixed by democratic procedures. He argues that this does not, however, mean that music that transcends the mundane is inherently undemocratic.

It may well be that art music contributes to multiculturalism by being transcendently *other* to majoritarian tastes, but it does not follow that this would necessarily contribute to transformation and democratisation. Lüdemann (2009a:12; 2003:271) disagrees. Alluding once again to the universalising perils of musical miscegenation (i.e. an homogeneous music on the *lowest common denominator*), he argues that the continued survival of the Western art music tradition in South Africa could function as a prop against the forces of entropy that are leading to the realisation of a *musical one-party state*. The continued protection of a tradition patronised and practised by a minority group – so goes his line of reasoning – is important to ensure the maintenance of a diverse and democratic South African cultural landscape:

²³ This specialisation unavoidably leads to the exclusion of others, and it also places no obligation on his own music department to facilitate such an intercultural space.

²⁴ This section of the inaugural address is based on another article in the *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, “Diabolus in Musica: In dialoog met Thomas Mann se Doktor Faustus”, which Lüdemann (2003:259-276) published six years before his inaugural address.

Die spelreëls van demokrasie laat 'n veel ryker verskeidenheid ten opsigte van kulturele diversiteit toe as wat tans besef word. Die volle spektrum van moontlikhede wat deur hierdie spelreëls toegelaat word, wag nog op ontdekking. In die huidige politieke en kulturele klimaat in Suid-Afrika skyn die grootste klem nog op “demokratiese” kuns te val. Die demokratiese meerderheid behoort egter, onder andere deur middele tot beskikking van die staat, die privaat sektor en veral die media, spesifiek aan kunsmusiek die bestaansruimte te verskaf wat dit nodig het om sy unieke bydrae tot die reënboogkultuur te kan maak. En die voorstanders van kunsmusiek sal moet leer om met meer verbeeldingryke inisiatief en met 'n slimmer benutting van die demokratiese spelreëls hulle saak te bevorder. Anders word die bont kleure van ons musikale reënboogkultuur deur die *diabolus in musica* in 'n “middelmatige” grys verander (Lüdemann 2003:271; 2009a:12 contains a slight variation of this text).

[English translation]

The game rules of democracy allow a much richer assortment with regard to cultural diversity than is currently understood. The full spectrum of possibilities allowed by these game rules still awaits discovery. In the current political and cultural climate in South Africa the greatest emphasis still seems to be on “democratic” art. The democratic majority should rather, among others through means available to the government, the private sector and especially the media, supply art music specifically with the space for existence [survival space] that it needs to make its unique contribution to the rainbow culture. And the proponents of art music will have to learn how to advance their cause with more imaginative initiative and with a more cunning utilisation of the democratic game rules. Otherwise the variegated colours of our musical rainbow culture will be changed into a “mediocre” grey by the *diabolus in musica*.

Lüdemann thus manoeuvres an oftentimes hegemonic and elitist musical tradition into an endangered *niche*, whence advocacy of survival can be motivated by the rescue of South Africa's fragile multicultural democracy.

In the penultimate section of his address, Lüdemann (2009a:12) discusses the implications of his framework for the Music Department at Stellenbosch University (SU). Important issues relating to a policy document come into the foreground. Historically, he explains, all national tertiary music departments concentrated only on the study and performance of Western art music. This hegemonic situation has since changed, so that other types of music now also form an integral part of some university curricula. He explains these developments in terms of unique cultural environments: To stay relevant within the changed national environment, most music departments have apparently now come round to the idea of each creating their own specific musical *niche*, so that each of them now specialise in a unique type of music found in their immediate surrounds. This Kuyperian array of exclusive local specialisations necessarily implies an overall diversity and multiculturalism.

Lüdemann names the fields of study in which *other* university music departments now specialise as popular music, jazz studies, African music and so-called world music. This leads him to ask on what style

the Music Department at SU should concentrate its resources. When he finally asks this very important question, it had actually already been answered: In setting out his irenicon, Lüdemann already stated that his department prioritises both Western and South African art music, and has done for more than a century.

In die diverse en komplekse polifonie van Suid-Afrikaanse musiek, wat bestaan uit klassieke Westerse musiek, Anglo-Amerikaanse pop- en rockmusiek en sy Afrikaanse nabootsings, boeremusiek, klassieke Afrika-musiek, jazz en sy verwante sogenaamde township-musiekstyle, is daar een stem wat daver in stilte. Dit is Suid-Afrikaanse kunsmusiek in al sy fasette. Meer as enige ander musiek lê hierdie musiek op óns voordeur. Stellenbosch was en is die tuiste van sommige van die toonaangewendste Suid-Afrikaanse komponiste. As ons in ons kreatiewe werk en in ons navorsing 'n relevante bydrae wil lewer tot die instandhouding van musikale diversiteit, dan is dit presies dié soort musiek wat ons moet herontdek, bevorder en vorentoe moet uitbou. Hiervoor is ons beter toegerus as enige ander musiekdepartement in die land. Sodanige fokus sal op sy beurt vir ons die deure na die wêrelderfenis van klassieke en eietydse kunsmusiek kan oophou (Lüdemann 2009a:13).

[English translation]

In the diverse and complex polyphony of South African music, which comprises classical Western music, Anglo-American pop and rock music and its African/Afrikaner [the original is unclear] imitations, boeremusiek, classical African music, jazz and its related so-called township music styles, there is one voice that re-echoes in the silence. It is South African art music in all its facets. More than any other music this music lies on *our* doorstep. Stellenbosch was and is the home of some of the leading South African composers. If we want to make a relevant contribution to the conservation of musical diversity in our creative work and in our research, then it is precisely this type of music that we must rediscover, advance and enlarge in the future. For this we are better equipped than any other music department in the country. Such a focus will in its turn keep the doors of the world heritage of classical and contemporary art music open to us.

Lüdemann's assertion that South African art music's voice has been silenced (*daver in die stilte*) is simply not true.²⁵ The institutional resources devoted to this music throughout South Africa remain considerable. I will return to more important implications of this paragraph in due course.

In the final section of his address, Lüdemann (2009a:13) finds ways in which the discussion about music, cultural diversity, human dignity and democracy could contribute to the research focus areas decided upon by SU and its Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. I now turn to a critical appraisal of four specific ideas/themes that Lüdemann articulates in his inaugural lecture: Music and translation; the intellectual and

²⁵ In spite of South Africa's significant political changes, which included a comprehensive overhaul of the curricula of socially conscious music departments, one can nevertheless still study Western and South African art music with rigour at the following universities: the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth, the North-West University in Potchefstroom, Rhodes University in Grahamstown, the University of Cape Town, the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, the University of Pretoria, the University of South Africa (UNISA, a correspondence university), and the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

artistic middle ground for reconciliatory dialogue; miscegenetic concepts like a *musical one-party state*, an *ein förmiger Mehrheitsgeschmack* and a uniform music on the *lowest common denominator*; and the function that he argues SU's Music Department could fulfil in the South African democratic project.

Gobbet 44: The strategies people have used to permit their music to survive

Since 1965 ethnomusicologists have been centrally interested in studying how the world's musics have changed under the influence of Western and Western-derived musical culture and the musical culture of modernised technology, from wax cylinders to the Internet. Although this research has most frequently focused on the often deceptive Western/non-Western dyad, the general issue involves the strategies people have used to permit their music to survive in an environment where other musics – more powerful technologically and symbolically – have competed for cultural resources such as audience and performers.

[...]

The basic assumption has to be that for humans as groups or societies, cultural survival is secondary to physical survival but nevertheless essential; societies may be forced or motivated to change their culture to survive, but all sorts of reasons can influence a group's decision whether to change, maintain, or abandon their cultural forms. [...]

Ethnomusicologists have been interested in the specific ways in which societies have changed their music in order to preserve it. In some societies, for example, the musical system adapted to Western musical practices, and elements such as Western-derived harmony and increased emphasis on composition over improvisation gained ascendancy; this mechanism one might call Westernisation because traditional music survived by acquiring traits central to Western music.

Elsewhere, in what we may call modernisation, traditional musical sounds were maintained at the expense of placing them in Western-derived social contexts.

Bruno Nettl (2010:116-7)

“On the Concept of Evolution in the History of Ethnomusicology”

Nettl's Elephant: On the History of Ethnomusicology

On translating music

Lüdemann's ideas on translation form part of a broader analogy that compares language and music as systems of communication.²⁶ After explaining how the translation of written or spoken languages facilitates dialogue and reconciliation, Lüdemann posits and then immediately dismisses the possibility that translations of music could achieve a similar outcome. Unlike written or spoken languages, whose meanings are arbitrarily signified, he explains that the intrinsic meaning of a musical statement is tied up with the specific sounds or musical signs that are employed to declare it. From this statement of his, one concludes that the inherent meaning of the opening salvo to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony would inescapably be mistranslated if that work of Western art music were reformulated for, say, a jazz trio. The act of translation would introduce new sonic variables into the work (new style, new instrumentation, and possibly even a new key), meaning that the translation would actually alter the specific informational quanta that make the work communicate whatever message it is supposed to relay.²⁷

Because Lüdemann insists that music is non-referential, he necessarily also frames it as something untranslatable. Kofi Agawu (1999:144) echoes this idea about music's untranslatability in his research on music and semiotics. Lüdemann and Agawu frame their arguments differently though: whereas Lüdemann focuses on the arbitrary nature of linguistic signs and the fixed nature of musical signs, Agawu focuses on the fixed meaning of linguistic units and the unfixed meaning of musical units. This difference in approach to semiotics means that Lüdemann views music as the more fixed object, whereas Agawu views language as the more fixed object. So, whereas they agree that music cannot be translated, the way in which they conceptualise this untranslatability is contradictory. Lüdemann uses the impossibility of translating music as

²⁶ Translation across written or spoken languages is presented by Lüdemann as a type of intercultural dialogue that cultivates understanding between alien cultures. Presumably these cultures would gain intellectual access to one another's essences (i.e. one another's humanity and human dignity), as embodied in lexical phenomena like literature, history, religious dogma and the law. If that is indeed so, then one wonders how expediently the faithful translation of anti-Semitic literature, such as *The Merchant of Venice*, could aid intercultural understanding and reconciliation between Jews and their persecutors. This is another indication of the Apollonian way in which Lüdemann seems to think about artistic expression. There are no guarantees whatsoever that translations of written or oral literatures will facilitate dialogue and reconciliation, simply because there are no guarantees that the messages contained within these literatures will have a benevolent and dignified content. In actual fact, translation probably exacerbates conflict by alerting various cultures to the vehemence of hatred directed at them.

²⁷ One flaw in this line of reasoning is that, by any objective standard, it would be nearly impossible to pin down or explain the precise meaning of the opening salvo in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, whereas the similarly famous first sentence of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* has a meaning that proves less evanescent. The comparatively ephemeral nature of performed music suggests that one may very well enforce a pointless standard when trying to be faithful to any perceived original meaning of a musical work.

part of a larger argument that accentuates the differences of musical styles in order to suggest their incompatibility with one another. Agawu (1999:144), on the other hand, stresses that although different musical systems cannot be converted into one another, this does not deny “the existence of morphological or expressive resemblances between systems”.

Because Lüdemann’s framework demonstrates an inclination to cement essentialised stylistic diversities within a globally diverse cultural landscape (i.e. many self-contained cultures that together form an overall diversity), it allows very little scope for discovering and utilising the morphological or expressive resemblances between individual musical styles. One recalls his view that “trying to translate a piece of music written by an English composer into a Japanese musical idiom would be an absurd undertaking” (Lüdemann 2009a:9). This argument about a putative impossibility entails a reduction to absurdity: Music cannot be translated, otherwise we would have idiomatically Japanese stylistic versions of Vaughan Williams symphonies. Lüdemann’s example may borrow from Steven Mithen, who writes something similar but less unconditional in *The Singing Neanderthals*:

Whereas we can translate Japanese not only into English but into any other language spoken in the world, though recognising that we may lose much of the subtlety of the original in the process, it makes no sense to attempt to translate the music used by one culture into that of another, and there is no reason to do so (Mithen 2005:14).

At face value, Mithen (2005:288) and Lüdemann are saying the same thing. Nevertheless, Mithen actually believes that it *is* possible to adapt pieces of music from one style into another. In explaining how senseless it is to translate the music of one culture into that of another, he adds a very important footnote: “There can, of course, be transpositions of one musical style into another, such as Bollywood versions of Western music and the 1980s’ ‘pop’ versions of classics” (Mithen 2005:288). Mithen does not preclude as illogical the adaptation of pieces of music from one style into another: He uses the word *transposition*, instead of Lüdemann’s *translation*, perhaps to signify the redundancy of uncompromising faithfulness to original compositions when novel adaptations can expand a specific work’s meaning.

Lüdemann is correct that nobody should deny the possibility of translating English words into Japanese. As Umberto Eco (2003:2-5, 71-3) explains, the workability of this mode of translation is perceived as a self-evident truth because of the mere fact that books exist that tell the same stories in different “natural languages” (written or spoken languages). Nevertheless, the inaugural lecture avoids the subtle problems faced by translators who negotiate the peculiarities of discrete natural languages, an omission that strengthens the argument that language and music differ completely from each other

regarding translation.²⁸ In gleaning over these subtleties, Lüdemann sets up a dichotomy in which natural languages can readily be translated and musics cannot. This dichotomy serves to hypothesise translation across written or spoken languages as a feasible cultural activity, while dismissing the conceptual possibility musically to pursue and accomplish intercultural translation.

His contention over the *absurdity* of translating music rests on an idea that musical sounds are indelibly fixed to their specific meanings, whereas words – verbal sounds – link up to their respective meanings in an arbitrary manner (Lüdemann 2009a:9). This viewpoint depends first on the already stated idea that music is a non-referential system of meaning; and thereafter it refers to Ferdinand de Saussure's theory that the words – verbal sound-images – designating concepts are arbitrary referential conventions.²⁹ Lüdemann (2009a:9) argues that Saussure's arbitrary signification is not possible in music: Because musical sound-images have very specific and irreplaceable meanings, he feels that they cannot be translated. Alterations in the pitch, timbre and duration of musical sound-images would change the meanings of entire musical signs, and thereby communicate an altered meaning for any adapted piece of music.

Because Lüdemann considers *individual profile, style, context* and *ethos* as interlocked parts of a musical work's meaning, he consequently reasons that adapting (translating) the *style* of a piece of music would change its entire content so as to make it unrecognisable. This means that, whereas reading Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* in English can convey an accurate impression of the work in its original Russian form, a translation of Shostakovich's social realist Fifth Symphony into the typically English style of Benjamin Britten would be an *absurd* idea (Lüdemann 2009b:646). This reduction to absurdity is deceptive, since it compares two dissimilar spoken languages to two art musical styles that Lüdemann's theorisation otherwise regards as one unified Western art music language. A more appropriate analogy could compare

²⁸ Translators of written or spoken languages actually face considerable dilemmas in their work, with problematic and oftentimes unconsidered factors that include a responsibility to change the exact meaning of the original, so as to capture the "spirit" of its meaning in translation. Apart from small word changes that render colloquial speech understandable, one of the most pertinent choices is whether to *domesticate* or *foreignise* (concepts formulated by the translation theorist Lawrence Venuti) a text in translation: Domestication makes it culturally familiar to its target audience, while foreignisation adheres more faithfully to original cultural contexts and conventions. Examples of domestication and foreignisation are contained, for example, in Michiel Heyns's accomplished translation of Marlene van Niekerk's novel *Agaat*. For all Afrikaans cultural goods mentioned in the novel, such as songs, children's rhymes and games, hymns, idiomatic expressions and farming lore, Heyns (2006:i) retains, as far as possible, "the sound, rhythm, register and cultural specificity of the original". However, where Van Niekerk's novel quotes from mainstream Afrikaans poetry, her translator has "taken the liberty of extending the range of poetic allusion", and of inserting "equivalents from English poetry".

²⁹ This validates Saussure's and Lüdemann's idea that links between words and their meanings are random. Onomatopoeia is sometimes used to refute Saussure's (1959:69) theory about the arbitrariness of verbal signifiers. Similarly, opera and musical theatre, ballet and other dance forms, programme music, and song accompaniments refute Lüdemann's idea that musical signifiers are always fixed and non-referential.

translating Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into Jane Austen's Regency English with paraphrasing Shostakovich's music into a style associated with Britten.

Hamlet can be translated from its original early modern English into other variants of English; from early modern English into other discrete languages such as Japanese; and also from early modern English into musical media, such as Peter Klatzow's ballet *Hamlet*, and the Disney musical *The Lion King*. Since two distinct musical translations of the "Hamlet" story are evidently possible, there should be no reason why one of them cannot be translated into another culture's idiomatic musical style. Such translations are wholly practicable, comprising an abundance "of responsive genres [including] parody, thematic variations, travesty, pastiche and innumerable modes of adaptation" (Steiner 1997:23). They do not only include the faithful restatement of an original English text into Japanese.

Lüdemann's analogy of reading *The Gulag Archipelago* in English could be taken to its extreme by instead imagining an adaptation of Shostakovich's social realist Fifth Symphony into the typically English style of The Beatles. Unlike Benjamin Britten's classically-resourced Albion sound-world, any style associated with The Beatles would not merely be another dialect of the conventional Western art music language, but rather constitute a more starkly discrete musical language to that of Shostakovich. In spite of this bigger difference, there should be no reason except a slavish fidelity to the ultimately inaccessible "original meaning" of Shostakovich's *Fifth Symphony*, that this work could not be reworked into a musical idiom ("Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club"?), associated with The Beatles. Insistence on the opposite subscribes to a nineteenth-century worldview in which unique artistic genius is immune to mundane musical needs and practices, because composers are thought to articulate their "unique individuality", by speaking in their own musical languages (Taruskin 2009:456)

Why would Lüdemann view the translation of music as so "impossible" and "absurd"? The reason can be derived from his argument about untranslatability, which demonstrates an apparent acceptance of compulsory fidelity to the meaning of original masterworks. By invoking the authority of the score, musicologists can imagine boundary conditions for the authentic performance of musical works. This textual fetishism pins down the evanescent contours of performed music by adhering to the supposedly concrete and objective data thought to relay a composer's intentional meaning with a musical work. Consequently, an impossible-to-gauge authorial standard creates illusory proscriptive lines that dare not be crossed in musical performance, yet whose real-world positions depend on the mulishness with which separate listeners recall and construct what they themselves consider to be the work's true nature.

There can be no objectively verifiable standards according to which the ideal of *Werktreue* (i.e. the obligation of feaisance to an original musical work) limits the interpretative liberties available to a performer (Taruskin 2009:450). Sterile conventions of correctness nonetheless pervade Western art music's practice, so that a concerted reification conventionalises the sound-worlds of musical works and standardises their perceived sonic meanings. In opposition to this orthodoxy of stylistic correctness, Taruskin (2009:459) proposes an alternative approach to the ever-popular present-day "novelty" of staging modernised or updated versions of time-honoured operas; e.g. Peter Sellars's infamous direction of the Mozart/Da Ponte trilogy: "*Don Giovanni* in East Harlem, *The Marriage of Figaro* in Trump Tower, and *Così fan tutte* in a neon-lit diner". Taruskin argues that a spirit of even-handedness should actually include an "update [of] the music along with the mise-en-scène". Yet, echoing Lüdemann's ideas on translation, directors who are in the habit of renovating operas in this manner always leave the original music untouched:

Why no Mozart on rock guitars or Verdi in tinny prerecorded jukebox timbres? Why no techno Traviatas or R&B *Götterdämmerung*? Why [not] have Verdi's Triumphal March performed as an electronic collage or by an Egyptian cabaret orchestra? (Taruskin 2009:459).

In South Africa one can point to the failure of Mark Dornford-May's much talked about operatic motion picture *U-Carmen eKhayelitsha* (2005) comprehensively to incorporate indigenous musical styles and practices into its score. Surely the music – one would say *especially* the music – would be an obvious dimension of change when placing the *Carmen* story inside a South African township?³⁰ Dornford-May's *Impempe Yomlingo* (2006), an adaptation of *Die Zauberflöte*, is a much more adventurous project in that it transfers Mozart's original orchestral settings to "eight custom-built marimbas, township percussion in the form of glass bottles filled with water, large metal oil barrels, [and] hand clapping and ululation along with djembes". Added to this, the score of *Impempe Yomlingo* was extended to include "neotraditional isiXhosa choruses that often overlay or develop out of existing melodies" (Olsen 2012:67).

Not allowing for the possibility of intercultural translations (or Mithen's transpositions) of musical works eliminates the reciprocal give and take that is necessary for cultural diversity to breathe through music. Translation is itself a form of *reconciliation* – a process whose success depends on successful negotiation: "In order to get something, each party renounces something else, and at the end everybody

³⁰ The 1943 Broadway musical *Carmen Jones*, for example, translates Bizet's original score into jazz, while the 2001 MTV production of *Carmen: A Hip Hopera* introduces an almost entirely new musical score. Yet in *U-Carmen eKhayelitsha* one finds an isiXhosa (i.e. tonal language) libretto, which is so faithful to the tonal patterns of Bizet's original score that it even adheres to the original French phrasings of "L'amour est un oiseau rebelle".

feels satisfied since one cannot have everything” (Eco 2003:6). Lüdemann’s assertion that music cannot be translated interculturally negates any prospect of such a negotiated settlement. Classical musicians often subscribe to this fallacy, where reverence for the reified musical object closes down the conceptual space needed for a musical work’s poietic structure to open up. The paradigm demanding this kind of *Werktreue* does not allow for the mutation or mediation of individual musical works. Instead, it moulds musical environments into “imaginary museums” (Lydia Goehr’s phraseology) for the ossification of sound, so that the Western art music canon can be protected in a pure form.

Lüdemann’s blueprint indicates an adherence to this kind of petrification. This is best illustrated by focussing on his citation of Christopher Cockburn’s (2008) research on contextual shifts in the meaning of Handel’s *Messiah*, as observed in this work’s two hundred year South African performance history. Considering Lüdemann’s four levels of musical meaning (*individual profile*, *style*, *context* and *ethos*), the significant idea that he borrows from Cockburn’s research is that moving a stylistically pure work of Western art music into a new social *context* automatically alters its meaning. Altered South African performance contexts for *Messiah* adapted the work’s meaning to signify ideologies as divergent as the superiority of the British Empire’s “white civilisation” and the political emancipation of the country’s oppressed “black” population.

Even though Lüdemann perceives in Cockburn’s research how changes in *context* can cause ideological drift, he nevertheless insists on the petrification of musical structures (*individual profile* and *style*). He disallows the translation of musical works into new idiomatic styles because their meaning would change, and yet he allows that unaltered musical works be performed in multiple cultural contexts, where their meanings would change anyhow. So, even though *Messiah* might be performed in a “black” social environment and thus celebrate an altered political meaning (an altered *ethos*?), Lüdemann argues that the musical codes or *signifiers* necessary to recognise *Messiah* as itself (*individual profile*), and also as a work of baroque Western art music (*style*), cannot be modified when cultural divides are bridged. Why lock a composition’s musical signifiers into place to protect its meaning when contextual shifts like intercultural appropriation are going to alter the meaning anyhow? Or to restate this question in more familiar terms: When even an “authentic” performance of *Messiah* would have an altered meaning in a Japanese context, what difference does it make that a more fundamental translation of the work’s individual profile and style into a Japanese musical idiom would alter its fixed musical signs? Neither the “authentic” nor the “translated” performance can be faithful to the work’s original meaning.

Why should some interlocked levels of musical meaning coagulate when others change routinely in every new performance context? In recognising how a different performance *context* alters musical meaning, one might as well forfeit an impermeable outlook on the other levels of musical meaning that Lüdemann outlines. The idea of accurately translating a musical composition becomes a *non sequitur*, since whether translation be possible or impossible (or absurd), musical meaning will change regardless. The type of translation that guarantees putative fidelity to an original meaning becomes pointless, except if fidelity is not at stake at all, but rather the power to decide on the criteria of fidelity. At the core of the impossibility and/or absurdity of translation, is the control of cultural capital, and therefore the exercise of power.

Whorfian flame cast in a Chomskian crystal

The other significant manner in which Lüdemann's framework canvasses static musical meanings is by theorising the potential for musical reconciliation within a *biological* paradigm. His route from culture to biology entails a reconciliation schema rooted in a paleoanthropological image of purported universality.

Lüdemann uses a determinist argument that evolution has established musicality (like Chomsky's generative grammar) as a universal and innate human trait. Just as Chomsky would contend that there is a linguistic faculty already mapped inside the physiology of the human brain, so Lüdemann theorises a "universal grammar" when it comes to musicality. Nevertheless, there is an important discrepancy: Whereas Chomsky's mathematical theory of generative grammar conceives of the linguistic faculty as a crystalline and immutable structure, it nevertheless still makes allowance for the translation of spoken and written languages. According to Chomsky, universal grammar is the stable neurological foundation upon which countless spoken languages are constructed; and because these languages have the same grounding they can necessarily be translated into one another (Byatt 1996:192-3). Lüdemann appears to argue that musical languages are grounded in a similar universal neurological capacity, but that the universal attribute of musicality (his framework's "generative grammar") does not ensure and facilitate the translatability of musical languages into one another. Instead of thinking of the evolved ability to make and understand music as a single crystalline structure, which is to say as one overarching and unchangeable grammar whose seat lies in the brain, Lüdemann treats individual musical languages as a plurality of unchangeable grammars in themselves. In some ways this approach hardens the structure of the crystal even more than Chomsky, while in others it adopts a scattered Whorfian outlook that views (musical) languages as distinct monads.

When Lüdemann looks at musical diversity, he observes a Whorfian world through Chomskian goggles.³¹ Benjamin Lee Whorf was an influential American linguist who, during the first half of the twentieth century, advanced an idea that languages each articulate an untranslatable cultural consciousness and worldview (Stern 1975). His work was influential in helping discredit an ethnocentric assumption, prevalent during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that certain dialects of the Indo-European family – especially Latin and Greek – contained everything (especially pertaining to grammar) worth knowing about human languages (Deutscher 2010:130-2). Whorfianism (or the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis) propounds a concept of linguistic relativity, in which languages are considered so fundamentally unlike one another that their grammars give respective speakers a drastically different worldview or consciousness. This resonates with Lüdemann's view that musics are untranslatable and articulate discrete paradigms.

More generally, Whorfianism also resonates with the biblical myth of Babel, which functions as the operative metaphor for linguistic diversity. Where Lüdemann's ideas touch on linguistic relativity they necessarily also embrace a Kuyprian model for understanding cultural difference. The Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyprian viewed Babel Tower as a hubristic attempt to achieve unity, through a "hankering to be one people [with] one language" (Bratt 1998:23).³² Diversity is one of the dogmas of Kuyprian neo-Calvinism, born out of the Pentateuch's narrative that Babel Tower was abhorrent, and that Yahweh destroyed it and scattered its assembled people across the globe, giving them languages incomprehensible to one another. Kuyprian doctrines consequently preach "the immutable exclusiveness of ethnic nationalities", enforced through an apartheid-style social engineering called pillarisation (*verzuiling*). The latter ideology maintains that all spheres of national life – i.e. all forms of culture, sport and commerce – should be ethnically bounded and inviolable, to maintain their "sovereignty in [their] own sphere" (Moodie 1975:99, 229). The object with pillarisation is to protect divinely ordained diversity through avoiding the kinds of intercultural contact that could lead to the uniform *miscegenation* of ethnic identities.

Linguistic relativity has been largely discredited in linguistics, on grounds that Whorf's research methodologies were spurious and duplicitous. The advent in linguistics of Chomskian determinism brought about an almost wholesale rejection of relativism, with the result that Whorfianism is now generally

³¹ My insight here is shaped by the linguist Gerard Wijn Nobel in A.S. Byatt's (1996:192-3) novel *Babel Tower*, who believes in both the Chomskian and Whorfian formulations of language simultaneously.

³² Apart from being an influential theologian, Kuyprian also served as Dutch Prime Minister (1901-1905). His ideas made a considerable impact on South African intellectuals who studied in the Netherlands during the first three decades of the twentieth century. The Potchefstroom-based philosopher H.G. Stoker is probably most associated with Kuyprianism because of his considerable influence in helping reformulate this worldview into a doctrinal grounding for apartheid ideology. My thanks to Prof. Ernst Conradie for explaining Kuyprianism to me.

considered “an intellectual tax haven for mystical philosophers, fantasists and postmodern charlatans” (Deutscher 2010:131). Lüdemann’s theorisation is related to Whorf’s thinking through his rejection of musical universals (Whorfian relativism) and to Chomsky’s thought through his insistence on seeking out an irenic methodology that operates on universals (Chomskian determinism). Not only is it a contradiction that underscores my perception of a Whorfian world regarded through Chomskian goggles, but it also struggles to contain a theorisation that first accentuates difference and untranslatability, and then tries uniformly to orchestrate this virtually incompatible diversity into a harmonious blueprint.³³

One of the biggest problems in Lüdemann’s formulation of musical diversity is that it makes the structural problems of intercultural understanding contained in the Babel myth look comparatively tame. Even though people who use different spoken languages do not understand one another initially, they nevertheless communicate concepts that are sufficiently similar and reconcilable that translation is (or can become) an option. When it comes to musical utterances, Lüdemann insists that the concepts communicated are too dissimilar and irreconcilable to be translated; his Whorfian reasoning that different musical styles (musical languages) have different value systems that each articulate their own separate “truth”. Does this make music one of the superlative cognitive modes for *othering* foreign cultures? By singing and playing our instruments, do we indiscriminately help make ourselves and our home cultures into distinct alterities that are always going to be alien to one another? Empirically, the answer is no.

Far too many people subscribe to a multitude of musical identities and move freely between the styles and cultures that Lüdemann describes as antagonistic and incompatible *others*. Not only are passive audiences (listeners) matter-of-factly literate in the appreciation of an array of musics, but a not inconsiderable amount of performers are also adept in the practice of more than one style or genre. With Lüdemann’s framework it would be instructive to learn precisely where he perceives the thresholds of *otherness* to be. Some of his examples demarcate and classify musical difference within very narrow parameters (Shostakovich and Britten), but if that is indeed the case, then the multitude of musicians who readily perform both of these musical languages with fluency disprove his entire premise that circumscribed musics enunciate the discrete paradigmatic values and “truths” of unique cultures. The stylistic versatility of these musicians also calls into question the genuine necessity of the strong artistic (and intellectual) middle

³³ Chomsky’s ideas about linguistics indicate “a passionate appetite for unity, for complete logic and explanation” (Steiner 1976:125). In adopting the biological universal, Lüdemann exhibits a similar appetite for unity: like Chomsky he constructs a universal grammar whose “desire to get to the root of things” indicates a monism that contradicts his allegiance to diversity. Lüdemann’s uniform methodology to initiate dialogue and reconciliation, through the cognitive deep structure of human dignity, is an example of this impulse. In his apparent desire to protect diversity it unfortunately seems that he also wants to order and separate a world full of conflicting differences.

ground, which Lüdemann proposes for the showcasing and recognition of musical *otherness*. Not only can the absolute nature of his categories of musical difference be disputed, but evidently these musicians have actually found more productive spaces in which the engagement with diversity exceeds mere observance and recognition of the *other's* essentialised humanity.

Because musics are purportedly too foreign from one another to be understood, and because the translation of musics is supposedly impossible, Lüdemann seeks another methodology through which foreign cultures could engage in dialogue and contribute to social concord. He finds it in the hypothetical middle ground, which is reasoned to promote intercultural understanding simply by allowing oppositional cultures to reveal their music to one another, and thus witness one another's human dignity. Because Lüdemann does not specify where exactly such an arena for cross-cultural communication could be located, my critique now turns towards gaining a better understanding of the philosophy (and religion) that underpins this notional space for dialogue and reconciliation.

To begin with, Lüdemann bases his idea of dialogue on the notion that there should already be a common denominator shared between parties that seek reconciliation. But because he holds that there is no criterion that applies universally to all musics, this necessarily means that there is no musical common ground on which to ground dialogue and reconciliation. It also disqualifies the possibility of creating a democratically shared South African musical style (something he thinks would be based on the *lowest common denominator*), which strikes one as an obvious means for creating musical dialogue in such a diverse country.

If one accepts the totalitarian nature of Lüdemann's framework – i.e. its everything-or-nothing approach – these two obstacles seem valid. However, if his irenicon aims primarily to contribute to peace in South Africa, then it is completely unnecessary to locate a shared criterion that applies universally to all musics throughout the world. In order to discover a communal basis for dialogue and reconciliation between South African cultures, one only needs to locate a shared criterion that applies to South African musics. Then again, even this is unnecessary, since there is no reason why everyone would need to uncover common ground simultaneously, nor engage simultaneously in an omnidirectional mode of dialogue, in order for reconciliation to succeed. The utopian imagination seeks to unify solutions to social problems into singular methodologies (e.g. “acknowledging one another's human dignity”) that create the illusion of social harmony by their very concordant nature. In the case of Lüdemann's blueprint, his allegiance to diversity is contradicted by a framework that proposes a *uniform – his uniform* – methodology for achieving peace.

Ultimately, this unifying impulse amounts to a solipsistic worldview: “Everyone can live together in harmony, as long as everyone accepts my way of enabling harmonious living.”

If one accepts his argument that common ground is a requirement for initiating dialogue, then a multiform scattered approach would surely be more practical (more of this world) and therefore better suited for the irenic task of reconciliation. One by one, a musicological irenics can discover, in a process directed to the future and to what is not known (as opposed to what is known), the many characteristics that particular musical styles share with diverse others. This does not mean that every type of music would end up having the same criterion in common. A programme of universally shared criteria, where every culture (value system) in a society should be in complete accord with all of its *others*, is not only impractical but also unnecessary. It is excessive to search for even one universal commonality. All one needs to find are sufficient commonalities shared in varying degrees by sufficient numbers of cultures to create a sufficient critical mass of dialogue and reconciliation.

Although Lüdemann dismisses the notion of musical universals, the problem that his irenicon depends on dialogue constructed around a common denominator obligates him, nevertheless, to seek out a musical universal. This is when he shifts his discourse from culture to biology, thus incorporating the determinism of which Chomsky’s theory of generative grammar is so readily accused:

The idea of musical universals does nothing if not place all of humankind on equal ground, acting as a biological safeguard against ethnocentric notions of musical superiority. In this balancing act between biological constraints and historical forces, the notion of musical universals merely provides a focus on the unity that underlies the great diversity present in the world’s musical systems, and attributes this unity to neural constraints underlying musical processing (Wallin et al., quoted in Lüdemann 2009b:650).

Lüdemann attaches human dignity to the evolved human faculty to make and understand music, with the result that his biological common denominator spirals back into the realm of culture. Most notably, “human dignity” becomes an ethical quality (*ethos*) that is supposedly shared universally by all musics. A biological common denominator is presented as something culturally egalitarian; a middle-of-the-road option that balances biological determinism with historical contingencies (culture). In a South African context, treating everyone as equals undermines entrenched ethnocentric notions of biological and cultural supremacy. A biological universal thus seems perfectly positioned to contribute to the national project of reconciliation, based on the cancellation of apartheid’s racist worldview.

According to Lüdemann, the biological universal opens up two immediate levels of dialogue. In the first level, one understands the fullness of the *other's* human dignity, regardless of the music they choose to communicate their humanity. This acknowledgement happens simply by listening to their music. Structurally, this is the weakest point in Lüdemann's irenicon. Given that "human dignity" is not the only possible content of the "humanity" articulated by human beings when they make music, there is no guarantee that acknowledging the music of the *other* automatically means recognising their "human dignity".³⁴ Citing the example of how Nazis used music for propaganda purposes, Lüdemann (2009b:651) recognises that human beings are also capable of communicating negative modes of conduct through music.³⁵ He does not admit the implications of this recognition for his irenic methodology to achieve musical dialogue and reconciliation. The inhumane aspects of human nature constitute an unavoidable dilemma when the suggested blueprint only works by observing the "human dignity" attached to another culture's "humanity". Bacchanalian types of music also express the human condition; however, they do so with the arguably "undignified" content of orgiastic, libidinous and violent *ethea*, making them incompatible with an Apollonian framework.

This fundamental discrepancy is not resolved satisfactorily. In the moment when Lüdemann's discourse encounters the oftentimes destructive libidinal shades that music entrains from the human body, he chooses rather to paper them over by incorporating a second level of dialogue that pulls the theorisation back up to a dignified ethical plane. In this regard it is significant that Lüdemann never tenders sexuality as a possible marker of musical identity. Instead, he rather presents ecumenical theology as an exemplary discourse. The mode of intercultural dialogue most controlled by apartheid's social engineers, sexuality is not only a fundamental aspect of music and performance, but also of the South African social conflict Lüdemann hopes to solve.

For the second level of musical dialogue that eventually leads to reconciliation, Lüdemann (2009a:10-1; 2009b:652-3) adapts research on diversity by the Catholic theologian Hans Küng. Ecumenical

³⁴ The thinking in this case is based on a premise that anthropoids first became *human* when they discovered music. In an extraordinary leap in time that ignores up to seventy-five millennia of evolution, Lüdemann then redeploys and consigns this incipient and primordial condition of *human dignity* to present-day *humanity*. His assumptions about the elemental cognitive facility for music are offered as a guarantee in the modern world, which states that *human dignity* is a universal corollary of anyone's music. With this connection, he insists on an Apollonian paradigm for reconciliation, thereby ignoring the smorgasbord of characteristics other than *human dignity* that might also supervene from performed music. The inaugural lecture proper seems ignorant of the problems contained in an equivalence between musical practice and human dignity, while its adaptation for publication in an academic journal makes one or two concessions that hint at the Dionysian side of human nature.

³⁵ One could also cite violent South African struggle music like state president Jacob Zuma's trademark song "Awuleth' Umshini Wami" (Bring Me My Machine Gun) (Lüdemann 2009b:649).

theology is presented as a discourse that has much to offer in lessons over accommodating clashing worldviews. Where musical styles – along with the ethnic/racial and/or cultural identities to which they are tied – were thus far mostly compared to languages and their translation, Lüdemann now compares musics to religions. Far from easing the negotiation required to reach a peaceful settlement in South Africa, this comparison actually elevates musical difference and cements *otherness*, by insisting that idiomatic musical styles articulate discrete paradigms or value systems.

This foray into ecumenical theology is what prompts me to classify Lüdemann’s blueprint as an irenicon. He explains that ecumenical theology is characterised by considerable efforts to find peaceful ways of accommodating diversity. However, these initiatives are also constantly impeded, because the prospect of ever resolving religious differences seems unlikely – unless one were to adopt a pluralistic approach to worship, or otherwise recede collectively to a “lowest common denominator” that replaces specific religions with a broad-spectrum spirituality (Küng, in Lüdemann 2009a:11; 2009b:652). Evidently, similar to Lüdemann’s theorisation of musical diversity, ecumenical theology also avoids open-ended, relativistic and miscegenetic approaches to culture and identity.

Küng’s irenicon strives to facilitate world peace by urging religions to ignore that specific dogmas divide them, and rather initiate dialogue about the common ground of their shared ethical values (Lüdemann 2009a:10-1; 2009b:652).³⁶ Participation in this “extremely necessary” conversation about ethical values should happen without religions having to sacrifice their own dogmas, and also without sacrificing a discussion about the fundamental “question of truth”. Just as Küng wants the followers of various religions to acknowledge one another’s unique claims to “truth” without simultaneously sacrificing their own, so Lüdemann wants devotees of various musics to recognise one another’s aesthetics and *ethos* without sacrificing their own. Küng explains how the borders between truth and untruth do not necessarily lie in the same place as the borders between different religions, but oftentimes also run through the own religion. Similarly: Lüdemann argues that the borders between “good music” and “bad music” do not necessarily lie in the same place as the borders between different musics, but oftentimes run through the own music.

³⁶ Küng’s religious theorisation offers an analogical grounding for Lüdemann’s Kuyperian view of monocultural musics: Like religions, musical styles become – in Lüdemann’s framework – egocentric and ethnocentric worldviews, relegating any hope for reconciliation to the off-chance that cultures can find common ground. This model for musical reconciliation is much more complicated than the one that facilitated South Africa’s political settlement. In the latter instance, different cultures all rallied around the common figure of Christ as a means to achieve dialogue. However, seeing that disparate musics are now equated to antithetical religions, the search for a *common denominator* becomes much more demanding. This is most evident in the fact that Lüdemann needs to formulate three separate levels of musical dialogue to complete his theorisation of reconciliation.

This means that the aesthetic differences between different musical types need not be denied in order to avoid conflict; instead, they should be named explicitly and also become the subject of analysis and criticism. Of course, this comparative musicological approach depends on *naming difference* and then *analysing* it. Lüdemann's assertion is that indiscriminately accepting stylistic diversity would lack "scientific integrity", since this relativistic mode of musical analysis would gloss over essential "differences in meaning and values" (Lüdemann 2009a:10).

[The only] scholarly justifiable position would be to accept the fact that various styles celebrate different social contexts and value systems and to confront this as a phenomenon worthy of study, not despite, but because of these differences. Only in that way can a better understanding be gained of the kinds of meaning these diverse styles articulate, of the discourses that underlie them or of the triviality that characterises their utterances (Lüdemann 2009a:10).

With a focus on common ground (*universals?*), the aim of musicology emerges as cataloguing and comparing difference. Admittedly, comparison (metaphor, simile, analogy) is a valuable academic tool. But it does not follow that musical styles should therefore be compared to one another in order specifically to understand differences in their meanings and value systems. Lüdemann presents this as the only rigorous musicological approach because of his blueprint's vested interest in upholding cultural difference. The possibility is not considered that alternative scholarly approaches (accepting stylistic diversity indiscriminately and seeking out common ground between individual musics) could lead to an open-ended transformation of apartheid's engineered cultural landscape.

Although Lüdemann's Kuyperian model for the protection of multicultural diversity does not necessarily indicate a nostalgia for the dehumanising aspects of apartheid ideology, it nevertheless entails imagining a South African world (specifically a cultural environment in Stellenbosch) where the survival of Western art music is guaranteed. This is most evident in his religious idea that adherents of particular musical styles should engage in dialogue without sacrificing their own unique worldviews. According to the precepts of his theorisation, cultures (and their home environments) will never be subject to meaningful transformation.

Monocultures on the middle ground

Lüdemann's third level of dialogue happens when musics engage with their *others* in the intercultural milieu of the strong artistic (and intellectual) middle ground. He demonstrates an apparent resistance to the

possibility that musical compositions could be subjected to processes of drastic structural adaptation, and thus be invested with an altered meaning:

[E]ven if their differences are not eliminated, two kinds of music could nevertheless influence one another. To mention one example: Art music could take on certain characteristics of popular music, like becoming more listener friendly or by addressing topics of the day such as HIV/Aids, as well as other topics with which young people identify, without necessarily falling into the stock melodic, harmonic or formal progressions typical of popular music (Lüdemann 2009a:11).

The above passage shows how Lüdemann permits the aesthetic level (*context*) of compositions to adapt, while he locks the poietic level (*individual profile and style*), to keep the musical syntax unblemished. There is nonetheless an intimation that the framework's proposed scope for reconciliation is more productive than my reading argues thus far. As Lüdemann explains (2009a:11) the middle ground, divergent cultures would not only go there to showcase and observe different musical manifestations of human dignity. He insists that reconciliation consists of more than "a moment of recognition"; that it also involves *action* in which the dynamic tensions between different musics are developed creatively. One possible course of reconciliatory *action* is the instance put forward above, where art music could adopt traits more typical of popular music, such as addressing topics of the day and becoming more "listener friendly". This would mean that the middle ground is not only a space for gazing at or observing the *other*, as much of my writing suggests, but also a place of *action* and *interaction*.

Although it is a commendable proposition to make art music speak to contemporary social issues, this could only refer to newly composed works of art music. Excepting opera or related dramatic works, one would have to call into question Lüdemann's proposal that the historic canon of Western art music could speak meaningfully to contemporary social or political issues. Whereas Mozart's operas could be manipulated visually to effect a socially relevant treatment of the HIV/Aids theme, it is extremely difficult to imagine how Mozart's piano concertos, performed in the generally expected manner of authentically recreating the Urtext, could ever treat the HIV/Aids theme.³⁷ This point is significant, because Lüdemann's championing of art music is not limited to the composition and performance of new and topical South African works (which, in reality is a very minor part of the Western art music repertoire performed, even in Stellenbosch). His championing of art music includes a sizeable legacy of European masterpieces that,

³⁷ In the case of Mozart's operas I would again submit Taruskin's suggestion to change the notes, thereby updating the music along with the stage action. In the case of Mozart's piano concertos it would also be possible to adapt the music, since it would take an extraordinary leap of imagination to maintain their categorisation as absolute music – which is to say *not* programmatic music – while simultaneously incorporating HIV/Aids commentary.

apart from the so-called universal values that some argue are embedded within them, would have nothing specific to say about contemporary issues.

With Lüdemann's plan possibly to inculcate a more "listener friendly" approach, it is erroneous for him to postulate that art music would recruit a defining aspect of popular music by pandering to perceived requirements of acoustic amenability. Just as art music is not necessarily listener *unfriendly* (are Strauss waltzes *unfriendly*?, are Chopin Nocturnes *unfriendly*?, is Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto *unfriendly*?), popular music – depending on what is included under this label – is also not necessarily listener *friendly* (is Jimi Hendrix's rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" *friendly*?, is Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music* *friendly*?, are Zim Ngqawana's scrap yard improvisations *friendly*?). Surely the approachability of various types and sub-types of music lies in the ears of the beholder.

The middle ground's projected exchange of surface characteristics between differently constituted types of music would therefore be nowhere near as dynamic or creative a process as Lüdemann suggests. When one considers that the predominant way used to make art music more "approachable" after the twentieth century's break with tonality is a retreat into the accessible harmonic language of the so-called Common Practice Era, one also has to ask how such an atavism could constitute an inventive rubbing-off or bartering with another kind of music? And how could receding into oneself bring about a willingness to engage and reconcile with the *other*? Or: When the most effective means to make art music "audience-friendly" is to populate the listening environment with time-honoured works from the Baroque, Classical and Romantic eras, it becomes infinitely more difficult convincingly to lay claim to progressive socially relevant agendas like "reconciliation" and "HIV/Aids commentary". It is of course possible to commission new works that are composed in an anachronistic neoclassical or neoromantic style – works that admittedly would have their proper place in a postmodernist cultural landscape. But even then, a predisposed obedience to a "listener friendly" aesthetic would impoverish concert practice as a critical space by, yes, reverting to the *lowest common denominator* of audience preferences.³⁸

One could argue that Lüdemann envisions the middle ground as a space that limits the full extent of change that segregated musical types could undergo while interacting with one another in the newly desegregated

³⁸ Stolp (2012:24) makes a similar point in her PhD critique of contemporary South African performance practice: "Engagements with contemporary South African social issues such as HIV/Aids, traditional art practices, race or xenophobia in the visual arts and theatre fields characterise much of the output of these disciplines, adding to the social validity of their contributions. Over the last eighteen years (since the beginning of democracy in the country in 1994), art music performance practice, on the other hand, has presented few examples of such social resonances and seems characterised by a state of ossification and lack of change."

South African cultural landscape. For example, Lüdemann structures art music's becoming more like popular music to exclude "falling into" its routine melodic, harmonic and formal patterns. Adopting such a protective stance towards art music helps perpetuate an essentialised identity for the collective oftentimes assumed to make up its core constituency. It also limits the sphere of intercultural musical influences to the façade of musical styles (and their representative cultures), and negates any real possibility of societal transformation. In this way, reconciliation is envisaged as a project that enshrines and protects cultural difference; the same ideal with which apartheid was tasked.

This last point of ideological overlap occurs because Lüdemann's irenicon subscribes to a Kuyperian worldview, where multiple cultural monads each contribute to an overall diverse cultural landscape, while simultaneously retaining sovereignty in their own spheres. It seems to be nourished by the ambiguous nature of the nomenclature he uses to define cultural collectives. His irenicon is generally meticulous in presenting the art music collective with descriptors other than "race". However, one of the prominent examples where he explicitly introduces racial categorisation is when he states how "black nationalists" (and their "white hangers-on") have opposed art music, by shutting down opera houses and symphony orchestras ever since the dawn of democracy (Lüdemann 2009b:648). Is this "black" racial monolith the great big "black" *other* of art music? And do the words "white hangers-on" (Afrikaans: *wit meelopers*) insinuate that "whites" should actually direct their loyalties to within the art music fold?

Another reference to "race" occurs when Lüdemann gives a further example of reconciliatory *action* to the listener friendly HIV/Aids art music scenario already discussed:

Dat kunsmusiek van 'n Westerse styl en Afrikamusiek in 'n wedersyds produktiewe verhouding gebring kan word, is teen hierdie tyd al oor en oor bewys in werke soos Peter Klatzow (2000) se verwerkings van liedere van Prinses Magogo KaDinizulu. 'n Hele paar ander komponiste van beide rasse het met soortgelyke pogings vorendag gekom (Lüdemann 2009b:654).

[English translation]

In works like Peter Klatzow's (2000) arrangements of songs by Princess Magogo KaDinizulu it has been proved again and again that art music in a Western style and African music can be brought into a reciprocally productive relationship. Quite a few other composers of both races have come out with similar efforts.

It has become routinely acceptable to arrange (translate) African music into the Western art music idiom (as Lüdemann's example illustrates), while any similar appropriation and conversion of Western art music is dismissed by Lüdemann as an impossible and absurd undertaking. More to the point, the phrase "both races" – presumably "white" and "black" – in the above extract dichotomises Western art music and

African music according to salient “ethnic differences” (Lüdemann 2009b:646). Western art music is conceptualised as a cultural product that articulates the racial identity of “white” composers, performers and audiences, while African music evidently belongs similarly to “blacks”. When it is therefore explained that *composers* of both races have arranged (translated) African music into the idiom of Western art music, one wonders to what extent “black” practitioners would ever be considered art music composers except by becoming “white”.

Does the racial make-up of South African art music differ from that of Western art music? And does Western art music in South Africa have a different racial make-up than Western art music in other locales? Does the introduction of a more diverse racial profile into art music in general require of entrants from other “races”/“ethnicities” to acculturate themselves to a prevailing or entrenched “white” epistemology? Historically, art music’s South African constituency comprised a “white” population. These adherents of classical music have necessarily also imposed their subjective values and stylistic preferences on the demarcation of what can “legitimately” be considered as “art music” in this country. Lüdemann’s unyielding protective stance towards art music’s stylistic quiddity (*eiesoortigheid*) situates his thinking within such a traditionalist paradigm. While his inaugural lecture is protractedly enthusiastic about *reconciliation* it proves hesitant when it comes to comprehensive systemic *transformation*.

One of the principal discursive mechanisms to facilitate vagueness on the “new” South African social responsibility for transformation is the anticipated middle ground for artistic (and intellectual) dialogue. This neutral terrain can only parade diversity once essentialised musical cultures have come from elsewhere – from their home bases or group areas – and gathered together to participate in the reconciliatory pageantry of recognising one another’s humanity. In the middle ground, congregated cultures can celebrate their diversity without being subjected to the miscegenetic pressures that a more comprehensive transformation of their home territories would have entailed. Because one of the middle ground’s (unintended?) functions is to regulate cultural intermarriage (Kuyper’s dreaded *uniformity*), one necessarily confronts a space of social engineering that is reminiscent of one of apartheid’s most sacred ideals. It is therefore crucial to focus on a specific *bête-noir* that Lüdemann put to the audience at his inaugural lecture.

Avoiding the uniformity of a melting-pot

In the introduction to his lecture, Lüdemann (2009a:5) explains that the public media ignores the wide range of music in our society, in favour of a music in which a uniform majority taste (*einfirmiger*

Mehrheitsgeschmack) and economic interests seem to be the only standards. Without giving this homogeneous mainstream music a proper stylistic name (or group name) one can unfortunately not pinpoint exactly what specifically he refers to. Moreover, the fact that uniformity is associated with a *majority* becomes problematic towards the end of the lecture, when there is an entreaty that the *democratic majority* (the ANC? the “blacks”?) should provide art music with the necessary means to survive:

Die demokratiese meerderheid behoort egter, onder andere deur middele tot beskikking van die staat, opvoedkundige instansies, die privaatsektor en veral die media, spesifiek aan kunsmusiek die bestaansruimte te verskaf wat dit nodig het om sy unieke bydrae tot die reënboogkultuur te maak (Lüdemann 2009a:12).

[English translation]

The democratic majority should rather, among others through means available to the government, educational institutions, the private sector and especially the media, supply art music specifically with the space for existence [survival space] that it needs to make its unique contribution to the rainbow culture.

There is an involuntary *othering* at play here: because no clear alternative is given, the reader is left to attribute the *ein förmiger Mehrheitsgeschmack* to the country’s democratic majority, despite the fact that a population that measures into the tens of millions would surely listen to a plurality of musics.³⁹ A monochrome view of the *Mehrheit*’s music is alarmist, as it exaggerates the full extent of a diversity-crisis by insinuating a loss of *overall* miscellany, were one democratic minority’s musical tradition to disappear. Lüdemann (2009a:12; 2009b:655) further inflates this overstated anticipation of catastrophe when he writes that it is specifically art music – through its transcendence of mundane (majority) artistic needs – which helps obstruct the forces that would bring about a *musical one-party state*. His choice of autocratic terminology suggests that the democratic majority would be the obvious victors if a regime of musical *uniformity* were one day to come about. One is therefore left to understand that “they” (the “black” majority) would either campaign for a monoculture’s realisation (ethno-cultural cleansing), or else demonstrate passive indifference to the erasure of a multicultural musical environment.⁴⁰

That this overwhelming uniform *other* is actually an assembled tapestry of dynamic cultures which cannot properly be reduced to the cliché *ein förmiger Mehrheitsgeschmack*, indicates that the oppressive image

³⁹ These include Afrobeat, Afrojazz (and multiple other styles that would be termed “jazz”), gospel, highlife, hip hop, isicathamiya, kwela, kwaito, marabi, maskanda, mbalax, mbaqanga, mbube, reggae and even “Western” art music (especially choral music). These diverse styles do not represent a *uniform* aesthetic.

⁴⁰ Is this what Lüdemann (2009a:12; 2009b:656) means when he explains that the initiative and hardest work to ensure South Africa’s multiculturalism will have to come from those who have the most to lose should it not succeed?

of a *musical one-party state* is another misapprehension – a survival anxiety that art music no longer enjoys the infrastructural assurances that once assured its cultural supremacy. Is there really any credible threat of a *musical one-party state* coming about in South Africa? Where else in the world is such a national musical uniformity extant? Has it for that matter happened anywhere else before?⁴¹

At the time of his inaugural lecture's writing, Lüdemann (2009a:5) argued that Thabo Mbeki's "African renaissance" ideology stood in direct opposition to a multicultural approach in South Africa's cultural politics. Perhaps if one were consistently to regard Africa as the "Dark Continent" (i.e. as a homogeneous "black" *other*), then one could envision the eventual formation of a *musical one-party state*.⁴² By whichever route Lüdemann arrives at this potential danger, his thinking is erroneous for the way in which it distrusts the unending ability of musical styles (through the people who perform them) to adapt, scatter and proliferate. He even contradicts himself, by pointing to this vitality when he explains that musical diversity encompasses a much richer array of styles and forms than the diversity of the world's languages (Lüdemann 2009b:648). Apart from the stylistic diversity that flows out of inter-ethnic diversities, he adds that music has an added dimension of intra-ethnic diversity, so that the management and preservation of difference is apparently much more complex in music than in other spheres of culture (Lüdemann 2009a:10; 2009b:647). With this abundance of diversity, he also maintains that the scope for prejudice is augmented, and that the national project of cross-cultural reconciliation necessarily becomes more vulnerable.

Lüdemann's awareness of intra-ethnic diversity obviously gainsays his postulation of the democratic majority's *einfirmiger Mehrheitsgeschmack*. If the array of extant musical styles is so multifarious and prolific as to weigh down successful implementation of cross-cultural dialogue, how can the erasure of musical diversity by the democratic majority (who themselves do not comprise a *uniform* culture) be a pressing cultural concern? Effectively, diversity is conceptualised in two contradictory ways simultaneously; one situation where it thrives and must be protected, and another where it is threatened and must be protected. This significant paradox in Lüdemann's theorisation is compounded with inconsistency when he searches for viable musical solutions to social conflict.

⁴¹ So-called "one-party states" like China, North Korea and Cuba are probably the best places to examine the processes (propaganda and censorship) that could lead to the formation of a *musical one-party state*. In the context of Lüdemann's inaugural lecture, one would also have to scrutinise the prominence or disappearance in these countries of Western art music and national art music composed after the "Western style".

⁴² Lüdemann (2009b:648) himself writes that ethnic differences can be so acute and divisive that members of one cultural group have complete incomprehension of another group's music. As an example, he names early European discoverers who travelled to Africa and described the music they encountered as an incomprehensible crying, which then served as ostensible confirmation of pejorative stereotypes about the civilisational development of the "dark continent's" inhabitants.

Because diversity is apparently so much more complex in music than in other cultural arenas, Lüdemann (2009a:10) asks whether the inevitable solution is not “a uniform kind of music based on the lowest common denominator”. He presents this uniform common music as an outcome that is already coalescing and which also includes two other fast approaching consequences, namely the marginalisation of all other kinds of music to exclusive and inoffensive *niches*, as well as an overriding consideration of commercial interests in determining whether certain types of music get heard or not (Lüdemann 2009b:649). Such a deleterious situation is presented as the direct future consequence of prevailing broadcasting practices in electronic media like television, as well as of the current Arts and Culture syllabus in South African schools. Wrapped within all these unattractive eventualities, it becomes very easy to associate and confuse Lüdemann’s miscegenetic concept of a uniform (*einformiger*) music based on the *lowest common denominator* with his other negative reference to an *einformiger* (uniform) *Mehrheitsgeschmack*.⁴³ The clumsy interchangeableness of these two ideas is a direct result of how the entire irenicon is geared towards averting a Kuyperian apocalypse of miscegenation and uniformity.

With regard to the proposed uniform musical style based on the *lowest common denominator*, it needs to be underscored that Lüdemann dismisses as theoretically impossible the miscegenetic musical style that he wants to resist. Having postulated that no musical universal exists common to all musics, a uniform musical style based on the *lowest common denominator* should be inconceivable and impracticable. Why then pose this homogeneous musical style as a likely outcome of the present approach to reconciliation when the fundamental tenets of one’s theorisation disallow its very formation?

When Lüdemann (2009a:10) first discusses the possible universal criteria that diverse musics could share, he means aesthetic standards like “beauty”. This aesthetic outlook is a consequence of his framework’s inclination to evaluate the worldviews of disparate musical cultures, so as to make comparative value-judgements about the *ethea* that inform diverse musical *styles*. Remarkably, his search for musical universals neither considers sonic phenomena like “vibration” or “sound”, nor structural musical elements like “melody”, “harmony” and “rhythm”. Having eliminated those basic musical criteria from consideration, it is unsurprising that he dismisses the possibility of a miscegenetic musical style based on the *lowest common denominator*.

⁴³ This is exactly what happens in the case of Visser (in Van der Westhuizen & Schonken 2009:8): In a published debate on the survival of art music in the new South Africa, Visser integrates these two separate ideas in Lüdemann’s inaugural lecture as substantiation for a largely pejorative assessment of post-apartheid musical practice, in which he argues that music’s – he means Western art music’s – very survival is at risk.

An aesthetic criterion like “beauty” obviously relates to the level of musical meaning that Lüdemann calls *ethos*. Since *ethos* is the only terrain on which he searches for a universally applicable musical criterion, it would be more accurate if he rephrased the supposed absence of a musical common denominator as the absence of a universally applicable musical *ethos*. This, however, threatens to circumvent the irenicon’s incorporation of a biological common denominator – human dignity, as an offshoot of music making – that is essential for reconciliation to succeed. And if one recognises that Lüdemann’s blueprint depends on constructing the universal *ethos* of human dignity (which is supposed to be the only universal), then one must ask what prohibits composers and performers from creating a communal South African musical style whose *ethos* is “reconciliation”?

Even though Lüdemann rejects the achievability of a common South African musical patois, it is furthermore significant that he frames the thing he negates as a Creole pidgin that takes shape when all styles collectively regress to their lowest shared characteristics. In doing this, he verbalises even further depreciatory musical hierarchies towards types of music that do not “transcend” the mundane. More importantly, lurking somewhere in the paranoid mental picture of the uniform *one-party state* and uniform *lowest common denominator* outcomes there is “white” resistance to entropy and miscegenation.⁴⁴ As a consequence, Lüdemann’s irenicon pillarises South Africa’s cultural landscape into a pluralistic collection of autonomous cultures. Kuyper’s implausible nightmare scenario of an entropic uniformity proves sufficiently worrying for Lüdemann to petition for the alternate uniformities (*eiesoortighede*) of separate national musical identities. Unfortunately, the irenicon therefore also resonates with the historically failed doctrine that Verwoerd described as an avuncular policy of good neighbourliness.

Considering the position from which Lüdemann writes, this effectively amounts to an argument where art music’s *own* does not want to conceive of any musical metamorphosis where it is gradually assimilated or absorbed into the “black” majority *other* (as if that were even what would happen). The inaugural lecture is so anxious about art music’s survival that it imposes its own engrossment with conservation and reification on every *other* musical style. Lüdemann’s irenicon foremost determines the conditions needed for art music to survive. Those criteria are then applied to all *other* musics in a scheme that purportedly guarantees the survival of overall diversity. Yet, even though the art music community might foretell the configuration of dreadful uniformities like a *musical one-party state* or a style based on the *lowest common denominator*, it does not necessarily follow that these two eventualities are inevitable. Much

⁴⁴ Along with genocide, suppression, cultural imperialism and complete segregation (apartheid), Lüdemann (2009b:641) also considers assimilation and miscegenation as intolerant methodologies for coping with diversity.

less should other cultures be compelled to adopt a similar anxious stance towards art music's hypothetical cultural apocalypse.

Lüdemann's road map states an intention for musical cultures actively to influence and challenge one another inside the creative territory of an artistic (and intellectual) middle ground. Much of the present analysis suggests that this proposed democratic environment may also be a mechanism to try and avoid musical miscegenation and cultural uniformity. The scope for cross-cultural exchange is limited and controlled within this hermetically sealed no-place. Utopia is a nowhere place, the ideal location in which to position South Africa's music if one wants to safeguard its extant diversities. The best possible middle ground, to my mind, would be comprised of existing institutions such as universities, symphony orchestras, music schools, opera houses and theatres. Practitioners and audience members of diverse backgrounds could assemble within these spaces and participate in the creation of new hybrid musical styles. But Lüdemann's irenicon maintains that this assimilation and melting-pot approach is too disrespectful of cultural differences that already exist. To avoid their entropic erasure he proposes another imaginary museum of musical works, where normal musical processes of intercultural adaptation and evolution can be arrested by placing existing musical repertoires in amber.

Application to SU Music Department

At the high-point of Lüdemann's (2009a:11-2) inaugural address, the overall expectations of crisis are intensified. Not only does he communicate strong concerns about the survival of art music in South Africa (and at university music departments), but this is extrapolated into a bigger concern over the survival of multicultural democracy in South Africa. The former anticipated crisis is stimulated by a misleading indication that South African art music lacks any form of institutional backing from university music departments throughout the country, while the latter is stimulated by Lüdemann's prolonged theorisation about the interconnectedness of diversity, human dignity and reconciliation. After having explained that art music functions as a bulwark against forces of cultural entropy that erode diversity, Lüdemann (2009a:12-3) positions the Stellenbosch University (SU) Music Department as a monocultural bulwark against the dangers of *ein einförmiger Mehrheitsgeschmack*.

Bewildering assumptions and inferences are made, all of which serve to validate Lüdemann's view that SU's Music Department should position itself as a *niche* environment for the rediscovery and advancement of South African art music. He states that, whereas all national music departments once

focussed on the exclusive study of Western art music, most have since transformed themselves to the pursuit of newly discovered and socially relevant disciplinary *niches*. By explaining that tertiary music departments have adopted a scattered and diverse approach that jointly covers many of the disciplinary bases in music studies, Lüdemann creates the impression that every *other* music department has its own specific area of specialty, whether that be popular music, jazz studies, African music or world music.

While this line of reasoning holds that almost everyone else has abandoned the intellectual legacy of Western primacy, it also seems to absolve the SU Music Department from any similar responsibility for curricular transformation. Lüdemann (2009a:13) nominates South African art music as a unique academic *niche* for his own department, on incorrect grounds that the varied activities of other music departments have left this particular musical style echoing in the silence (*dawer in die stilte*). Simply because some of South Africa's foremost composers have lived in Stellenbosch and worked at the university (I count four or five possible individuals who could claim to be "foremost composers", of whom three are dead), Lüdemann maintains that South African art music permeates the cultural landscape surrounding his department *more than any other musical style*. Since this music is already on the Music Department's doorstep, Lüdemann's argument runs that it only makes sense to adopt South African art music as a socially relevant specialty. However, this also means that instead of transforming like so many other music departments, the SU Music Department adopts a Kuyperian ideology of self-determination where it participates in the new South Africa merely by contributing to the overall pillarisation of multicultural diversity. Within the reconciliatory paradigm of Lüdemann's strong artistic (and intellectual) middle ground, the conservation of monocultural environments necessarily strengthens multicultural democracy because they are argued to contribute to the maintenance of overall cultural diversity.

Lüdemann's claim that South African art music is indigenous to Stellenbosch rings hollow when one considers that in the four years (2005-2008) preceding his inaugural lecture, the SU Symphony Orchestra only performed one work of South African art music (Stimie, in Stolp 2012:137). Furthermore, there is no professional orchestra in Stellenbosch, nor is there an opera house or opera company – institutional structures one could expect from any environment that presents itself as the home territory of a national art music style.⁴⁵ The single criterion (that "foremost composers" live in Stellenbosch) according to which Lüdemann measures the indigenusness of South African art music to Stellenbosch, automatically privileges Western art music above other musical practices, based on the apartheid-era politics of space that determined who could live where (only "white" composers *could* live in Stellenbosch). It not only ignores

⁴⁵ My thanks to George King for pointing this out.

popular musical styles – especially Afrikaans rock music – that thrive in the Stellenbosch area, but it also *others* styles of music that the irenicist associates with population groups in the greater Cape Peninsula who, because of their darker skin pigmentations, have historically been excluded from determining the cultural character of the “white” Stellenbosch Group Area.

Instead of maintaining that South African art music is indigenous to Stellenbosch, and can therefore lay claim to being the Music Department’s academic specialty, Lüdemann should rather admit that this style has long already been indigenous to the Department itself. However, he sidesteps the historic ideological investment that SU’s Music Department has made in this musical style, and uses circular reasoning to attribute the Department’s (newfound?) choice of a relevant niche to its fortuitous prevalence in the surrounding milieu. Considering that the Department helped situate South African art music within Stellenbosch’s cultural life to begin with, any commitment to this style is actually a problematic recommitment to a pre-democratic intellectual agenda.

Lüdemann’s theorisation also undervalues the long historical and continuing sponsorship of South African art music at other tertiary music departments.⁴⁶ Asserting that South African art music has been abandoned institutionally (*dawer in die stilte*) is such a misrepresentation of the facts that one is left to ask why it would be beneficial to appropriate South African art music for the SU Music Department. My contention is that it allows the Department to represent “South African” art music as a socially germane and democratic academic pursuit, since one expects that an academic and artistic programme that concentrates (*toespits*) on a regional musical style nourishes and upholds the culture of the circumjacent community.

Another benefit of appropriating “South African” art music for Stellenbosch becomes apparent through Lüdemann’s own reasoning, when he argues that a departmental focus on South African art music would keep doors open to the world heritage of classical and contemporary art music (i.e. “Western art music”). For me it is unclear why South African art music would necessarily help keep the doors open to the world heritage of Western art music. Surely these doors are already open, as they have been for a long time. Even though Lüdemann does not explain sufficiently why one would want further to empower such a colonial legacy, it is nonetheless obvious that he wants Western art music also to be one of the academic specialities at SU’s Music Department. In an unpersuasive sequence of academic and artistic aspirations, he accordingly portrays a vibrant arena of South African art music compositions and performances as a precursor or precondition of gaining access to international variants of the Western art music style. Do

⁴⁶ For example, South African composers are not only indigenous to Stellenbosch. They live throughout the whole country, because most South African universities take local composers into their employ – some even more than one.

European works of the Common Practice Era not have such a fierce history of imperialist hegemony about them so as to disprove this progression of thought? Fostering the undersized heritage of South African art music is not a *sine qua non* of studying and performing the music of Bach, Beethoven or Brahms.

In practice Lüdemann's schema probably even prioritises European (or international) art music above the South African variant. This is not necessarily on purpose, but definitely inevitable. First, the conservative paradigm of what is generally considered "art music" in South Africa severely limits the inclusion of locally composed music. There are not enough recognised or cherished works of "South African" art music independently to sustain the interest of academe, or the performance demands of the mainstream concert scene.⁴⁷ This naturally means that the available repertoire of European art music outnumbers (and outranks) the available repertoire of South African art music. It is therefore inevitable that the international stream would enjoy more prominence than the local one – meaning that European (or international) art music is effectively prioritised.

The second part of my criticism about the inevitable privileging of European (or international) art music above the South African variant relates to Stellenbosch specifically. It is unconvincing that Lüdemann (2009a:12-3) should depict this town and its music department as an inimitable hub of specifically "South African" art music, when it has actually been much more active as a hub of "Western" art music. The relevant fact to note is that SU's Music Department has purveyed mainly European art music into Stellenbosch's cultural life for more than a century, with much greater success and arguably also much more commitment than it has purveyed South African art music (Grové 2005). Only once the international art music tradition was successfully transplanted into South Africa, would it have been possible to contribute substantially to the formation and propagation of a subsidiary national art music style.

Lüdemann's Kuyperian theorisation about the survival of South African art music elicits serious reservations. Even though the SU Music Department is an institutional home for South African art music (and here one needs to acknowledge that it is one among many institutional homes), the Department's main activity still remains to promote a by no means smaller proportion of European (international) art music. To what extent is Lüdemann's irenicon then an attempt to authenticate the preferential perpetuation of this traditionally "white" European cultural practice at a prestigious historically "white" South African university? Probably the most revealing discrepancy in his theorisation is that the irenicon version presented for journal publication only campaigns for the survival of Western art music in South Africa, whereas the inaugural

⁴⁷ Thanks to Chats Devroop for pointing out that some critics would not even recognise so-called "South African" art music as South African. It is not rooted in the philosophy, theory or culture of South Africa, but rather that of a dated Western-European idiom, which has usurped indigenous art musics in its struggle for continued survival.

lecture makes a number of strained readjustments to portray this petition as specifically concerned with the survival of South African art music.

Is presenting South African art music as a socially relevant *niche* for SU's Music Department perhaps then a politically expedient legerdemain, or a cover, that allows this institution simultaneously to prioritise Western art music (historically its tradition of preference), and thus also to shirk the uncertainties of a more far-reaching curricular transformation?

Conclusion

Lüdemann's blanket statement that music is non-referential and therefore impossible to translate is one of the most important lynchpins in his theorisation about the survival of diverse musical styles. Although not stated as such, the assertion that music is non-referential serves as a validation that essentialised and untranslatable musics should each be protected in an ossified form. This enables Lüdemann to insist that the comparative musicological approach of studying difference – suspect since *Vergleichende Musikwissenschaft* became ethnomusicology during the 1950s – is the only valid scholarly approach.

Thanks to the totalitarian nature of apartheid social engineering, politics has influenced every conceivable level of culture in South Africa. It is worrying to see a framework for post-apartheid reconciliation that accepts apartheid's enforced diversities holus bolus, and instead of first problematising or deconstructing their political content, immediately ascends into the lofty domain of ethics, so as to locate each constructed identity's putative human dignity. My argument is not that certain cultures cannot claim to possess human dignity, but rather that it does not make sense to fetter their human dignity to music specifically. South Africa's entrenched constitutional principle that human dignity is universal should preferably stand firm in itself. If anything, Lüdemann's inaugural lecture shows that reframing this constitutional ideal according to musical parameters opens it up to critique and weakens it.

Lüdemann's proposed middle ground is a nowhere place. His Kuyperian worldview, which frames multicultural diversity as a collection of monocultures, is unacceptable in post-apartheid South Africa, since it underpinned apartheid's theory to begin with. The irenicon makes no attempt to suggest where these different cultures should meet one another, suggesting that the middle ground is not a place, real or imagined, but rather an abstract placeholder for a receptive attitude to the music of the *other*. If that were the case, then democratic carnivals of miscellany could only ever happen if diverse musical cultures were to step into one another's home territories. Doing this, they would nonetheless remain untransformed essentialised entities that just happened to display their particular stylistic identities along with their humanity. This is because, from a logistical point of view, it is unclear how successfully visiting cultures would be able to pass through the infrastructural embankments that safeguard the domicile of a particular stylistic *niche*. African music, for example, could not matter-of-factly gain traction in a historically "whites"-majority cultural landscape, especially not one that has been saturated in Western art music for more than a century. I cannot imagine how historically "white" institutions, which continue to prioritise "white" culture, could shore up sufficient audience support meaningfully to recognise the innate humanity contained in the

music of the African *other*. The repeated success of such initiatives for dialogue and reconciliation would in fact depend on strategic incorporations of the *other* into the *own*, institutional largesse that, over time, would lead to the veritable *transformation* of entire cultural ecologies – and not stop at *reconciliation*.

In contrast to Lüdemann, I am purposefully arguing for Breytenbach’s creative *basterskap*, or what Lüdemann (2009b:641) calls a culturally intolerant “melting-pot approach” (*smeltkroes-benadering*). Breytenbach’s miscegenetic discourse was imagined as a virtuous outcome of Louw’s *dark night of the soul*, in which Afrikaners undergo a creative *katabasis* (spiritual death and rebirth). The way in which scholars like Muller (2009:9, 29) introduced this discourse into musicology suggests that accepting the inevitable intermingling of culture, and also encouraging Western art music’s embrace of Africanism, can be a mechanism to ensure physical survival through cultural adaptation. Fundamentally, this proposal touches on questions over whether diverse musical syntaxes can fuse and create hybrid sonic languages, and whether such musical mixing might bring about the formation of diverse new identities, or otherwise increasingly blend extant cultures and “races” into an apocalyptic Kuiperian uniformity.

Ironically, the miscegenation of South Africa’s musics that this chapter – and much of this thesis – argues for, was prevalent in a profligate “genre-rebellion” during the 1980s:

New performing venues sprang up in the major cities: through these passed musical groups of breathtaking originality, offering syncretic styles of a range, depth and variety absent from the South African stage for decades, or in some cases never previously imagined. Bands such as Sakhile, Bayete, Sabenza, and Johnny Clegg’s Savuka played music in which the blend might be *mbaqanga* with traditional Nguni song; Cape-Coloured *klopse* idioms with bebop; *marabi* with electronic rock; Zulu *maskanda* with the Celtic ballad; and so on. These were genre *transgressions*: ways of breaking free of the mollusc. But they were also genre *integrations*: potent cultural and political discoveries that prefigured a new reality. Precisely in this way, and precisely for this reason, they offered hope: an often euphoric promise that the final struggle against apartheid could be won. Their music was an alchemy, helping, in its way, to corrode the old social order and to liberate the new (Ballantine 2011:29).

Two decades after the end of apartheid, this rebellious spirit of “taxonomic emancipation” has for the most part disappeared (Ballantine 2011:29). Even in the composition of South African art music, creative experiments in hybridity have been abandoned in favour of a Western primacist aesthetic. So, whereas Kevin Volans (2015) had once gently tried “introducing an African computer virus into the heart of Western contemporary [art] music” with his iconic composition *White Man Sleeps*, composers and scholars now habitually parrot Rudyard Kipling’s phrase “never the twain shall meet” in their insistence that Western and African musical styles cannot be synthesised (Pooley 2011:45-69).

Meanwhile, in reviewing South African musicologist Peter van der Merwe's *Roots of the Classical: The Popular Origins of Western Music*, Richard Taruskin (2007:134-5) praises how the breadth and scope of Van der Merwe's research demonstrates conclusively "the way in which the different registers of musical discourse infiltrated and reinforced one another before purist ideals gained ascendancy". To this praise, he adds the following important observation:

Adulteration and mongrelisation have never received a more ringing affirmation. How lovely that the author hails from the old bastion of apartheid (Taruskin 2007:135).

This chapter demonstrates how, despite lessened infrastructural support from government, there are advocates who want Western art music to remain as pure and unblemished as possible in the "new" South Africa. In deliberately still arguing against the *smeltkroes-benadering*, Lüdemann's inaugural lecture joins with at least one other post-apartheid inaugural lecture, presented by Fanie Jooste (1994:14-5) at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education on 26 August 1994, that university music departments have a pedagogical obligation to maintain cultural differentiation by teaching music according to the segregation pattern. The fact that Lüdemann makes the same argument – admittedly using a more sophisticated theoretical framework – fifteen years after the country's first democratic election is of extreme concern. This may very well be the result of how a post-democratic "neoliberal policy orientation [...] has spawned a complacent, *nouveau riche* commercialism, and, crucially, a corresponding epistemology" (Ballantine 2011:30):

Our new social order is vested in fixed, or molluscan, identities (ironically, *exactly the same* "race"-based identities that underpinned apartheid), and unreflective, taken-for-granted, often primordial ways of naming, categorising and classifying the world. To the extent that the new South Africa, like the old, has tied personal and cultural identities to essentialist notions of personhood, it is profoundly at odds with what we fought for, what we expected in 1994, and what we anticipated in the new world we were about to build (Ballantine 2011:30).

At the present historical juncture, it is difficult to understand why the Lüdemann blueprint's penchant is necessary at all for grouping human beings according to the types of music that they esteem. Doing this ignores the self-evident fact that diversity of musical styles is just as properly encountered within one individual as within any identity grouping ("race", "ethnicity", "culture") of people. Of course, reducing musical diversity to the realm of the individual, where miscegenation (*versmelting*) happens unavoidably because of individual human beings' musical tastes and personal motivations, encourages unimagined and

unwanted random outcomes for any Platonic irenicon. This is because an absence of a conforming and uniformly structured methodology – albeit in the name of protecting diversity – makes it impossible to validate and administer utopian efforts, such as the safekeeping of “Western” (and “South African”) art music at the SU Music Department.

The overprotective “caretaker culture” could perhaps remember Klaus Heimes’s musicological interpretation of Spengler and Toynbee, discussed in Chapter Three, and take heed of the warning that “Caesarism” only hastens a civilisation’s inevitable downfall. The musical demarcation and maintenance of apartheid’s identity boundaries impoverishes present and future generations of musicians and musicologists from discovering the creative potential and energy contained in a dynamic South African culture. Even more disastrously, this preoccupation with survival enslaves ordinary people to the supposedly divinely-ordained limitations of South African cultural identity, all because of Abraham Kuyper’s wrongheaded and outdated interpretation of the story about Babel Tower.

Let the *other* people into the “laager”. Let them transform us.

Gobbet 45: And the most important of all: “the music may not die”

Om konserte wat nie ’n groot publiek trek nie te kan befonds moet ons met ander aanbiedings sorg dat “ons konsertsale vol kom” en winsgewend is. Hoe belangrik hierdie balans ook al is, kommersiële oorwegings mag nie ons belangrikste doelwit wees nie. Om optreegeleenthede vir ons studente en personeel te skep, hetsy as soliste of as orkes- en ensemblespelers, is net so belangrik soos om ons almal bloot te stel aan standarde van uitvoering wat deur besoekende musici uit die binne- of buiteland gehandhaaf word. Verder moet ons die reg op artistieke vryheid respekteer, ook met betrekking tot uitvoerende musici. En die belangrikste van alles: “the music may not die”, soos ’n eertydse kollega, Eric Rycroft dit een keer teenoor my gestel het. Teen hierdie agtergrond is dit beslis geregverdig dat uitvoerings van Rachmaninof se Tweede Klavierkonsert of Mahler se Eerste Simfonie in ons “heilige Hallen” gehoor word. Die groot byval wat juis hierdie twee werke by die publiek gevind het bewys dat hulle wel nog “die verbeelding aangryp”.

Winfried Lüdemann (2009c:4)

“Aan die Redakteurs van *Fanfare*”

Fanfare: Stellenbosch Konservatorium 2 (2)

Translation:

In order to fund concerts that do not draw a large public we need to make sure that “our concert halls are filled” and profitable. However important this balance may be, commercial considerations may not be our most important goal. To create performance opportunities for our students and staff, be it as soloists or as orchestra and ensemble players, is just as important as exposing everyone to standards of performance as maintained by visiting musicians from inside the country and abroad. Furthermore we must respect the right of artistic freedom, also with regard to performing musicians. And the most important of all: “the music may not die”, as a onetime colleague Eric Rycroft once put it to me. Against this background it is definitely justified that performances of Rachmaninoff’s Second Piano Concerto or Mahler’s First Symphony are heard in our “heilige Hallen”. The enormous approval that these two works met with the public proves that they still “capture the imagination”.

Gobbet 46: The work and offerings of the Department

The Music Department has been afforded the opportunity to exercise its “right of reply” in response to certain statements in the [Stolp] dissertation that compromise the integrity and reputation of the Department. The following as a general response to this opportunity and not an attempt to expose every single point in the dissertation that is open to criticism on ethical grounds. It goes without saying that the Department respects, even actively supports the right of any researcher to engage critically with the work and offerings of the Department if such research adheres to accepted norms, as summarised, for example, in the *Singapore Statement on Research Integrity* of July 2010 (and subsequently adopted by the University).

[...]

The Statement on p. 133 that “the institution ... is enforcing ... a balance towards a ‘dominant, culturally privileged “historic music” ... of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries” is incorrect. The academic curriculum, concert programmes and the repertoire performed by the various ensembles in the institution, as well as the Department’s vision and mission statement provide quite a different view.

Anonymous (2013:2-3)

“Response from the SU Music Department to the dissertation

Contemporary performance practice of art music in South Africa: a practice-based research enquiry
by Dr Mareli Stolp”

Gobbet 47: A precondition for sustainable survival

We are committed to remaining attentive to the enrichment of diversity. This underlies many of our concerns: the recognition and the valorisation of diversity within the larger context of shared values (the utopia we cling to) – not as some expression of conservatism but as a precondition for sustainable survival and even political and economic *progress*; for renewal and growth in mutual respect, tolerance, and ultimately for decency and dignity. This implies according memory its rightful place and recognition, and promoting the comprehension between memory and imagination.

Progress? No. Creativity? Out of necessity. There may be no progress, but we have to keep on imagining ourselves. There may be no progress, but we must continue creating the premises of facts on the ground. The world – our world – has existed since all times, and every day we have to create it anew. If we did not walk the earth it would not exist.

Breyten Breytenbach (2009:93)

“On Progress”

Notes from the Middle World

Gobbet 48: Have I thought enough about survival?

Habe ich genug über das Überleben nachgedacht? Habe ich mich zu sehr auf den Aspekt beschränkt, der zum Wesen der Macht gehört und da ich darauf versessen war, andere, vielleicht nicht weniger wichtige Aspekte außer acht gelassen? Was kann man überhaupt denken, ohne das meiste auszulassen?

Elias Canetti (in Klein 2010)

“Flüchtige Glücksmomente: Elias Canetti und das Massengrab in uns”

Deutschlandfunk

Translation:

Have I thought enough about survival? Have I limited myself too much to the aspect that belongs to the nature of power and, since I was obsessed with it, have I perhaps left no less important aspects out of consideration? What can one think at all without omitting a major part?

CONCLUSION

The first time I attended a musicology conference was in 2010, when the annual SASRIM conference was hosted by Stellenbosch University, where I had recently enrolled for this PhD degree. My most vivid memories of those few days include then-SASRIM chairperson Zelda Potgieter's paper presentation about the continued survival of Western art music in post-apartheid South Africa; an incomprehensible and interminable panel discussion about a formalistic analysis-and-composition model; a visiting scholar's enthusiastic conflation of American civil rights issues with putative musical resistance to apartheid within a Grahamstown community; a well-known debonair Anglo-Australian conductor-musicologist's complaint that he didn't understand the conference theme ("hegemony"); an astonishing piano recital and lecture-demonstration by Daniel-Ben Pienaar; and a Composers Panel discussion with three "black" South African jazz musicians: Louis Moholo, Tete Mbambisa and the late Zim Ngqawana.

Because the conference theme focused on "hegemony", many presentations and discussions centered around music and apartheid. In private, two young musicologists from another music department complained to me and my colleagues that apartheid wasn't as horrible as everyone was making it out to be. One of them spoke movingly about how well her father takes care of the "black" workers on his farm. Despite the fact that my MMus and PhD research was geared towards better understanding the intersections between music and apartheid, this conversation about caring "white" farmers and their "black" workers must have struck a chord with me. When it came to the Composers Panel discussion, the three black musicians probably commented on how strange it still was that they should be invited as expert composers into a "white" conservatorium like the SU Music Department. I remember at least one of them spoke about how apartheid impacted on his life and career, and I also remember that an audience of mostly "white" musicologists was listening to these three "black" composers on this panel.

"When do we stop obsessing over apartheid and just move on?"

Embarrassingly, I can't even remember to which one of the three panelists I asked this question. I possibly wasn't interested in his answer to begin with, since I'd grown up understanding "whites" to determine the conditions of all intercultural discussions. In asking him when we stop obsessing over apartheid I was already supplying an answer of sorts: You should stop obsessing over it and get on with your life; but my research is about music and apartheid, so I'm welcome to continue thinking about it. And even though this research is patently obsessed with apartheid, I've nevertheless also expressed a contradictory desire to "white" colleagues with no interest in apartheid scholarship – people who profess themselves *sick*

and tired of how everything gets blamed on apartheid – that I look forward eventually not to write about this difficult topic anymore.

When do musicians/musicologists stop obsessing over apartheid?

I don't know.

I've only begun to realise that "whites" shouldn't feel entitled to set a timeframe for stopping such discussions. I've only begun to understand that "whites" don't get to tell "blacks", "Coloureds" and "Indians" how to interpret and process their historical humiliation and exploitation, nor how to embrace their supposed emancipation in the "Rainbow Nation". I've only begun to learn that *reconciliation* is not interchangeable with systemic *transformation*, since negotiation entails actually losing something.

I grew up inside the restrictive symbolic universe of the "laager", and in many ways my knowledge horizon remains impoverished and I remain one of its inhabitants. I grew up in a culture where almost everyone stood by and allowed apartheid to take its course, either because they were too busy living their own difficult lives or otherwise because they wholeheartedly approved of its racist paradigm. Admittedly, indoctrination was a significant factor. But when does taken-for-granted subscription to a malignant ideology translate into complicity? And at what point do "white" South Africans (especially Afrikaners), who continue to suffer from an anxious survival complex, become responsible for the systemic atrocities that were committed in the interest of their collective survival?

Most of this country's "whites" would probably argue that morality – ethics? – does not apply to their material privilege or to their ancestors' exploitative struggles for endurance. In an essay called "Apartheid Thinking" – published in his book *Giving Offence: Essays on Censorship* – J.M. Coetzee writes dismissively of just this kind of self-justification. He analyses the collected writings of Geoffrey Cronjé, a theorist whose obsession with Afrikaner and "white" survival gave an intellectual grounding for apartheid social engineering. Coetzee arrives at a conclusion that the tenor of Cronjé's theorisation is indicative of madness and ignorance. Pointing to Cronjé's and other apartheid ideologues' lack of restraint, evident in their discourses that irrationally connect the realm of culture with "race", Coetzee links apartheid intellectualisation with zealotry. This analysis contradicts the conventional interpretation put forward by historians like Hermann Giliomee – cited in Gobbet 22 and Gobbet 23 – which maintains that the oppressive legislation associated with apartheid, as well as the entire system's eventual dismantling, were logical and rational responses aimed at Afrikanerdom's self-preservation.

Coetzee's alternative is that apartheid's founding fathers were animated by crazy, selfish desires, and that the electorate who voted for them was deluded. This is because, in spite of a roundly professed

altruism and dedication to “Western” Christian values, “whites” exercising power in South Africa at various historical junctures were indifferent to the long-term consequences of their actions – even unconcerned about the social and political problems that could overwhelm their descendants. This irrational solipsism is extremely difficult to study, predominantly because I’m positioned comfortably inside the system that was intended to secure my existence. One of my doubts is that wherever I’ve pointed out how survival concerns have informed musicological discourse, have I also pointed out my own equivalent anxieties, or have I somehow achieved a heightened and more responsible consciousness?

Thirty or fifty years from now, scholars will possibly identify a certain tortured style of academic writing that is characteristic of someone who completed sociologically conscious postgraduate research at tertiary institutions like Stellenbosch University, especially in the decades following immediately on the dissolution of apartheid’s totalitarian system. Perhaps those future scholars will understand how this doctoral thesis was written against the background not only of a disciplinary crisis, but also against the predicament of a resurgent national crisis over how to deal properly with apartheid’s legacy and effect honourable social transformation. Distressing social problems like the 16 August 2012 massacre of striking mineworkers at Marikana, and the taken-for-granted persistence of colonial intellectual and cultural heritage in South African universities that have been brought to acute crisis in the student protests of 2015, have dominated public discourse and revealed continuing animosity between groups that were supposed already to have reconciled with one another. Most significantly, the enormous problem still facing economically privileged South Africans is similar to the one facing economically privileged Americans: understanding that black lives matter.

I hope that the scholarship presented in this thesis can somehow contribute to clearing out the intellectual and cultural detritus that continues to vex this country. I’ve made use of several points of entry to show how a preoccupation with “white” biological endurance infiltrated musical discourse and facilitated the unnecessary and inequitable separation of cultures. Having focused only on critiques of survival anxieties that inform “white” discourse about Western art music, the most cogent answer I have to any potential cultural apocalypse is to encourage the unencumbered interaction and miscegenation of local cultures through profligate creative interplay between their musics. In doing this, I volunteer as a possibility the (by no means unproblematic) suggestion that the cultural markers denoting “whiteness” could be painted – to use Breytenbach’s phrase – “in the colours of disappearance”, in order that paradoxically some type of transformed biological and non-genocidal endurance can be secured.

Prospero's famous line in *The Tempest* is relevant to my argument that Western art music could come to a transformative South African individuation by incorporating its "dark" musical shadow (which is its perceived "black" and threatening *other*) within itself. In his musicological interpretation of the conclusion to N.P. van Wyk Louw's dramatic monologue *Raka*, Stephanus Muller has suggested a similar transformative outcome. I don't think, however, that "white" South Africans should emulate Prospero by simplistically regarding Caliban as their *other* and uttering the famous phrase "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine". Such a pronouncement can only repeat the power dynamics that informed colonialism and apartheid. Hopefully Caliban can instead regard Prospero, acknowledge this historically destructive thing of "whiteness", and generously incorporate it into a more equitable dispensation.

ADDENDUM 1

The libretto of an African symphony

First Movement: Text for “Die Lied van Suid-Afrika”

Sy sê: “Ek vorder as ’n heil’ge reg
die vrug van eindelose pein;
ek smyt hulle oor die berge weg,
en smoor hulle in die sandwoestyn.”

Sy sê: ”Nooit het ek iets gegee;
ek laat hulle honger, dors en bloei;
hulle worstel deur en sterf gedwee,
en min my as ’n vlam wat skroei.

“Tien male moes hulle veg vir my,
tien male moes hulle kerm en stoei,
tien male in die stof gebrei,
tien male opstaan weer en bloei.

“My liefde duld geen ewenaar –
vergeefs die weeklag van die vrou,
van kleintjies al die stom gebaar:
my liefde verg ’n enkel trou.

“Hulle diepste hoop is lang verteer,
vergaan in rook en as en bloed,
hulle sak aanbiddend om my neer,
ek voel hulle trane op my voet.

“Ek adem nooit hulle name meer,
nooit kon ek hulle kinders noem;
in vreemde tale hoor ek weer
die dowwe fluistering van hulle roem.

“En vlymend soos ’n swaard, geheg
bly van my liefde slegs die pyn;
ek smyt hulle oor die berge weg,
en smoor hulle in die sandwoestyn.”

[English translation in the score]

She says, "I claim from them as sacred right
the fruit of never-ending pain;
I cast them o'er the steepest cliffs,
and choke them on the desert plain."

She says, "My only gifts to them
are famine, drought and endless wars;
they struggle on, and die forlorn,
and love me as a scorching flame.

"Ten times they had to fight for me,
ten times they had to groan and strive,
ten times I ground them in the dust,
ten times they had to rise anew.

"My love brooks not a rival claim –
in vain the plea of spouse or friend,
of children every mute appeal:
my love demands a single troth.

"Their dearest hope is waned to naught,
consumed in smoke and ash and blood,
adoringly they kneel to me,
I feel their tears upon my foot.

"I breathe no more their faded names,
children of mine they never were;
in foreign tongues I hear once more
the distant echo of their fame.

"And searing like a sword, my love
leaves in its wake unending pain;
I cast them o'er the steepest cliffs,
and choke them on the desert plain."

Second Movement: Text for D.J. Opperman's "Gebed om die Gebeente"

Heer waar U noordewind die droë dissel rol
 en oor die skurwe brakland jaag van Afrika,
 maar eindelik teen 'n doringdraad met pluksels wol
 vaswaai terwyl die kraaie en die aasvoëls kla,
 laat my ook ná die swerf oor vlaktes heen nou rus
 en glo my kind is dood, al hoor ek die berigte om my kryds:
 "Ek het hom as matroos hier aan die kus..."
 "Ek: as stoker op 'n trein..." "Ek: in die vaalgeel ligte
 van 'n steenkooldorp se kroeg nog nou die dag gesien..."
 Glo omgekoop! Of hy sou skielik blink gesteentes
 smokkel... blink gesteentes! Selfs dan... Nee, miskien
 lê hy tog êrens dood; maar, Heer, dan die gebeente,
 wys my, gee my die drag gebeente van my skoot
 dat ek nie opgejaag deur hierdie land bly swerf
 en soek, maar eindelik rus en weet hy het deur lood
 onder twee mudsak ongebluste kalk gesterf.

Snags het ek soms gelê en vrees daar sou iets boos
 oor hierdie kind nog kom, want in Middelburg se kerk
 staan duidelik in die doopregister sy geboorte
 nie na die stand van sy gesternte aangemerkt.
 En, soos wanneer jy tussen vinger en die duim
 die wit son rol en skitter in 'n diamant,
 sou hy deur Vrystaat en Transvaal se leiblou ruim
 uit spieëls ons stryd laat en straal van rant tot rant.
 Maar hy moes sterf: die Dood het self hom eers gejag
 deur kou riviere van die Kaap, dwarsoor Anysberg
 tot in die buitekamer op 'n plaas, waar hy een nag
 in koue sweet moes lê en aan borswater sterf...
 toe 'n tweede jagter hom van tent na trein, van trein
 na tent met doringdraad en bajonet bewaak
 en met gemete sorg van arts en medisyne
 vir 'n tweede dood, o Heer, stadig gesond kon maak.

En ná die skynverhoor het hulle hom vertel...
 voor Graaf-Reinet se sel. O Graaf-Reinet se sel!
 Hy was gewone kryger, Heer, en geen rebel.
 O Graaf-Reinet se sel... Eségiël! Eségiël!
 Vergeef my die gelykenis, Heer: ek weet 'n hond
 as hy versadig is, verag die been en murg
 maar bête dit agter 'n bossie in die grond
 - behoedsaam, en snuffel met 'n tweede honger terug:
 Teen middernag het op bevel 'n vyf soldate
 die kalkwit bondel beendre in die kalkwit doek
 met grawe en lanterns in verskeie gate

onder die roosmaryn langs die rivier gaan soek
 en herbegrawe... toe U die storm word, Heer; ek weet
 U en die vyand het die nag in die vallei
 deur geel geflikker in slaggreëns mekaar gemeet
 oor wie uiteindelik my kind se lyk sou kry.

Hy moes drie dode sterf, maar hy wat drie maal sterf
 die sterf nie meer; hy word nou elke dag gesien
 as 'n matroos, of stoker op 'n steenkoolwerf,
 in myn of tronk, in sirkustent of 'n kantien –
 hy leef in hierdie land nou ewig en altyd!
 Maar soveel beendere lê onder die roosmaryn...
 Seën, Here, ál die bleek gebeente van die stryd –
 ek ken as moeder na 'n halwe eeu van pyn:
 een land vol skedels en gebeente, een groot graf
 waaroor U noordewind die dröe dissels waai
 en spruit en krans vul met die afloskrete van
 die aasvöels, van die wildehonde en die kraai
 – dat ons as een groot nasie in dié gramadoelas
 met elke stukkie sinkplaat en met elke wiel,
 en wit en bruin en swart foelie agter skoon glas
 ewig U sonlig vang en na mekaar toe spieël.

[English translation in the score]

Lord, where your northern wind trundles the dried-out thistle
 and harries it across the rough wasteland of Africa,
 blowing it fast at last with scraps of wool on barbs
 of fencing wire, while the vultures and the crows complain,
 let me too after wandering o'er the plains at last find rest,
 and believe my child is dead, despite the rumours cawing
 'round my head: "I saw him as a seaman at the coast..."
 "I, as stoker on a train..." "I, by the dusty lamplight
 of a tavern on the mines, why, just the other day..."
 He's been bribed, they say! Or has become a diamond
 smuggler... he, a smuggler! Even then... No, perhaps
 I'd rather he was dead; but Lord, then let his bones
 be shown me, give me the bones I carried in my womb,
 that I may cease being driven searching through this land,
 that I may rest at last and know he has been shot
 and buried beneath two mud-sacks of unslaked lime.

At night I would lie awake in fear that some great evil
 would befall this child, for in the church at Middelburg
 I saw with my own eyes in the baptismal register
 that there had been an error with his date of birth.

And, just as you can roll the white sun
 between finger and thumb in a glittering diamond,
 so through the slate-blue skies of Free State and Transvaal
 from mirrors he flashed our strife across the land.
 But he had to die: and Death itself pursued him first
 through icy rivers of the Cape, over Anysberg,
 to an outhouse on a farm, where he lay one night
 with cold fever, and by rights should have died...
 but a second huntsman bore him from tent to train, from train
 to tent, detained him with barbed wire and bayonet,
 and with a doctor's measured care, slowly nursed him
 back to health, O Lord, to die a second death.

And after the mock court martial they told him...
 before the cell in Graaf-Reinet...O fateful cell!
 He was a common soldier, Lord, and no rebel.
 O grim and fateful cell...Ezekiel! Ezekiel!
 Forgive me the comparison, O Lord: I know a dog,
 once his hunger is assuaged, will spurn the marrow-bone,
 but will bury it carefully behind a shrub somewhere ,
 and come sniffing for it when his hunger-pangs return:
 'Round midnight five odd soldiers under orders
 stole with spades and lanterns to unearth and rebury
 the lime white bundle of bones in the lime white shroud,
 in several holes under the rosemary down by the river...
 when you became the storm, o Lord; I know
 that in the ravine that night you strove with the enemy
 through livid flashes and pelting rains
 o'er who at last should have my child's remains.

He died three times, o Lord, but dying thrice
 means dying nevermore; and now they see him every day
 down by the coast, as stoker in a coaling yard,
 on mines, in jail, in taverns and in circus tents –
 he now lives in this land forever more!
 But so many bones lie under the rosemary...
 Bless, o Father, all the bleached bones left by war –
 I know as mother after half a century of pain:
 one land of skulls and skeletons, one huge grave
 o'er which your north wind rolls the dried-out thistles,
 where spring and cliff resound with the hunger-cries
 of vultures, of wild dogs and of crows –
 let us as one great nation in this wasteland,
 with every scrap of sheet-iron and with every wheel,
 like white and brown and black tinfoil behind glass,
 always catch your sunlight, Lord, and beam it each to all.

Third Movement: Text for “Afrika” (*Tranquillo*)

Die sonbrand sterf in skemervreemde see
se verre, gladde gloring teen die land
wat donker soos 'n reus 'n wyding gee
aan palmkruine ritselend oor die sand.

Die seewind waai om my en aan die kim
verrys 'n boot nou, donker-spokig ver,
en oor die mas se lyn het stil ontglim
die eensaam vuur van 'n verlore ster.

Ek dink aan Afrika, en lang vervloë
en reeds versoonde eeue se bestaan,
en deur die skemervertes vors my oë:
'n woud van lewe waai hier aan.

Ek sien die donker hordes en ek hoor
'n yl geskreeu oor ruimte en oor tyd,
en in die dreuning van die see verloor,
verruis dit ritmies soos 'n ewigheid!

Ek weet nou wat verlore is, o Land
waar donker voorgevoelens sawens huiwer,
ons lewe is verdor net soos die sand
o maak ons hart weer afgronddeep en suiwer!

Laat uit die oewerlose ons verlede
met oerkrag van die lewe self verrys
en soos 'n golf vergaan tot in die hede
en ons die glimpad na die sterre wys,

wat swyend gaan, oneindig deur die tye
soos wêrelde van lig wat ons ontbloot
aan eie nietigheid se roerloos swye
wat steeds ommuur is deur die nag en dood.

O sing deur ons en maak ons menslik, ruim,
ons oë sag om ver die blou te meet,
dan breek gebrek in ruising van die skuim
en word ons suiwer deur te glo en weet!

O Afrika! jou naam dreun soos die see!
jou stem is op die nagwind, diep en donker,
en in ons roep 'n eeue ontwaakte beë
na vure van die nag wat helder flonker!

[English translation in the score]

The burning sun is drowning in the sea,
remotely, smoothly gleaming 'gainst the land
that darkly yields its giant pastures to
the palm fronds that rustle over the sand.

I feel the sea wind's breath, and 'gainst the sky
a boat arises, distant, ghostly dark,
and o'er the line of naked mast there gleams
the lonely fire of a straying star.

I think of Africa, of generations
that trod this land in ages long since past,
I gaze intently through the dusky vastness:
a living swarm blows 'round me on the shore.

I see them crowding darkly and I hear
a spectral call from ancient, distant worlds,
and in the thundering of the waves its pulse
dissolves, and melts into the infinite!

I know now what is lost to us, o Land
where dark forebodings hover in the evening air:
our lives have grown as arid as the sands –
o plunge us in the heart's pure ocean depths!

And from the shoreless vastness let the ages
arise now with the power of life itself,
and like a wave break o'er into our being,
a shining pathway to the stars themselves,

that silently float ever onwards through
the eons, each a universe of light,
each laying bare the poor quiescence
of our petty lives immured by night and death.

O sing through us, and make our hearts human, vast,
make our eyes mild to cleave the distant blue,
let every flaw dissolve then in the spray,
to leave us pure to know and to believe!

O Africa! your name roars like the sea!
your voice is on the night wind, dark and boundless,
and in us wakes an ages-old desire
for firelight blazing brightly in the darkness!

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