

**MUSIC and (POST)COLONIALISM:
The DIALECTICS of CHORAL CULTURE
on a SOUTH AFRICAN FRONTIER**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the genesis of black choralism in late-nineteenth-century colonial South Africa, attending specifically to its dialectic with metropolitan Victorian choralism.

In two introductory historiographic chapters I outline the political-narrative strategies by which both Victorian and black South African choralism have been elided from music histories.

Part 1 gives an account of the “structures” within and through which choralism functioned as a practice of colonisation, as “internal colonialism” in Britain and evangelical colonialism in the eastern Cape Colony. In chapter 1 I suggest that the religious contexts within which choralism operated, including the music theoretical construction of the tonic sol-fa notation and method as “natural”, and the “scientific” musicalisation of race, constituted conditions for the foreign mission’s embrace of choralism. The second chapter explores further such affinities, tracing sol-fa choralism’s institutional affiliations with nineteenth-century “reform” movements, and suggesting that sol-fa’s practices worked in fulfilment of core reformist concerns such as “industry” and literacy. Throughout, the thesis explores how the categories of class and race functioned interchangeably in the colonial imagination. Chapter 3 charts this relationship in the terrain of music education; notations, for instance, which were classed in Britain, became racialised in colonial South Africa. In particular I show that black music education operated within colonial racial discourses. Chapter 4 is a reading of Victorian choralism as a “discipline”, interpreting choral performance practice and choral music itself as disciplinary acts which complemented the political contexts in which choralism operated. Part 1, in short, explores how popular choralism operated within and *as* dominant politicking.

In part 2 I turn to the black reception of Victorian choralism in composition and performance. The fifth chapter examines the compositional discourse of early black choral

music, focussing on the work of John Knox Bokwe (1855-1922). Through a detailed account of several of Bokwe's works and their metropolitan sources, particularly late-nineteenth-century gospel hymnody, I show that Bokwe's compositional practice enacted a politics that became anticolonial, and that early black choral music became "black" in its reception. I conclude that ethno/musicological claims that early black choral music contains "African" musical content conflate "race" and culture under a double imperative: in the names of a decolonising politics and a postcolonial epistemology in which hybridity as resistance is racialised. The final chapter explores how "the voice" was crucial to identity politics in the Victorian world, an object that was classed and racialised. Proceeding from the black reception of choral voice training, I attempt to outline the beginnings of a social history of the black choral voice, as well as analyse the sonic content of that voice through an approach I call a "phonetics of timbre".

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Abbreviations

<i>CA</i>	<i>Cape Argus</i>
<i>CT</i>	<i>Cape Times</i>
<i>CE</i>	<i>Christian Express</i>
<i>EdGaz</i>	<i>Education Gazette</i>
<i>GTJ</i>	<i>Grahamstown Journal</i>
<i>Imvo</i>	<i>Imvo Zabantsundu</i>
<i>KE</i>	<i>Kaffir Express</i>
<i>MH</i>	<i>Musical Herald</i>
<i>MT</i>	<i>Musical Times</i>
<i>RS-GE</i>	<i>Reports of the Superintendent-General of Education</i>
<i>SMR</i>	<i>School Music Review</i>
<i>TS-fR</i>	<i>Tonic Sol-fa Reporter</i>

Preface

These first few pages, like the last, were written in Grahamstown. From most places in the small Eastern Cape town the horizon splits one's vision. On the one side, standing alone up on a hill, is The Monument; a multi-functional arts complex, a "living monument" – originally to those intrepid settlers from Britain who had arrived on the scene in 1820, now for all and everyone's culture. An apartheid structure – its forbidding concrete the hallmark of authoritarian architecture – it overlooks, as it is overlooked by, an idea no less part of the structures of apartheid: on the "other" side of town – Grahamstown East it is now called – a township sprawls over and beyond another hill. Unlike much of South Africa's urban geography the township is not comfortably out of white sight; during apartheid its very visibility was menacing: white motorists, who had to pass through the township on their way east, were stoned; a highway was built to bypass the problem. The township hill is called Makana's Kop, named after the warrior-prophet who spearheaded a Xhosa assault on the British in Graham's Town in 1819. In "frontier country", the "contact zone" as Mary Louise Pratt renamed it, the histories of British settlers and Xhosa-speaking people are irrevocably entwined in the present (1992: 4, 6-7).

A banal observation, but one central to my subject: black choralism, a cultural act that regularly makes the short taxi hop from the township to The Monument's concert hall. To say that the history of black choralism entails the history of the settler's singing, and vice versa, is hardly revelatory. My concern, rather, is with the unrecorded specifics of that ongoing musical conversation from the past.

I want to begin by acknowledging an intellectual debt: one which is referenced frequently in my text, and is emphatic on at least one point: the dialectical and dialogic nature of colonialism. These, indeed, are two of the academy's buzzwords. Their consequences for historical practice are several, and have been lucidly spelled out by Jean and John Comaroff in their "historical ethnography" of evangelical colonialism; black choralism was born in part on the back of the foreign mission. The Comaroffs suggest that while work on the mission and "African peoples" has paid minute attention to the socio-cultural orders of Africa, colonising European societies have seldom been similarly scrutinised in that story (1991: 51). In refusing to confront colonialism *in full*, the "past has truly become another country" (1997: iv). As I explore in the second introduction, it is the taint of the colonial country – Britain – that has beset histories of black choralism. Instead of this flight from the past, the Comaroffs argue that "the missionary encounter must be

regarded as a two-sided historical process; as a dialectic that takes into account the social and cultural endowments of, and the consequences for, *all* the actors – missionaries no less than Africans”. This leads them to assert that any study of the colonial encounter must begin in Europe (1991: 54). I am less sure. A history of black choralism might just as easily proceed from precolonial black musicking. But I have taken up the Comaroffs’ point: no account of black South African choralism can hope to completeness if it does not confront the details of the coloniser’s choral culture, and what I hope to have achieved is to have taken the Comaroffs’ example into “the choral”. This has been less easily done than said. For, as I show in the first introduction, nineteenth-century British choralism too has had to bear the brunt of historiographical erasure. And so my account of early black South African choralism begins in Victorian Britain – but not because it must – moving back and forth between metropolitan choralism and its colonial and black receptions.

Many debts of many kinds accumulate during a project like this, and naming them here can register only a token of my thanks. It goes without saying that I owe much to my supervisor, Christine Lucia. Perhaps more so than usual. At the inaugural Vice Chancellor’s Concert at Rhodes University, held in 1997, she made mention of the paucity of work on black choralism, an excellent opportunity for graduate research. Misreporting her, the student newspaper, *Activate*, stated that she had referred to the work of Ciro Pinsuti, a Victorian composer who had appeared on the programme. If, a few years later, I took up Christine’s challenge to work on black choralism, it was one, as I’ve said, that explores no less the Victorian choral world of which Pinsuti was a part. With a past in British musical culture and a present knowledge of black South African musicking possibly unequalled, Christine has bought a unique, dual vision to this project. With no particular interest in either Victorian or black South African musics, Roger Parker, a supervisor from the past, has still been an enthusiastic, critical reader.

I want to acknowledge three debts of a more specific nature: South Africa’s premier Victorianist, Wendy Jacobson, initiated me into that world from the past that is often still so familiar; Jackson Vena, of the Cory Library for Historical Research at Rhodes University, translated John Knox Bokwe’s Xhosa song texts (as well as enlivening months of dreary archival research); and Rob Allingham generously gave me access to his personal collection of historical recordings. Andy Fry, Stephanus Muller and Andrew van der Vlies all read sections of the thesis, and the text is the better for it. During the final stages Tim Radloff offered kind assistance. To all the current choral practitioners – administrators (especially

Mavis Mpola), composers, conductors and choristers – to whom I have spoken and listened over the last three years, if your voices are not heard in this project on the past, hopefully they will find a place in later work more explicitly on the present.

Archives are of course indispensable to the historian, and I'd like to thank the staff of the following libraries for their (usually) friendly efficiency: Cory Library, Rhodes University Inter-library Loans Department, Cape Town division of the South African National Library, British Library, Bodleian Library, and the library of the Royal College of Music, London. Special thanks to Fiona Still-Drewett, the Rhodes University Music Librarian, who made the library available to me 24/7, tracked down references when I was out of town, and increased the library's holdings on Victorian literature beyond its needs. Not all my library experiences have been pleasant. The James Rodger Hymnological Collection, largely of Victorian hymnals, and the largest of its kind in South Africa, languishes in a basement store annex of the Rhodes Library, mostly inaccessible and in a less than ideal environment for the rare books it contains. Worse still, the archive of what was first the Tonic Sol-fa Association, then College, now the Curwen Society, gathers dust (and much of it), uncatalogued, and in poor repair, in a backroom of the Royal College Library. The marginal status Victorian choralism occupies in the academy extends, it would seem, to some of its archives.

More happily, I am obliged to thank Rhodes University for its generous financial support of my research, and for the latter stages, spent in Amsterdam, the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Nuffic) for a Huygens grant.

Of a more personal nature: When I returned to Grahamstown from Oxford, Undine reminded me (often) that there was more to life – starting with a G&T – than work. She's been the best of fun during good times, and a sturdy shoulder during the difficult. And whenever, which was often, I visited London, Sal made Kew Lodge a home away from home. If the six months or so I spent in the UK doing research might only just have been possible otherwise, they could not imaginably have been more pleasant. Hugs girls. Two other women have been in the picture much longer. From childhood, mom and gran supported me throughout my various musical adventures, and to them I dedicate this latest (even though they'll probably never read it).

Grahamstown, March 2003

PART 1

Introduction

**Scriptions Of The Choral 1:
The Historiography of The English Musical Renaissance**

Thomas Cooper Gotch's *Alleluia* (1896) is a Pre-Raphaelite inspired imagining of a choir. What interests me about the painting reproduced in figure 1 is its rich narrativising of "the choir" as the Victorian choir; specifically, how it is narrated *into time*: a mythical (and mystical) past that situates the choir, by turn, in the late Victorian present. That ancient past is both local and elsewhere, "other" and thoroughly "British". For the painting's subjects, the choristers, are invented Celts, from Britain's own ancient and musical periphery. At the same time they are subjects of Britain's own story of modernity, its Christianising and colonising of "its" others at home in the name of a greater British Empire. The backdrop for this story, and the background for Gotch's choir – the architextural décor – is a classical scene; perhaps Roman, another of Victorian Britain's favourite ancient pasts and an enduring self-image of Empire (see Young 2001: 33). But while the choir is drawn as an agent of modernity, and of



Figure 1. TC Gotch's *Alleluia*. Reprinted in James Bates, *Voice Culture for Children* (1907).

colonialism, it is also ambivalently figured as regressive. Narrated into a double-time, it becomes, I will show, an anachronism: out of step with the musical times. Victorian choralism has also, by and large, been written out of the pages of music history.¹ So, when I came to explore how the choir acted in the colonisation of South Africa, I found that I needed first to recuperate parts of its untold story in the metropolis.

instrumentally writing the renaissance

The start of Victorian choralism's historiographic misfortunes began with another start: the "English Musical Renaissance".² As a "rebirth" it was predicated, as many have noted, on an English lack: the English were "unmusical", England was "the land without music".³ Historians have attempted first to dispel the myth – Victorian England was quite a musical place after all – and then to account for it. Phyllis Weliver, for example, has recently summed up the evidence by asserting that "*Das Land ohne Musik* is a gender-packed, class-based, nationalistic idea", and it is now a commonplace that musicking in Victorian England was the domain of women, the "lower" classes and foreigners (2000: 20). In part, yes. But the "problem" was not that the English did not musick, or even compose their own music, but that its composers "failed" at certain types of music. At issue was the content of *die Musik*, and English composers' failure to fulfil the generic requirements of that music. Choralism, I suggest, became the ground on which the impotences of genre were exposed, where music came not to be Music, and hence from where a narrative of revival could take off.

While the posts of the renaissance – when did it start, who and what is included – have shifted with time (see Temperley 1999: 6-8), the anachronistic time that Victorian choralism has occupied recurs throughout renaissance historiography. In post-War histories, for example, Elgar is conventionally the fulcrum on which the renaissance turned. It was he, so the story goes, who put

¹ "Choralism", which I use throughout the thesis, indexes the entire range of practices and discourses that constituted nineteenth-century choral culture: performance practice, choral composition, choral institutions, and so on.

² It is beyond the scope of this introduction to explore how the choralism of modernity, from the Enlightenment on, and particularly Victorian choralism, has been ex-scribed from general music histories. John Butt's chapters on choralism in the recent *Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, for example, continue to marginalise the Victorians in the name of the canon (2001: chaps. 8 and 13). Here, I confine myself to the narration of Victorian choralism in histories of English music.

³ For the origins of the phrase and English unmusicality, see the letters columns of *The Musical Times* (1975: 439, 625, 877). Evidence for the longevity of the idea, from the early nineteenth century through the twentieth, is given in Temperley (1999: 4-5).

England once more after several centuries upon the musical map of Europe. The recognition of *The Dream of Gerontius* at Düsseldorf was a spectacular revelation of the rising of a new star in the firmament, but what was ultimately decisive in asserting England's new contribution to the music of Europe was the fact that he was primarily, in spite of his successful oratorio, an instrumental composer. Richter's acceptance of the *Enigma Variations* in 1899 and the subsequent appearance of the two symphonies and the violin concerto proclaimed that at last England was refusing to allow her long vocal traditions to fetter her creative gifts (Howes 1966: 25).

Frank Howes' *The English Musical Renaissance* tells the well-known tale of the renaissance as England's re-entry into European musical history. It is a story that, far less known, trades on what might be called the "choral complex": the creative shackle of England's vocal traditions; we are told that the Continent's musical taste was non-choral (18-19). Ultimately, for Elgar to be written into the renaissance, and gathered in the European musical embrace, it is a proviso that he surmount his, and England's, choral heritage – "he was primarily, in spite of his successful oratorio, an instrumental composer".

England's choralism became its instrumental lack already in the nineteenth century. On the eve of Victoria's accession, Dickens' father-in-law George Hogarth commented that the "composition of instrumental music, either for a full orchestra, or in a form of concerted pieces for instruments, ha[d] not yet been successfully cultivated in England. We have no symphonies, quartets, or quintets" (1835: 421; also Fuller Maitland 1902: 24, 31; and Walker 1907: 277). By the end of the century that lack had become a lag: a lack of the past, a zero-base from which the musical "progress" of the nation, as a turn towards instrumental activity, could be charted. Francis Hueffer celebrated Victoria's reign as "the revival of Music as a national art" by comparing the state of the musical nation at the start of the reign with its state fifty years on (1889: vii). In the 1830s, the "spirit of modern enterprise and competition had not yet entered the quiet realms of music – or at least of orchestral music". As it did so, the "great change" to come over English Music was that orchestral music, "the highest form of music in its pure or absolute state", had "made enormous strides within the last fifty years" (9, 14). It did so, Hueffer seems to say, by displacing choralism. First institutionally: those bastions of Victorian choralism the Sacred Harmonic Society and Exeter Hall had become "mute and inglorious", while in their stead emerged August Manns' orchestral concerts at the Crystal Palace and the London Symphony series (12, 14; also Walker 1907: 286-7). Then compositionally, as the "native composer" moved from "the organ-lofts of churches and cathedrals" to the concert hall. This led Hueffer to conclude that "the long mooted discussion as to whether England is or is not a musical country can no longer be said to be *sub judice*" (viii-ix, 25). Rosa Newmarch put it more forthrightly: the

“orchestral craze” of the 1890s “proved how false is the charge that we have no music in ourselves”. England’s “national reproach” – a choral reproach – had been removed (1904: 21).⁴

If the verdict was already out, that from the rise of instrumentalism in England the renaissance would be born, late Victorian and Edwardian histories nevertheless still wrote choralism – its music, even hymns and part-songs, and its institutions, such as the tonic sol-fa movement – within the space of national musicking (see, for example, Davey 1895; Bennett 1897; Fuller Maitland 1902; and Walker 1907). That historiographic-national space became increasingly closed to choralism in histories chronologically removed. The fortunes of two composers, one very well known, the other much less so, reveal how that excription was effected.

William Sterndale Bennett (1816-1875) was marked out from other Victorians by his early success as an instrumental composer, a triumph secured through his recognition in Germany, which “warmly heralded the coming of a new genius out of the dark West” (Walker 1907: 279). This has earned Bennett a place in history. For WH Hadow, he “restored [England’s] music after a hundred years’ exile to a place in the comity of European civilization” (1931: 131). But Bennett’s place in history was the space of the past, in the twilight of what Hadow wrote as the “Dawn” of the renaissance, and Howes the “Gestation” (1966: 40-1). It was in part, I suggest, a residual choralism that confined Bennett to this not-quite status. Hadow lamented thus:

By a curious perversity we have thrust into the dark those compositions which are most worthy of our attention [the early orchestral works], and allowed a feeble glimmer to rest upon those with which we could most readily dispense: two of the latter are kept in suspended animation by amateur choral societies in search of an easy task (1931: 135-6).

In one historiographic move, then, a composer was written out of the renaissance partly because of his choralism. Another rescued him for the renaissance by excising his choralism. Elgar is a case in point of the latter. Hadow introduced him into the renaissance as follows:

Round about 1880 the new chapter [that is, the renaissance] was opened ... in the band of the three-choir festivals, at this time, was a young violinist named Elgar, already known as a writer of slight and fugitive pieces, and about to enter, with his overture “*Froissart*,” the front rank of English composition (148).

Although the composer-hero’s context is the archetypal choral venue – the choral festival – Elgar is sited in the orchestra, and it is only with an orchestral work that he rises above compositional mediocrity. Wilfred Mellers leaves us in no doubt as to what the “slight and

⁴ Howes wrote of the orchestral institutions that they “spread the knowledge of and fostered a taste for orchestral music to provide a foundation on which the renaissance could lever itself out of the uncertainties of Victorian music” (1966: 48).

fugitive pieces” were: “one is apt to forget after how many false starts [Elgar] progressed from his early Crystal Palace-like, dowdy festival competition choral pieces to the *Enigma*, *Gerontius*, and the concertos” (1946: 105). Elgar’s induction into history reintroduced him primarily as an orchestral composer, and later histories, as Charles Edward McGuire has pointed out, do not reverse these judgments (2002: viii, xi).⁵

the choir and narratives of regression

Like the time occupied by Gotch’s choir, the two strategies of elision narrated choralism into a Victorian time as a time of the past. Bennett’s choral works, amongst others, put him before the rebirth; Elgar’s are placed before his own rebirth. Choralism existed outside, that is, of the progressive modernity of the instrumental renaissance.

England’s musical past has puzzled its historians, defying, for instance, conventional periodisation; accounting, perhaps, for its marginal status in the story of Western music. Why “did our music not evolve in the same way as that of continental countries”? asked Mellers like many before and since. His analysis of the post-Purcellian rupture as the Dark Ages returned has become a central myth of renaissance writing. The Victorian dark ages was also – Mellers provided the copulative – the Age of the Oratorio (1946: 91, 90, 98). As an agent of regression, the oratorio, a metonym for Victorian (choral) music, kept England back in time, making it a musical backwater like that other historical cultural void the dark ages. Consequently, in Mellers’ account, the renaissance, the “second-birth-pangs”, had to play catch up on “two hundred years of musical evolution” (103). It did so instrumentally: Vaughan Williams “bridged the two hundred years’ gap in which the English symphony should have developed”, Edmund Rubbra’s “whole career [was] devoted to the attempt to give English composers a symphonic tradition” (115, 118-19). After the Victorian “break” in the country’s “cultur[al] continuity”, English music as instrumental music was on the march forward again.⁶

⁵ In passing, McGuire has also noted that renaissance texts privileged instrumental over choral music (2002: x; and forthcoming(a)).

⁶ By the time of Mellers’ account, Victorian choralism was represented as a foreign corruption – by Handel, Mendelssohn, et al – of English choralism (1946: 98-100); Handel’s English status was already being questioned by the turn of the century (see, for example, Newmarch 1904: 15; and Walker 1907: 352). It is widely known that a nationalist renaissance historiography has written the renaissance as a progressive move away from German musical influence; again, a move that originated with the late Victorians just as the first renaissance composers were modelling their instrumental music on the German symphonic tradition (see esp. Stradling and Hughes 1993: chap. 4, “Being Beastly to the Hun”). If the symphony, so the story goes, was rescued by composing “Englishness” into it, above all the music of the folk and Elizabethan renaissance (see,

The idea of national musical progress was endemic to especially the later nineteenth century, and it was the Victorians themselves who first began to analyse Victorian music's refusal to progress with the times. For Henry Davey, the later Bennett failed because he "never dare[d] to invent anything ... never attempted to advance the art"; the "great curse", claimed Davey, of English music in general (1895: 469-70; also Walker 1907: 268, 279). Victorian critics came to cast their composers as a "race of mere copyists", for whom "the slightest attempt at originality [was] held as a blasphemous innovation", and whose music witnessed the "repression of new ideas, the insistence on conventionality" (Fuller Maitland 1902: 61-2). This late Victorian reaction against the conventional was, I suggest, a consequence of the belated rise of musical "Romanticism" in England, brought to London in its most recent forms as continental orchestral music. *The Musical Times* thus considered "the present rage for ["modern"] orchestral music", particularly by Wagner, as a "remarkable" event in England's musical history (Bennett 1897: 598). And it was by way of example of the symphony that Sir John Stainer expounded Romanticism in music – "a rebellion ... against the conventional" – to his Oxford audience (1892: 41-2).⁷ Aside the modernity of the orchestra, English music as choral music appeared increasingly anachronistic. So, while orchestral music had made "substantial progress" in Victorian England, "church music" had "remained stationary" (Bennett 1897: 735).

To gloss Victorian church music as choral music is only to note that the two have often functioned as synonyms born from the association of time. When Ernest Walker wrote of the "organ-loft composer" he referred to the choral composer who, in the nineteenth century, led the choir from the organ, and who had no "instinct for instrumental writing" (1907: 256-66). Grove's *Dictionary* drew on the timeless association in defining the apogee of choral – of Victorian – music: "The Oratorio is to the Musician the exact analogy of what the Cathedral is to the Architect – the highest Art-form to the construction of which he can aspire" (Rockstro 1902 [1880]: 559).⁸ And Stainer wrote the history of the more popular

for example, Mellers 1946: chap. 7; and Blake 1997: 45 for Mellers' intellectual context), Victorian choralism was equally de-anglicised, doubly othered in the context of an English, instrumental renaissance.

⁷ Wagner was heard primarily as an orchestral composer in late Victorian England. Dramatic performances were rare, whereas instrumental excerpts from the operas were regularly programmed. It was thus typical to speak of Wagner's "modern orchestral music" (Bennett 1897: 734; and Newmarch 1904: 49). For thoughts on Victorian (church) music's incompatibility with the ideology of Romanticism, see Gatens (1987: chap. 3) and Banfield (1988a).

⁸ Thoughts on two comments made by McGuire in his study of Elgar's oratorios as a rewriting of the Victorian genre. He suggests that from the mid-nineteenth century on, critics and British composers alike "probably would not have regarded the oratorio as a viable medium for masterworks" (2002: 2). The entry in Grove's *Dictionary* – a founding text of the renaissance (see Stradling and Hughes 1993: 21-22) – and the composition and critical reception – Shaw notwithstanding – of, say, Parry's late-century oratorios, suggest otherwise (see Hughes 2002: chap. 6). Elsewhere, McGuire notes that by the 1880s and 1890s the oratorio as a genre was

part-song as the story of the people's church choirs: its introduction paralleled the rise of church choirs, it was sustained by parish choirs (*MT* July 1899: 459-60). The very rise and fall of "amateur choral societies [was] not unconnected with the religious features of English social life" (Davey 1895: 450). Choralism's lingering religiousness, I want to argue, further constituted its non-progressiveness. Gotch's choir was not only narrated into the past, it was sacralised. De rigueur as religious iconography, the neumatic notation of the chant that the choir reads is the unmistakable music of the church. Like choral time, religious music was from and of the past.⁹

While the idea, and sometime practice, of what William Gatens called "stylistic propriety" had always informed the writing on and of church music (1986: 60, chap. 4), it was only late in the nineteenth century that a "sacred" choral style as ancient became regressive. This narrativising of the choir into the time of the sacred past predominates in Rosa Newmarch's account of the turn-of-the-century "orchestral craze", which she considered a "natural reaction from the monotonous manufacture of choral works", a.k.a. "the 'oratorio industry'":

After the English musicians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had set the Bible several times over to music of a colourless and tepid kind, there arose a generation who craved a secular renaissance. They realised that sacred music, like a sand-storm from the desert, had overwhelmed and choked nearly all that was bright and promising in our native talent ... In other countries Opera has balanced Church Music and supplied a wholesome, secular corrective which has kept musical art in a sane and progressive condition. In England – half-Puritan still in musical feeling – we accepted Oratorio as a compromise and became atrophied on the secular side ... At last the "ideal model" has changed. A young and hot-headed generation has asked for new sensations in music. They look for living forms, energetic movement, colour and passion, genius of race ... a relief from the lamentable monotony of the past (1904: 14-16).

Where, concluded Newmarch, "could the public satisfy this newly-awakened and natural hunger for a living art save in modern orchestral music?" (16). For its first historians, then, the instrumental renewal sounded the death-knell of a dead choral art. The new school seldom wrote oratorios and "oratorio-like works", it composed "very little church music" (Walker 1907: 310, 349; also Fuller Maitland 1902: 101).

referred to as "sacred music", even though its librettos were often not explicitly religious (2002: 21). In addition to historical association, it was precisely in the *music*, I would suggest, that the genre came to be figured as "sacred" (see below).

⁹ Chant's pastness was regularly summoned as evidence against it in Victorian chant polemics. The composer Henry Smart, for instance, spoke of the "mediaeval barbarism of the four-line staff and diamond note" (1855: preface). That "progress" belonged to the domain of "the secular" was, of course, a commonplace by the late nineteenth century.

We know that this is a misrepresentation of the collective renaissance oeuvre. But it has been the reality of the on-going invention of the renaissance,¹⁰ one that has especially effected the reception of Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, whose fate, shifting with chronological perspective, has been less secure than either Bennett's – clearly outside the renaissance – or Elgar's – pretty much within.¹¹

Parry was centrally involved in inventing the renaissance while composing for it; he was, at first, one of its "leaders". If it was specifically in his orchestral works that the late Victorian press located the English renewal, it was equally enthusiastic about his choral output (see Hughes 2002: chap. 6). Parry's composerly reputation, though, turned with the century. It did so, I suggest, because by then he was a choral composer. Already by 1902 Fuller Maitland could claim that "Parry's career as a composer ha[d] been almost uniformly in the direction of choral works" (200), and Walker, a little later, that Parry was "not at his best in instrumental writing" (1907: 299).¹² Partly this change had to do with audibility – the popularity of his pre-twentieth-century choral music kept it in the public ear, while after their successful premières his orchestral works remained in score – and partly because his later career was devoted to vocal music. It was a situation which made Parry a palimpsest case, and his "second" career – the Parry that endured – would be written to the narratives of the Victorian choral. Walker's comments on the oratorio *Judith* almost twenty years after its festival première are typical: the most popular of Parry's music, it was "commonplace", a "reactionary work", "hark[ing] back very largely to traditions which ha[d] fully served their time ... a remarkable illustration of their firm clutch on the hearts of choral societies" (1907: 301). Indeed, the "cause" for Parry's failure as a composer, which has become something of a myth, is precisely those "choking" limitations of Victorian choralism that Newmarch noted. Parry's turn to choralism thus became a turn against himself, as the dictates of

¹⁰ In one of the few moments in which they note the generic politics of renaissance historiography, Stradling and Hughes show how large-scale popular choral works from the turn of the century on were "gently elided by 'official' history" (1993: 197-200).

¹¹ In light of the above, a final comment on Bennett: his "best religious pages", for Walker, "never [rose] to anything like the artistic height of his best secular" (1907: 268).

¹² These acts of amnesia would stick throughout the century. Hadow wrote of Parry's "great choral writings", while his instrumental work was of "secondary account" (1931: 152-3). For Howes, Parry stood (or fell) by his vocal music (1966: 134). And noting the critical neglect of Parry's instrumental music, Bernard Benoliel continues the practice by confining his discussion of Parry's substantial instrumental output to one chapter (1997: 58-60, chap. 4).

choralism's "religious convention" forced him into "artistic hypocrisy", "artistic compromise" (Benoliel 1997: 34; Hughes 2002: 154).¹³

At the turn of the century Parry was a choral composer very much part of the renaissance. With the perspective of time his relationship to the renaissance changed while he remained unregenerately choral. It "is becoming increasingly difficult", wrote Mellers, "to see why Parry and Stanford had any historical significance"; Mellers, accordingly, didn't bother with Parry (1946: 105). More common, those writers with one foot in the Victorian century, such as Hadow, incorporate Parry into the renaissance, whereas those without, such as Howes, push him to its margins though never quite beyond. In post-War histories, consequently, Parry is, in the metaphors of teleological organicism, always a "roots", a "soil" composer; crucial but invisible. Even in this time of pre-history Parry has been a problem. In Howes' tripartite division of the renaissance, for example, Parry belongs to the period of "gestation", but as its final chapter just prior to the "birth" period, threatening to spill over into the renaissance proper. Despite his choralism and teutonicism, then, he seems to have become a linchpin in the argument for a renaissance, performing a crucial function that is a precondition for the *idea* of the renaissance.¹⁴

**"it is feminine ... it lives and moves and has its being in the cathedral chancel";
"the members of the chorus are mostly 'factory workers'"**¹⁵

Gotch's choir is composed of females. His painting of a girls' choir became the cover of an Edwardian choral voice training manual (Bates 1907), its sexed subjects representing both the primary constituency of choralism in late Victorian England as well as the gendering of the choral as feminine. It was after all, as the *Magazine of Music* announced, "emphatically the age of Woman – with a capital letter". If "the sex" was "pushing its way into every

¹³ Parry's letter to the English Wagnerite, Edward Dannreuther, has become obligatory evidence. It tells of his desire to do something Wagnerian for the Birmingham Festival of 1888, and of the Festival committee's veto: "The Birmingham people stood out for a regular oratorio ... I caved in, but with a mental reservation that there shouldn't be much of religious or biblical oratorio beyond the name" (quoted in Stradling and Hughes 1993: 29; also Hughes 2002: 146-9). The compromised result was *Judith*.

¹⁴ Parry provides an exemplary case of the doubly othered – choral and "German" – composer that I mentioned earlier. In his chapter on the renaissance, for example, Andrew Blake introduces Elgar by way of the obligatory roll-call of his immediate predecessors, including Parry, who are dismissed in one paragraph. All we learn about Parry is that he was not only too German, but sham – "ersatz" – German, and that he "played an active part in the maintenance of the amateur choral tradition, writing short pieces and oratorios" (1997: 38).

¹⁵ The first quote is from Walker on Samuel Wesley's choral style (1907: 265); the second from a "London Weekly Journal" on the make-up of the Leeds Festival choir (quoted in *The Bradford Observer* 22 Nov. 1895).

department of life and work which ha[d] hitherto been regarded as the exclusive property of the male”, the choir had long ceased to be a male space (Dec. 1895: 254).¹⁶

Throughout the Victorian century singing in a choir had been the one form of “respectable” music-making for women that existed outside of the parlour; it was one of the few public leisure activities available to Victorian women. Dave Russell has shown how, with the demands by women for increased leisure participation, the number of women in choral societies rose dramatically from the early to late Victorian periods. The structural make-up of the choir was altered in the process. Before, altos were men and the highest part given to boys. By the end of the century the contralto had replaced the male alto and sopranos were edging out boy trebles. It was at this time that the shortage of male singers and the numerical dominance of sopranos became a long-term reality of choral demographics (1997: 259-60, 292; also Davey 1895: 457).¹⁷

Accompanying women’s move into the choir was a parallel discursive move that represented that choir’s music as feminine. Exemplary of this strategy is a series of essays on “Victorian Music”, penned on the occasion of the diamond jubilee by Joseph Bennett, the editor of *The Musical Times*. The parts on church, or choral, music are basically a chronological history of its composers. At one point, Bennett interrupts this narrative to give a synopsis of it, which at the same time lays bare his method:

Let me premise that the reader will be asked to observe further movement in the direction of what, on the score of grace and sentiment, may be called femininity and, necessarily, an equal removal from masculinity as represented by qualities of intellect, science, and strength. This is the tendency of the age in all art, and Church music cannot hope to escape, notwithstanding its strong traditions (1897: 225).

The “manly” tradition of early Victorian choral music is the standard from which Bennett measured out church music’s increasing feminisation. The music of successive generations of composers became progressively “emasculate”, until, arriving at the late Victorian present, cases of “decadence” were to be found (267, 226, 300). If Bennett concluded that

¹⁶ The *Magazine of Music*’s pronouncement was a reaction to the news of an all-women brass band. Paula Gillett does not consider the choir in charting how late Victorian and Edwardian musical women variously “encroach[ed] on all man’s privileges” (2000a).

¹⁷ A “slice of history” examination of advertisements placed in *The Musical Times* primarily for church choristers for the years 1900, 1891 and 1881, shows that during the last two decades of the century “wanted” notices for men choristers by far exceeded those for women; I excluded from my analysis the all-male choirs of the cathedrals, colleges and Chapels Royal. With late Victorian witness to female presence in the parish church choir in mind, this suggests that the supply of women singers was sufficient to obviate advertising, while filling the male positions became a perennial problem.

Empirical evidence for the social basis of Victorian choralism is thin, both as regards gender and “class” (see below), so any conclusions must remain tentative. A more nuanced analysis would have to take into account, amongst others, different choral spaces – church choir, choral society, ad hoc festival chorus, work choir – and regional variations.

“this branch of the art in England [was] sound”, it was only because he reclaimed the high Victorian composers as part masculine. Stainer, for one, while commonly said to incline to “sentimentalism” and “the effeminate”, was also, “in a greater degree”, a musician of “strength” who could “hit with the hammer of Thor” (302, 300-1). Besides, his feminine musical side was really only a ploy for popularity, the sentimental tunes being “those which best please[d] the ladies” (300-1, 226). Bucking the trend, Bennett appropriated the discourse of degeneracy not to pathologise Victorian church music but to argue for its healthy condition.¹⁸ Still, if the music of the church was not quite on the skids, it was, and against its feminine developments, non-progressive: that branch of the art that had “remained stationary” (735).

Throughout the nineteenth century choralism was also a space in which “class” – its politics, language, and identity – was played out. I will have more to say about this in following chapters. Here, I want to briefly explore how, again in the conflation of “reality” and representation, the choir was classed. It was in an endeavour to close that gap, to correct the remark made by a London paper that the members of the Leeds Festival chorus were “factory workers”, that an occupational analysis of the singers was undertaken:

Forty-seven of the women are married, and these have “no occupation” – that is to say, they confine themselves mainly to domestic work. In addition to these, there are 87 single women of “no occupation” – making a total of 114 who, it appears, are not compelled to labour for their living, in the usual senses of the term. Presumably, the majority of these are in fairly good social positions ... Then there are 25 school teachers and music teachers. Only 15 are described as factory workers ... 7 are classified as shop-girls. Of the 184 men, 21 are stated to be factory workers ... Shop assistants and tradesmen number 49. There are 18 teachers, 56 clerks and travelers, and 40 shop men and warehousemen (*Bradford Observer* 22 Nov. 1895).

For the Leeds chorus of 1895, then, structures of class were modulated by those of gender. The women are largely of the “middling sort”, the men are mostly from the labouring elite and lower middle class. Detailed knowledge of the class make-up of the Victorian choir is sketchy, but the Leeds case confirms the available evidence. In summing this up, Russell shows that despite its portrayal by the contemporary press and subsequent historiography as a proletarian activity, popular choralism crossed classes, taking in all levels of “respectable”

¹⁸ In an earlier essay, Bennett rejected Max Nordau’s forbidding diagnosis of “an all-pervading degeneracy”, while drawing on aspects of Nordau’s analysis (see *MT* June 1895: 367; also Jan. 1898: 9). Nordau was the infamous theoriser of fin-de-siècle aesthetic degeneracy, whose *Degeneration* was hugely popular reading when it appeared in English in 1895 (see Arata 1996: 27-32 for Nordau’s reception in England). The feminising of culture was a hallmark of analyses of degeneracy as civilisation’s decline (see, for example, Siegel 1985; and Arata 1996: chap. 1). As I said, though, while Bennett employed this strategy he did not arrive at the usual conclusion that would have made Victorian choral music degenerate. Others, including Parry, did (see *MT* Dec. 1899: 816-17).

society from the skilled working classes to the upper middle classes. Largely, though, it drew its members from the lower middle and skilled working classes, and the involvement of the haute bourgeoisie was limited to its daughters and wives (1997: chap. 10). By the turn of the century, however, Russell suggests a partial withdrawal of middle-class involvement, in part due to the decline in organised religion especially from the 1880s on, and partly as a result of class tensions in the 1890s which had re-emerged on the back of the increased organisation of labour (296; also Davey 1895: 450). In short, the real bodies of the turn-of-the-century English choir seemed to be approaching more closely their persistent representation as non-bourgeois. By this time, much of the choral repertory had been classified as “popular”. Although this by no means signified it simply as, say, working-class, it has been argued that choralism’s perceived popularity amongst, and promotion to, the lower classes did facilitate its exclusion from “classical music” (see McGuire 2002: x, 30).¹⁹

Whatever the case, the social face of the choir as female and popular has not been the face of England’s renewed music that the writers of the renaissance have put forth. Indeed, the choir was a hark-back to the music of the unmusical England, to a time when for “any *respectable* family” it was “almost an unmentionable disgrace that a taste for music should manifest itself in the case of the *male* children” (Fuller Maitland 1902: 127; my emphasis). For like the late Victorian choir, the practice of music before the renaissance, we are told, was not a space into which upper-class gentlemen generally entered. This non-practice even gained a name: “Chesterfieldism”, after the aristocrat who advised his son not to take up “fiddling” for fear of pandering to “vice and effeminacy” (*Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* 1820: 7). It was a cautionary tale that seems to have gained the status of conduct throughout much of the nineteenth century. All that the middle-class male needed to know about music was that it was largely not the done thing to do (see Leppert 1988: 22). By the end of the century, though, as Bennett charted the development or not of orchestral and choral musics respectively, he witnessed also as a “wonderful change” the demise of Chesterfieldism that had taken place among “the classes” during Victoria’s reign (1897: 11; also Hueffer 1889: 2).

¹⁹ The reported “decline” of choralism round the century’s turn, and especially the reputed middle-class defection, had its converse in the rise and “democratisation” of orchestralism. For while, in 1860, “M.” battled to account for English resistance to the newly affordable “classical music”, the “orchestral symphony or a stringed quartett” (*Macmillan’s Magazine* March 1860: 383, 387-8), by the end of the century tastes seem to have changed, and “the ordinary public” had “reached a pitch of enthusiasm” for orchestral music (Newmarch 1904: 1-14, 73).

For historians then and now Parry was the *gentleman* at the centre of that change. It was he who altered the social face of the profession from which a renaissance could be born. He did so from two positions: as a member of the upper classes and as a “man’s man”, both of which have been central in historiographic constructions of Parry “the man”. Parry’s class and gender positions are part of the same story, but if it is a fact that he was born of gentry and married into the aristocracy, his “masculinity” has been a careful construct. An article on “The Strong Man in Music” that appeared in *The Musical Times* set the trend. Part of a concerted late Victorian effort to regender music, it aimed to write the physicality of performance as athleticism.²⁰ One of the “proofs” offered for music’s “manliness” was the “credible proportion” of performers for whom “the service of art [was not] incompatible with a taste for manly and athletic pursuits”. Parry the pianist-composer provided the English evidence, his achievements in football, both rugby and soccer, cricket, swimming, and “fearless” yachting indexing a hypermasculinity (June 1895: 373-4). It is an image that has stuck from the first biographies to the latest (see *MT* July 1898: 441-8; through Benoiel 1997: 10).

And it is an image that has been central to Parry’s reception within renaissance histories, where “the music” has come to be subordinated to biography.²¹ Howes, for example, begins his chapter on Parry by issuing a methodological caveat only to summarily suspend its operation:

In an estimate of his achievements a composer’s character is a secondary concern to the critic ... but no estimate of Parry can be complete without close scrutiny of his whole make-up. His success and failure as a musician is directly explicable by other than musical factors in his life (1966: 129-30).

Foremost among these extra-musical factors are Parry’s masculine credentials, which pass from the biographical – he had a “naturally robust constitution” and was a “vigorous games player” (131-2) – to the compositional: the difference between Parry’s cantatas and those of other Victorians was their “sheer strength” and “manly quality”, their “bold, energetic and aspiring music [made] the usual festival cantata of the time look anaemic” (133, 139). Yet despite Parry’s “regeneration of English choral music”, he is ultimately, for Howes, a compositional failure. The reasons offered are the standard ones of “Teutonic predispositions” and the non-influence of the folk-song and Tudor revivals (132). But if

²⁰ See also the article “Manliness in Music” (*MT* Aug. 1889: 460-1), and for the classic account of the late Victorian cult of athleticism, Mangan (1981). The endeavour to masculinise music, and by extension the renaissance, was part of the much written about late Victorian resurgence in hegemonic masculinity (see Tosh 1994: 192-4 for an overview of the issues involved).

²¹ The first monograph biography of Parry included only a single chapter on the music (see Graves 1926).

Elgar, too, suffered from these same “constraints”, neither of which have prevented his inclusion in the renaissance, he was, recall, “primarily ... an instrumental composer” (25). Parry the composer, conversely, stood or fell by his vocal music (134). Because Parry cannot be compositionally (re)claimed his conditional inclusion in the renaissance is predicated not on his music alone but on his more general contribution to the social status of music. By the time of his death “the professional musician was accepted as a gentlemen” (133; also Trend 1985: 11; and Benoliel 1997: 34).²² In the end, the reclamation of music’s respectability, even if it has been at the expense of (choral) music itself, is catalyst enough for the renaissance. Parry’s entrance into history is the exit of his music from history.²³ It is an exit for which he helped prepare the scholarly ground.

choral music and the evolution of form

Alongside *Jerusalem*, Parry is probably best remembered for *The Evolution of the Art of Music* (1897). Part of Kegan Paul’s International Scientific Series, it announced English musicology’s intellectual coming-of-age, another of Parry’s efforts to win over “the educated classes to a belated recognition of the art of music as a part of general culture” (Howes 1966: 145). *Evolution* endeavoured to place music within world history by establishing music’s evolutionary credentials. It proceeded from “Preliminaries”, such as the “music of savages”, to “Modern Tendencies”, which had commenced with Beethoven and culminated in “the highest branches of art ... the noble symphonies of Brahms” (1897: 305). As the composer of Brahmsian symphonies Parry placed himself within the most recent developments of music’s history. Nor did he refuse choral music a place within the modern. At the time regarded equally as a choral composer, Parry included a section on the oratorio in the chapter on modern music. But for the late Victorians the choral, recall, occupied a double-time. And in the evolutionary script to which Parry wrote it was also a music of the past.²⁴

Choralism’s historic pastness, I want to suggest, was invented in the conjunction of evolutionary theory and the English reception of continental, especially German, “formalist”

²² Temperley ascribes Victorian unmusicality to middle-class emulation of the upper classes, who had long rejected music as a serious pursuit. Consequently, for Temperley, only gentlemen musicians, such as Parry, could initiate the turn-around (1999: 12-16).

²³ For Benoliel, Parry’s path to social arrival was an “ambivalent road”. While he “evol[ed] the concept of the bourgeois composer and musician ... turning, in Victorian times, a demeaning job into a gentleman’s profession ... he paid a very high price ... he almost destroyed his own creativity” (1997: 34, chap. 3).

²⁴ For the intellectual context of Parry’s historiographic work, including his idea of the evolution of music as a progress towards instrumental music, see Dibble (1999).

aesthetics. Evolutionary ideas had already been applied to aesthetic matters in the influential mid-century writings of Herbert Spencer (see, for example, 1857). And while formalist thought is said to have arrived late in England – Hanslick was only translated in 1891 – it was already shaping English aesthetics by the 1870s. The synthesis of evolutionary and formalist thought developed into the study of what its early and most lucid exponent, James Sully, called the “gradual expansion of musical form” (1874: 187). By the last decade of the century, histories such as Parry’s and everyday music criticism would popularise what till then had been largely academic matters.²⁵

Sully’s “Aspects of Beauty in Musical Form” outlined what became the founding tenets of formalist analysis: unity in diversity, symmetry, the organic whole; macro-narratives that a postmodern musicology has supposedly written against. Sully went further. Concerned to relate structural matters to the development of form, he compared the forms of Vocal Music, including choral music, with those of Instrumental Music, “with the view of discovering the relative capabilities of these two domains, in respect of the artistic beauty of musical form” (1874: 214). Instrumental music wins hands down. Sonata-form, for instance, “shows what an advance this species of structure exhibits on vocal forms”; the Sonata is “a still more complex development”; and the “sovereign” orchestral Symphony “a yet grander development of musical structures”. Sully’s conclusion was that “the most perfect realization of structural beauty and sublimity possible to music is attained by instrumental composition” (217).

Elsewhere, elaborating on Spencer’s work, Sully offered a more explicitly evolutionary account of the genesis of form. From speech, vocal forms increasingly less simple grew out of each other to eventually incorporate an instrumental component. In time, the instrumental part came to dominate the vocal form to the extent that instrumental structures freed themselves of the vocal part. This separation was a condition of music’s onward march towards ever greater complexity, for vocal forms were handicapped: words and their emotional and ideational subject matter, for example, “retarded” music’s progress towards the beauty of higher structures. In summary, “the complex music of the modern symphony appear[ed] to be a grand translation of the common vocal utterance of feeble men and women into a noble and sublime language”. This was Sully’s answer to the “hotly” debated issue of the day: “whether instrumental music, or the union of instrumental and vocal music in the opera, must be ranked first in aesthetic merit” (242-4). In the hierarchy of

²⁵ See Gatens (1986: chap. 2) and Banfield (1988b) for an overview of Victorian musical aesthetics.

forms, choral music occupied a very low rung.²⁶ Literally out of step with musical time as it was mapped out by late Victorian aesthetic theory, Victorian choralism has been written out of the story of English music that renaissance historiography has told to that time-frame.

²⁶ The influence that formalist aesthetics had on generic matters is evident from two late Victorian expositors of Hanslick. Eustace J Breakespeare's lectures on Hanslick to the Royal Musical Association asserted that Hanslick refused to consider vocal music (1883: 47; also 1880: 66). And under Hanslick's influence, Stainer concluded that "in all questions relating to the sphere of music as an art, we are compelled to appeal to the pure instrumental branch" (1892: 33-4).

Chapter 1

Religion and Science in the Mission of Music

As early as 1870, George Grove wrote a draft for what would become the story we know as the English Musical Renaissance, the familiar tale of England's musical revival. Detecting "signs" that English music was "returning to life" after being "depressed by the long and overwhelming supremacy of German and Italian influences", Grove imagined that England's "national spirit – the spirit of competition, of patriotic assertion ... was reviving ... that sufficient creative and executive talent existed within the country to revive the English school – to restore to England the lost laurel of its musical supremacy" (*Strand Musical Magazine* Feb. 1870, quoted in *MH* April 1895: 112). Grove's subject was not the revival itself, but the establishment of what was to become the Royal College of Music. First named the National Training School, the purpose of the institution was to bring the first signs of the revival to fruition, a task which historiography has claimed it duly did. For Stradling and Hughes, Grove's Royal College was "a turning-point in the history of music in England". As "the guiding beacon of the Renaissance", it gave England "a vibrant and successful musical culture of its own" (1993: 19, 22, 18).

This celebratory narrative of musical nationalism harboured a lack: the tonic sol-fa movement had been written out of the story. For the editor of *The Musical Herald*, John Spencer Curwen, Grove's excription entailed an act of intentional amnesia, an "omission" that could "scarcely be accidental".¹ For as secretary of the Crystal Palace Company, Grove "had the best possible opportunity of observing year by year, from 1857 to 1880, the quality and extent of Tonic Sol-fa work".² Just as the biography of John Curwen, the founder of tonic sol-fa, was elided from Grove's *Dictionary*, so his son, John Spencer, witnessed the exclusion of his life's work from the story of England's musical "progress":

The inference from Sir George Grove's argument is that, given the backward condition of music which he describes, the way of national musical advance is to be found in establishing and endowing a college. We have, however, pointed out that a wide-spread popular cultivation of music must go hand in hand with such work as is done at the R.C.M. if any effect is to be produced. It is this work, the foundations of which are now almost entirely laid in this country by Tonic Sol-fa teachers, that the late director of the R.C.M ignores (April 1895: 112).

¹ *The Musical Herald* was the mouthpiece of the tonic sol-fa movement. Originally called *The Tonic Sol-fa Reporter*, it changed name in 1889, and had a circulation that was second only to *The Musical Times* for most of the second half of the century.

² Against Grove's erasure stood the spectacular successes of sol-fa. Reviews of the first massed choir concert given at Crystal Palace in 1857, for example, estimated that more than 30 000 people flocked to Sydenham, the largest audience for a musical performance in the country at the time (Curwen 1891: 8-9).

Sol-fa choralism was just one of the many Victorian sacrifices on the altar of the instrumental renaissance. Its story, I begin to tell here.

tonic sol-fa as religion

In 1891 the tonic sol-fa movement celebrated its jubilee. *The Times* took the occasion to describe the notational system and pedagogic method as a “mighty force, which ha[d] almost attained the position of a religious doctrine” (quoted in *MH* Aug. 1891: 243). The analogy was not happenstance. Sol-fa’s Victorian origins lay in religious institutions and its supporters, it was frequently observed, acted with evangelical zeal in promoting it. More than this, sol-fa was packaged as a musical Truth that invested the notation-method with ethico-epistemological force.

This truth-value was constructed both “theoretically” and as a myth of historiography. Often these endeavours complemented one another, as in the first history of sol-fa.³ Told by its maker, John Curwen, the story began with an account of Curwen’s quest for music literacy:

I remember being often told that I did not mark correctly the “half-tones” ... of the scale, and I thought if those same “half-tones” were but marked plainly on the music before me, how gladly and earnestly I would strive to mark them with my voice. But, as it was, I was continually afraid of these “half-tones.” I knew that they were on the staff before me somewhere, but I could not see them. They lay *concealed*, but *dangerous* to tread upon, like a *snake* in the grass ... I longed for some plan by which these *puzzling deceivers* might be named and detected with equal facility in all their *shifting* abodes on the staff (quoted in JS Curwen 1891: 2; my emphasis).

The semi-tonal serpent lying upon the stave ready to deceive the singer recalls another story of origins. Curwen’s narrative, though, proceeds towards an epiphanic moment: upon his discovery of Sarah Glover’s Norwich system of sol-faing, on which he was to model tonic sol-fa, music was “cleared from the mystery of sharps and flats” (1):

I soon found out that the old methods of teaching had deceived me with the shell of knowledge, instead of giving me its kernel. The thing, Music, I perceived to be very different from its names and signs. I found it much more simple and easy in itself, and incomparably more beautiful than the mere explanation of the signs of the old notation ... I now saw that Miss Glover’s plan was to teach first the simple and beautiful thing music, and to delay the introduction to the ordinary antiquated mode of writing it, until the pupil had obtained a mastery of the thing in itself. Her method was, beyond all controversy, more deeply established on the principles of the science than any other ... The methods of teaching which are truest to the nature of the thing taught, and the least artificial, are always the most successful. In the course of a fortnight, I found myself, *mirabile dictu!* actually at the height of my previous ambition, being able to “make out” a psalm-tune from the notes, and to pitch it myself! It was the untying of the tongue – the opening of a new world of pleasure (2-3).

³ Sol-fa’s history has been most thoroughly documented by the historian of music education Bernarr Rainbow (see, for example, 1967: chaps. 3 and 10).

If Curwen began on safe philosophical ground, distinguishing the signifier, the “shell” notation, from the signified, the “kernel” Music, he did so only to substitute ontological access for sol-fa. Through the truthfulness of tonic sol-fa, and not by the false path of staff notation, Curwen gained access to Music. Of course, the music that he was miraculously able to read-sing was religious music, a psalm-tune.

Glover’s system itself had first been set forth in her *Scheme for Rendering Psalmody Congregational* (1835). It was part of the more general early Victorian initiative to “improve” the performance of music in churches. Curwen’s appropriation, modification and propagation of Glover’s system subscribed to the same reforming ethos. At a conference on congregational psalmody held at Hull in 1841, the Rev. John Curwen had been given a mandate to investigate ways in which to improve the singing in church. His findings appeared that year in the Congregationalist *Independent Magazine* as a course in what he named Tonic Sol-fa (1843: iii). And until lessons on the notation-method appeared in *The Popular Educator* in 1852, sol-faing was confined largely to the Sunday School classroom and temperance meeting-hall (Rainbow 1986: 39).

Admittedly, before 1840 education in Britain had been the preserve of the churches. Educational reforms at the start of the Victorian period, however, marked the beginning of state intervention in especially elementary education, and from the outset music education was part of the reform package. The Committee of Council on Education, charged with the task of overseeing the reforms, recommended as its preferred method of musical instruction John Hullah’s continentally derived fixed-doh system (see Kay-Shuttleworth, reprinted in Hullah 1841); one of several, often short-lived, notation systems invented during the nineteenth century. This excluded tonic sol-fa from state education, at least until the 1860s when it unofficially began to make inroads into elementary schools. In short, sol-fa was at first the province of organised religion, practiced specifically within Nonconformist churches (see, for example, Hueffer 1889: 20).⁴

It was, I suggest, the non-establishment nature of sol-fa’s early institutional context – external to state education and the Established Church – that provided the impetus for its later rapid spread. Having to fight for a place in musical England, sol-faists seemed to work according to the evangelical creed of Nonconformism. The reward for their labours was

⁴ The perceived relationship between sol-fa and Nonconformism was invoked by sol-fa’s detractors. Curwen complained that sol-faists were “regarded by many people as a sort of musical Pariahs, harmonic dissenters” (*TS-fR* Dec. 1876: 344). GA Mcfarren, the principal of the Royal Academy of Music, called the sol-faists a “sect”, which the polymath and sol-fa enthusiast Alexander J Ellis took to be “a word of bad odour, a word implying *dissent*” (quoted in Curwen 1883: 6).

spectacular. Curwen estimated that there were 20 000 sol-faists throughout the United Kingdom in 1856; returns from the Education Department for 1891 put the figure at over two and a half million children alone (Curwen 1891: 8, 30). Telling of this work ethic was that sol-faists often cast themselves, as they were cast by others, in the role of missionary (see, for example, *TS-fR* Aug. 1862: 326). It was an analogy that went beyond rhetoric. For as I explore below, sol-fa would take its place alongside that greatest of Victorian truths – Christianity – in the “civilising mission” at home and in the colonies.

nature, notations, intonations

An early press report on sol-fa put a different spin on its *raison d'être*, enthusing not over its educational value, but elaborating instead on the “principle of which [it was] founded”:

to show that, so far from instrumental music being indispensable to choral singing, either to the production of steadiness, or the maintenance of a proper pitch, it, in fact, prevents the development of the highest and best kind of choral and part singing in this country. Instead of trying to make the human voice seek its perfection in the imitation of the sounds produced by imperfect mechanical musical instruments, the object of the [Tonic Sol-fa] Association is to put the voice upon its own basis, and make it as available for the production of music and harmony as possible. The human voice will thus take the predominance assigned to it by nature, and instrumental music remain in its subordinate and proper position of an accompaniment to it (*Morning Herald* 7 Feb. 1855).

Here, sol-fa was to be an agent for the regeneration of choral singing, acting to return choralism to the originary and “natural” position of preeminence that it held prior to the ascendance of an artificial instrumentalism. Sol-fa’s special relation to choralism was constructed through a recurring appeal to nature.

The architect of this project was none other than John Curwen, preacher turned amateur music theorist, his aim to provide sol-fa with a “scientific” credibility that would complement its pedagogic claims. Curwen’s fullest theoretical statement was written in *Musical Statics*, a compendium of nineteenth-century European theoretical commonplaces with a few idiosyncratic applications to the new notation. Defining “statics” as teaching “those truths in music which arise from the great [“unchangeable and indubitable”] laws of nature” (1898 [c. 1874]: ii), Curwen grounded his arguments in theory’s standard claim that music’s truthfulness resided in its approximation to nature (see Clark and Rehding 2000: 1-2).

Sol-fa’s choralism, and its truth as natural, were worked out primarily in the terrain of intonation. The leading Victorian acoustician Alexander J Ellis, for example, summarised nineteenth-century knowledge on intonation in his *History of Musical Pitch*: just intonation was given primacy in terms of antiquity, while equal temperament became prevalent only

after the mid-nineteenth century, and then only in the piano; at the Great Exhibition of 1851 no English organs, for example, were tuned in it (1880: 294). This progressive tempering of instruments stood in contrast to “unaccompanied singers (especially the Tonic Sol-faists) [who] naturally s[a]ng in just intonation” (302).

The idea of both just intonation and vocal music as natural found its most complete elaboration in Hermann von Helmholtz’s magnum opus, *On the Sensations of Tones* (1863), translated by Ellis, and much cited by Curwen.⁵ In Helmholtz’s formulation, just intonation was the “natural intonation”, its “vast superiority ... over the equal temperament”, moreover, a fiat of aesthetic listening (1885: 317-18):

As regards musical effect, the difference between the just and the equally tempered, or the just and the Pythagorean intonations, is very remarkable. The justly-intoned chords ... possess a full and as it were saturated harmoniousness; they flow on, with a full stream, calm and smooth, without tremor or beat. Equally tempered or Pythagorean chords sound beside them rough, dull, trembling, restless. The difference is so marked that every one, whether he is musically cultivated or not, observes it at once (319).

These judgements were mapped onto musical media. Where the intervals of vocal music were “perfect”, every note on the tempered pianoforte sounded “false and disturbing” (320, 323). Finally, the mind’s ear was brought into the equation: “The only intervals which singers can strike with certainty and perfection, are such as they can comprehend with certainty and perfection, and what the singer easily and naturally sings the hearer will also easily and naturally understand” (325). Helmholtz’s point was that the voice, as the natural instrument, sang justly, because the ear was naturally attuned to just intonation. But the natural voice was not necessarily eternally pristine. In the modern world few singers were able to sing in just intonation because of the ubiquitous piano and its obligatory role as training partner; the equal-tempered piano had corrupted true pitching. Helmholtz’s fallen singer, however, was reserved for the professional, and as a contemporary instance of just singing he cited “unpracticed”, a cappella part-singers (326).

Curwen’s discussion of intonation was yet more dogmatic. The longest chapter in *Musical Statics*, “True Intonation Versus Temperament”, was organised as the “conflict between Art and Nature”. The tempered, or altered, scale was signified as a “revolt” against “what [was] true – true to the instincts of human nature, and true to the principles of science”. It was built into the artifice of the mechanical piano. Nature, by contrast, was represented by the Jubilee Singers, the African-American voices who were a hit in late-nineteenth-century Britain, and who “naturally used true intonation” (1898: 82). While the

⁵ For a brief overview of Helmholtz’s work, including his advocacy of just intonation, see Green and Butler (2001: 257-62).

projection of the black voice onto what Anne McClintock has called “anachronistic space” (1995: 40-1) was a typical move of early ethnomusicological writings, the positive spin Curwen put on it is somewhat unusual.⁶ Curwen, and sol-fa apologists after him, then, were quick to appropriate theory’s claims for the superiority of just intonation singing because it constituted evidence for their claims of the superiority of sol-fa choralism.

Theorists, in turn, held sol-fa choralism as a latter-day incarnation of true singing, and employed it in support of theory. It was after a visit to London in 1864, for example, where he first heard of the notation and heard a sol-fa choir in performance, that Helmholtz added an appendix to *On the Sensations* on “Just Intonation in Singing”. Emphasising that sol-faists learnt without instrumental accompaniment, “follow[ing] their ear alone”, he found that they were “in perfect unison” with an experimental “enharmonic organ” tuned in just intonation (1885: 423, 427). The example of the sol-faists was offered as justification for his theoretical hypotheses: “[a]fter this experience ... no doubt can remain, if ever any doubt exists, that *the [just] intervals which have been theoretically determined in [On the Sensations], and there called natural, are really natural for uncorrupted ears*” (428).⁷

Sol-fa resonated with the arguments of music theory as much in its own theory of notation. Recall that from the outset Curwen had argued against the ambiguity of the signs of staff notation. If sharps and flats, the most visible markers of the semi-tone, were “imperfect” signifiers of the equal-tempered semi-tone, then the staff failed hopelessly in representing the tonal complexity of just intonation, homogenising its three types of “part-tones” or “steps” into the single semi-tone (Curwen 1843: 37). In general, a single note on the staff represented several tones which differed slightly according to key. In sol-fa, by contrast, each letter-note had a “definite, exact meaning” (*MH* March 1891: 86). Curwen achieved this by elaborating Glover’s basic set of letter names into a quite complex system which somewhat defeated the simplicity objective of sol-fa. Taking the key of C Major, for example, the leading-note of the dominant major was labelled “fe”, while the sharpened sixth of the relative minor “bay” or “bah”, a distinction not possible in staff notation with its dual purpose f sharp; nor of course on the equal-tempered piano. The supertonic’s variability for the sake of just intervals – “bright” fifths and “sweet” thirds – was similarly noted: “ray”,

⁶ Sol-fa’s theoretical appeal to the atavistic was contradictory. On the one hand, the truth-value of the voice and just intonation were placed partially in their ancientness. On the other, the modern diatonic major scale was valued above earlier modal and folk tonalities (see below).

⁷ In a treatise on just intonation, partially subtitled the “Abolition of Temperament”, Thomas Perronet Thompson likewise cited tonic sol-fa choirs as contemporary evidence of the naturalness of just singing, which offered “stout resistance” to the “fraud” of temperament (1860: ii; and *TS-fR* Sep. 1856: 165). Sol-faists equally embraced Thompson’s pronouncements.

normally notated simply “r”, when flattened by a komma became “rah” or “r’” and “ray” correctly written then gained the adjacent acute accent, “r’” (Curwen 1879: 7) – see figure 2. It is hardly surprising that the value of the tonic sol-fa gamut lay not in its application to vocal practice but in Curwen’s attempts to ally the notation to just intonation.⁸

xi

THE EXTENDED MODULATOR.

DOH = Gb	D ^b	A ^b	F ^b	B ^b	F	C	G	D	A	E	B	F#
Lah = E ^b	R ^b	F	G	G	D	A	E	B	F#	C#	G#	D#
so	ba	t	m	l	D ¹	r ¹	D ¹	s	d ¹	f		so
s	d ¹	f			b		#	ba	t	m	l	r
					so						r ¹	s
ba	t	m	l	r	S	C ¹	DOH ¹	C ¹	f			so
f					so							ba
					ba	B	THE	B	m	l	r	s
					b	ta	lo	#				d
m	l	r	s	d	f				so		ba	t
											t ₁	m
						A	LAH	A	r	s	d	f
r	s	d	f			b	la	#				
r ¹					so						ba	t
											m	l
						G	SOH	G	d	f		
						b					so ₁	
ba	t	m	l	r	r ¹							s ₁
d	f				so ₁		ba	f _o	#	t ₁	m	l
											r ¹	s ₁
t ₁	m	l	r	s	d	F	FAH	F				d
											so ₁	
						E	ME	E	l	r	s	d
						b	ma				ba ₁	t ₁
l ₁	r	s	d	f			ro	#	so ₁			m ₁
											t ₁	l ₁
						D	RAY	D	s	d	f	
so ₁						b	ra					so ₁
							de	#	ba ₁	t ₁	m ₁	l ₁
s ₁	d	f			so ₁						r ¹	s ₁
ba ₁	t ₁	m ₁	l ₁	r ₁	s ₁	C	DOH	C	f ₁			so ₁
												ba ₁
f ₁					so ₁	B ₁	t ₁	B ₁	m ₁	l ₁	r ₁	s ₁
					ba ₁						s ₁	d ₁
											f ₁	

Figure 2. The “extended modulator”, or tonic sol-fa gamut. John Curwen, *The Standard Course* (1896, 12th ed.).

⁸ A New York correspondent to *The Herald*, for example, complained that sol-fa publication practice ignored the subtleties of the notation. The editor replied that the “voice, especially when singing in harmony, naturally tune[d] itself to just intonation”, and that the “mass of singers [were] not theorists, and d[id] not want too many directions” (March 1891: 86-7).

Even if the theoretically correct pitch names were ignored in practice, the method of instruction practiced by sol-faists pointed to the notation-method's relation to true intonation. For pedagogy was written into the very name of the notation-method – *tonic* sol-fa.

Distinguishing it from other sol-fa notations, the name emphasised that what was most important for the sight-singer was her ability to relate each note to the tonic.⁹ Amongst other things, sol-fa's relational tonicity had ramifications for the notation of modulation. This was clearly sign-posted by a simultaneous change in notation indicated by a "bridge-note" – ^sd, for example, signifying a dominant modulation – with the new tonic again called "doh".

Helmholtz commented on the significance of this for pitching just intervals:

Since the intervals of the natural major scale are transferred to each new tonic as it arises in the course of modulation, all keys are performed without tempering the intervals. That in the modulation from *C* major to *G* major, the *Mi* (or b_1) of the second scale answers precisely to the *Ti* [or *b*] of the first is not indicated in the notation ... Hence the pupil has no inducement to confuse *a* with a_1 (1885: 425).

In staff notation, by contrast, localised modulation is often not represented by a change of key signature, so that the *b*, to use Helmholtz's example, is equated with the b_1 , a condition not conducive to a reflexive just singing.

Sol-fa's premise on relationality brought into play also the issue of "pitch", a further binary along which notations and intonations became theoretically differentiated. In advocating sol-fa, for example, Helmholtz condemned the "ordinary notation" because it gave "nothing but absolute pitch, and that too only for tempered notation" (1885: 426). The other camp saw matters differently. Staff notationists took the attainment of absolute pitch, and not merely its representation, to be the crucial issue, and commonly held that sol-fa "ruined" the sense of absolute pitch (Stainer, quoted in Curwen 1883: 11). A high-profile debate on the matter was argued in the press in 1882 between the principal of the Royal Academy of Music, GA Macfarren, and Ellis. In an otherwise considered and lengthy letter protesting the use of sol-fa in government schools, Macfarren wrote vaguely of sol-fa "hinder[ing] the acquisition of a sense of pitch ... a most valuable quality for musicians" (quoted in Curwen 1883: 28, 2). Ellis read "pitch" as referring to absolute pitch and dismissed its relevance for musicians while questioning the success with which it could be learnt. Relative pitch, on the other hand, was a "more valuable quality for musicians" and

⁹ The idea proceeded from cognitive theory, which held that each tone in the scale, because of its relative position, produced a unique "mental effect" on the singer-listener. Sol-faists elaborated the insight into a pedagogic method also called the "mental effects". Each note within the scale was identified by an emotional association, which the singer could recall as an aid in pitching the note. The sol-fa syllables were thus "mnemonics of tonal mental effect" (see, for example, Curwen 1898 [c.1874]: 10-11; and Evans and McNaught c.1900 [1889]: 11-14, 118).

more readily taught. Having exchanged the terms of the debate, Ellis reversed Macfarren's charge, suggesting that staff notation and tempered instruments "destroy[ed] the sense of key-relationship, and hence of relative pitch". The "glory" of sol-fa was that it gave a sense of relative pitch (2).

nature, notation, modality

From the Enlightenment and throughout the nineteenth century the minor mode constituted something of an aporia for music theory. Its refusal to be easily incorporated into the dominant explanatory systems resulted in a variety of often fabulous theses in the endeavour to trace its origins to nature. Their combined effect was to figure the mode as secondary, "inferior" and less natural, to the major.¹⁰ For sol-faists, the minor mode proved similarly problematic. Tracts were written on the problem, and it became an almost obligatory point in every general attack on the notation. The dispute seemed to turn on the manner in which the minor mode was notated.

In sol-fa terminology the "doh mode" was the major mode and the "lah mode" the minor. Indicating key, however, was not as self-evident. A work in G major, for example, was indicated simply as "Key G", but its relative minor as "Key G, *L* is E", that is, for the key of G Major the lah mode was E minor. The terminological distinction between key and mode, and the minor's representation by the formula "Key *x*, *L* is the-relative-minor-of-*x*" went to the heart of the matter. In a polemical lecture given at the Association of Tonic Sol-fa Choirs on 26 February 1887, the theorist Sedley Taylor reiterated a long-held objection to sol-fa convention:

The *lah*-notation refers the sounds of the Minor phrase, not to their own tonic as key-note, but to the tonic of a Major scale a Minor Third higher up; it thus treats Minor scales as mere subordinate adjuncts of certain corresponding Major scales, and consistently with the behaviour, assigns to Major phrases an exclusive property in the term "key", and orders Minor ones to describe themselves as "modes" (1887: 7).

The sol-fa practice of attributing key to the major and mere mode to the minor originated in the not uncommon belief that the minor could not "stand alone" like the major, it was "not so independent and satisfactory" (Curwen 1879: 46).¹¹ As evidence for the assertion

¹⁰ The derivation of the minor triad and mode from nature proved problematic for theorists of "harmonic monism" from Rameau through Schenker (Cook 2001: 89; and Klumpenhouwer 2001: 459).

¹¹ The hierarchical position that major and minor occupied in sol-fa theory was naturalised by inscribing them in the gendered relations of Victorian domesticity: the minor was to the major as "the wife *lah*" was to "the husband *doh*" (*TS-fR* March 1855: 18).

compositional practice was cited: the minor “does not dominate in a tune as the major does, but passes continually into its relative major” (*TS-fR* 15 July 1870: 40).¹²

It was probably Curwen’s familiarity with hymnody and, given its provenance in religion, his belief in its moral-aesthetic superiority that accounted for his assertion that the minor mode had no repertoire of its own.¹³ Not only was there a relative dearth of minor tunes before the mid-Victorian era, but the conventional appearance of the minor in tunes was circumscribed, confined largely to modulation, or most commonly mode mutation, within the short few-barred phrase. By the end of the hymn, the tune tended to return to the major tonic key.¹⁴ Taking this as the norm, Curwen could thus question the minor’s independence. It was of course a position easily refuted. A certain Dr Merrick, for one, defended the minor mode’s ability to “sustain ... a composer in his longest periods of musical eloquence” (*MH* Feb. 1893: 51). Like the debate on sol-fa and intonation, the debate on sol-fa and mode turned on performance medium. In reply, the music educationalist WG McNaught noted that all Merrick’s illustrations of the minor’s autonomy were drawn from “classical instrumental music ... none were from popular music”. The evidence of vocal music in the minor, moreover, was tainted: minor-mode hymn-tunes were more often than not properly sung by the congregation only with the aid of instrumental accompaniment. In short, where “twelve instances could be found one way”, of popular tunes in the minor, “twelve thousand could be found the other way” (51). The true vocal popular tune was major; or major music was vocal and popular, and therefore true and natural. If the minor, conversely, was artificial, it was a fact supported by its prevalence in instrumental music.

Naturalising the major, though, was a task better accomplished by theory than by appeals to repertoire. It was a task crucial to the argument for sol-fa’s universality. For sol-fa’s truth was established through other truths, and the major scale, like just intonation, was one of these. If the mode’s naturalness was, as I mentioned above, signified in sol-fa’s notation of key and mode, in which the minor mode was a dependant of the relative major key, it was a relationship that in turn was dependant on theory’s construction of the diatonic major scale from nature. The explanatory phenomenon by which the major scale had

¹² Here, too, Curwen could appeal to the authority of Helmholtz, who cited the predominance of major-mode works in popular and classical repertoires in support of the inferiority of the minor (see Green and Butler 2001: 261).

¹³ In Curwen’s manual, *How to Observe Harmony* (1889 [1861]), the examples are predominantly drawn from chants and hymns.

¹⁴ I base this claim on an analysis of the mid- and late Victorian tunes of John Bacchus Dykes, found most commonly in the Victorian editions of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, whose use of the minor mode was considered aberrant by contemporary hymn-tune criticism.

traditionally been found to reside in nature was, of course, the harmonic series, and Curwen readily invoked it to account for the naturalness of the major (see, for example, *TS-fR* 1853-54: 81).¹⁵

The universality of the major scale, or “common scale” as Curwen termed it, was written in an article titled “The Musical Scale of All Nations and of All Times”. Appearing in a popular periodical subtitled “Magazine of Vocal Music for the People”, which at the time consisted almost entirely of music in sol-fa and courses of instruction in the notation, the high-flown piece of tonal theory seems bizarrely misplaced. It demonstrates the urgency with which Curwen endeavoured to reinscribe the naturalness of the major as the naturalness of sol-fa itself. He thus offered a rejoinder to those who proposed that the major scale was “of human invention”:

how is it that every newly discovered nation is found either using it (if they are musical at all) or possess of ears which readily approve of it? How is it that the Chinese or Indians have not “invented” some other scale? The truth is, – some of these nations do omit a note or two, but they do not alter the rest; and, when the question is fairly examined, it is found the omissions were caused by their rude and incomplete instruments rather than by defective ears (*TS-fR* 1853-54: 81).¹⁶

Near the end of the century, John Spencer Curwen was still peddling more of the same in the name of a major defined sol-fa when he denounced as “a very questionable hypothesis” John Stainer’s reference to the arbitrariness of the major scale (*MH* Nov. 1892: 336).

Suzannah Clark and Alexander Rehding have written that nature in music theory imposes authority, but an image of authority that always reflects its age (2000: 2). The theoretical project to universalise sol-fa, I want to suggest, speaks also of its universalising imperialist intentions: to displace the “old” staff notation in the metropolis, to become the new notation to those without any throughout the Empire. In the latter endeavour sol-fa’s truth, as I mentioned, complemented that of Christianity which it accompanied with the foreign mission, a relationship highlighted in an event commemorating the jubilee of the notation-method’s invention. In a quasi-religious pilgrimage made by sol-faists to John Curwen’s grave, one speaker reported on sol-fa’s work in the eastern Cape missions of South Africa and another on the notation’s theoretical universality. For the former, the Rev. J Knaggs took as the example of Curwen’s “ministry of music” the presence of sol-fa in all the

¹⁵ In Helmholtz’s Ramellian influenced harmonic theory, the major triad’s superiority over the minor was attributed to its closer approximation to the harmonic series (see Green and Butler 2001: 259-62).

¹⁶ Scalar anomalies closer to home, such as the “ancient modes” of Scotland’s “wild and lovely national melodies”, were similarly “contained” in the “one scale of nature”, the major scale (*TS-fR* Oct. 1859: 151; and April 1860: 236). As in Curwen’s analysis above, modal deficiencies were attributed to an instrumental lack and not to the universalised human ear.

mission stations Knaggs had visited on a recent trip to the Cape, where “Kaffirs and Zulus easily and readily learnt it, and delighted in singing” (*MH* Aug. 1891: 231). TF Seward then praised Curwen for “transform[ing] the art of music” by furnishing it with “a system of rational interpretation for all the deeper and higher laws of the art”. Curwen, the church father, was eulogised as “the father of Universal Song” (232).

sol-fa’s mission to the Cape

It was in the name of universalising that a missionary on duty in Africa wrote home to the father of the sol-fa mission. The churchman requested Curwen’s intercession with the Heavenly Father to guide him in introducing sol-fa to “the Africans” (*TS-fR* Dec. 1859: 190). Just one instance of an enterprise on the verge of going global as it tracked the spread of Empire, sol-fa dispersed “throughout the world, as an aid to missionary labour” during the 1850s (Jan. 1859: 4). Back at home, the unbridled expansionism was creating a “great problem”. As sol-fa found itself increasingly drawn into the sacred economy of mission, demand had begun to outstrip supply. Ever up to the challenge, Curwen had a contingency plan: “to supply every missionary with one copy of the ‘Standard Course,’ one of the medium-sized ‘Modulator,’ six each of the ‘Standard Course Exercises’”, and yet still more sol-fa literature. The initial target was two thousand missionaries and fund-raising efforts had got under way (4). By the end of the century, the institutional marriage between sol-fa and the foreign mission had become “history”; missionaries, noted Henry Davey in his *History of English Music*, had “taught it to savage tribes in all quarters of the world” (1895: 453).

The details of who courted whom, and when precisely they did so, are not as important here as the context of religion that the parties shared. Thus, when mission society training institutions placed sol-fa on their curricula in the early 1860s, the partnership was formalised, and a long and productive relationship ensued (see *TS-fR* Oct. 1863: 139; Curwen 1891: 28). Neither was the partnership ever taken as a *fait accompli*, sol-faists seeking always to maintain and extend their privilege, as they did later in the sphere of elementary education. Consider, for example, sol-fa’s expansionist “ministry of music”, which, amongst other things, planned to “send forth teachers to carry on the work already begun in the colonies, in the mission-field” (*TS-fR* July 1878: 149). The flow of reports from the colonies, particularly from the mission, that appeared as “intelligence” in *The Musical*

Herald as the end of the century approached, registered the triumphant story of sol-fa as imperial culture.¹⁷

It is well known that sol-fa arrived in South African with the “missionary” Christopher Birkett in 1855 (see n.d. [1871]: preface).¹⁸ And it is common cause that a century and a half later the entrenchment of sol-fa as black music literacy has become an abiding “problem”, at least for South African music educationalists. It is somewhat less well known that shortly after Birkett’s famous “introduction” in the eastern Cape, sol-fa arrived in the western Cape, via the activities of Capetonian John Henry Ashley in the late 1860s, and that this kick-started a Cape equivalent of the mid-Victorian “sight-singing mania” (see Bouws n.d. [1972]: chap. 7). Both of these initiatives occurred long before the involvement of the Cape government in music education, and divided largely, though not entirely, along the lines of race: sol-fa for blacks in the east of the Colony and for whites in the west.¹⁹

Charting a detailed history of sol-fa’s life in the nineteenth-century eastern Cape is an almost impossible task. There are too many paths of itinerant teacher-missionaries like Birkett to follow, too many missions that left too few extant traces. Before the intervention of the Cape education authorities in the early 1890s there was no uniform music education policy in the Colony, a laissez-faire state that has left only partial records. However, a thumbnail sketch would look like this: by the mid-1860s sol-fa was sufficiently established

¹⁷ We know that the rhetoric of Empire was duplicitous, its bravura speaking equally of failings and fears at home; a state of the nation known as “social imperialism”, by which the successes of the “imperial race” on the world’s stage were marshalled in the cause of unifying an increasingly fractured nation (see, for example, Coombes 1994: 190). By the same turn, the metropolitan discourse on “the world-wide extension of the Tonic Sol-fa system” (*MH Sep.* 1893: 272) occurred at the time when its dominance in England, in both the choral society and elementary education, was being increasingly contested (see chap. 3). The example of, say, the Cape Colony’s sol-fa-ing was both vindication and compensation. The reportage in the metropolitan music press on the fortunes of sol-fa in South Africa was so extensive that in an unpublished paper Robin S Stevens (2001) has managed to construct a reasonably complete picture of sol-fa’s early history in the Cape Colony from these sources alone.

¹⁸ Sol-fa’s first South African evangelist was no minister missionary but *Mr* Birkett, a teacher. Nor was his a sol-fa calling, but happenstance knowledge. When Birkett attended teacher training college in London sometime round 1850, sol-fa was still “a tremendous heresy” and he learnt it “unofficially” at night from a sol-faist (*MH Sep.* 1894: 263). As so often in the early life of sol-fa it was individual enthusiasts, working outside the establishment, who gave impetus to the movement. We do not know if Birkett left England to enlist specifically for the mission cause, but the first reports of his activities in the settler town of Grahamstown tell of his work with both black and white singers; he devoted twice the time and attention to his “European” classes (*GTJ* 4 Sep. and 15 Oct. 1863). This was no missioning in the heart of darkness. True, Birkett did soon leave Grahamstown for remoter parts of the eastern Cape to teach, amongst other places, at mission stations. But the reasons for his departure, as I suggest in chapter three, had as much to do with a will to musical evangelising, as with obstructionist metropolitan practices replayed in the Colony.

¹⁹ For now, I note this mainly to emphasise that any analysis of the South African historical scene must take cognisance of regional differences. My gaze is directed only on the eastern Cape Colony, specifically the Lovedale Mission Institution.

for the London-based Tonic Sol-fa Agency to publish music in “Kaffir” (Jackson’s *Te Deum* and “God Save the Queen” were amongst the items);²⁰ a decade later, a Rev. Davis from Queenstown in the eastern Cape reported that the “Sol-fa notation ha[d] been very generally adopted among [“the natives”]”; and, by the time of the sol-fa jubilee, a programme for the celebrations in Grahamstown in 1892 claimed that it was “universal amongst the natives” (*TS-fR* March 1865: 46; April 1875: 127; *Programme of the Tonic Sol-fa Jubilee*). In short, during the second half of the nineteenth century sol-fa was taken up rapidly by black singers throughout the eastern Cape missions – “like ducks to water” as the early ethnomusicologist Percival R Kirby put it (1934a: 134). So far I have spun a sort of “structural” web for the South African embrace of sol-fa choralism. Its universalising claims, as imperial culture and musico-religious truth, and its institutional connections with religion created a context that the eastern Cape mission was unlikely to have escaped. But there are also other, more mundane, reasons.

singing the Word

One of the central stories of South Africa’s musical past is the myth of Ntsikana Gaba (d. c.1821), “the first Christian convert among the Kaffirs” and also the first black “composer” (Bokwe n.d. [1904]: 8). In an early biography of Ntsikana by John Knox Bokwe, Ntsikana’s story was *The Story of an African Hymn*.²¹ Xhosa Christianity, from the first, was associated with music. Indeed, it emerged *in* song, for the hymns and the conversion are inseparable in this tale of origins. I pick up the story just prior to the *moment critique*. Ntsikana had been invited to “a great dance in a neighbouring kraal”, but each time he attempted to join in the traditional dance songs a violent wind picked up preventing him from doing so. This

²⁰ A note on terminology. Until about 1900, “kaffir”, and its variant spellings, did not index “race”, but an identity construed vaguely in terms of what is now called “ethnicity”. Typically, it interpolated Xhosa-speakers. The linguist John W Appleyard glossed the term as such in his early Xhosa grammar: the word in “its largest application is usually confined to the tribes dwelling beyond the Eastern frontier of the Cape Colony ... Amongst themselves, they are all distinguished by their own respective epithets, according to their several nations, tribes, and families. In most parts of the Colony, as well as in many recent works of travel, the term Kafir is frequently restricted to one of the above mentioned tribes, namely, the Amaxosa” (1850: 1). More than half a century later, the South African Native Affairs Commission of 1903-5 named its objects of inquiry, the “Natives inhabiting the eastern portion of the Colony today”, as “the Kafirs” (1905: 3). Hence the title change of the Lovedale paper in 1876, from *The Kaffir Express* to *The Christian Express*, signified not a miraculous wave of conversions but the paper’s growing influence as it spoke to and about the South African mission in general, rather than for Xhosa-speakers of the eastern Cape (see *KE* Dec. 1875: 1).

²¹ Bokwe’s first writing of the Ntsikana myth was serialised in *The Christian Express* between October 1878 and May 1879. In 1904 the story appeared as a pamphlet, which was elaborated into book form in 1914. My account draws on Bokwe’s narratives. For a reading of other readings of Ntsikana’s life and works, and their relation to colonial and nationalist discourses, see Erlmann (1999: chap. 5). Janet Hodgson’s (1980) work on Ntsikana has focussed on the verbal texts of the hymns, and Dave Dargie’s (1982) on the music.

happened three times. Ntsikana then left the celebrations, and while on his way home stopped at a stream to wash “the heathen clay from his body”. Next morning, his mystical conversion was confirmed when he “was heard to sing a chant, and to make his first statement on the Christian religion” (1904: 19-20; 1914: 9, 12-13). Perhaps none of this should surprise. As the ethnographic work on “traditional” Xhosa musicking stresses, Xhosa ritual is shot through with music, specifically song.

So was the Nonconformist mission. The modern evangelical movement in Britain was an offshoot of eighteenth-century Dissent, of which the Methodists are the best known example. One distinguishing feature of early Methodism was its singing, an association that became a Victorian commonplace: “the Methodists, with their hymns and their singing, burst like heralds of a new life. Crowds were drawn to the services simply by the irresistible charm of the music. To sing hymns was to be a Methodist”. More than this, “in the process of religious awakening, hymn-singing came before preaching, or even the reading of the Word. It was the hymns that were used to break the new soil” (Curwen 1888: 51).²² The evangelising power of song was quickly noted by the “opposition”. As the Anglican Rev. Vincent asserted near the end of the eighteenth century: “for one who has been drawn away from the Established Church by preaching, ten have been induced by music” (quoted in Curwen 1888: 62). Taking a leaf from the Dissent book, it was the Evangelical branch of the Established Church which introduced hymning into Anglican services in the early nineteenth century, in part to entice congregations back (see Bradley 1997: 14-15). My point: a history of musical Christianising shaped the world of Victorian evangelism, a legacy nowhere more spectacularly enacted than in late Victorian revivalism, in the mass meetings of Moody and the singing Sankey, in the *modus operandi* of the Salvation Army.²³

The foreign mission was of course evangelism globalised; nowhere, no-one was exempt from the gospel’s message. But as Jean and John Comaroff have shown for the southern African situation, the locals were not always overly receptive to “the Word” (see esp. 1997: chap. 2). At the Lovedale Mission Institution in the eastern Cape, for example, the discourse of “failure” extended well into the last decade of the nineteenth century. It was a concern that prompted the publication of the *Lovedale Register*, a compilation of the subsequent histories of Lovedale’s students “past and present”. Distributed to the press,

²² Nonconformist missionaries in the Cape repeated the tale of their origins: “Methodism was builded [sic] rapidly; but the walls never would have gone up so fast had they not been built to music” (*CE* May 1878: 13).

²³ The press, including the non-music and colonial press, often attributed the agentive power of the Moody and Sankey duo to the latter’s songs. Lovedale’s *Kaffir Express* remarked on “several instances [that] have come to light in which the truth sung by Mr. Sankey has been the means of singing souls for Christ” (March 1874: 6).

missions, and parliament in the face of declining funding, it spoke overwhelmingly of achievement; “relapses into heathenism” were not more than one percent, MPs were assured (Stewart 1887: 536). But the “trophies”, a mere 2 000 saved souls in thirty years, represented a very poor harvest from a potential field of millions. It was this reality that spurred the missionaries to ever more novel techniques of conversion (Comaroffs 1991: 231). The Comaroffs suggest that singing the gospel was one of them. It was, as we have seen however, an old, well-tested method.

In fact, one that united the Empire’s missions. In England, *The Tonic Sol-fa Reporter* quoted a missionary from India who suggested it would “amply repay the societies if they were to send out musical missionaries, who should sing and teach singing” (March 1875: 84). While in the Cape, *The Christian Express* headlined news of the Indian Kurrarpucker Singing Society: “an interesting example of spontaneous effort on the part of native Christians ... which shows that in the case of races which have the natural gift of music, singing the Gospel may be the most feasible way of spreading it” (July 1876: 10). When Lovedale unveiled a “scheme” for “Work Among The Heathen”, singing was accordingly among the strategies of conversion, and the scheme became at times “more a service of song” than anything else (*CE* Feb. 1877: 1-2). The missionary’s music, it would appear, enchanted as other acts of evangelising failed to impress. Indeed, music, especially singing, came to feature prominently in the foreign mission’s programme for conversion. In a tribute to Methodism’s centenary in South Africa, the Rev. JW Househam called song “a glorious handmaid to a glorious Gospel” (1923: 54). Music’s place in the mission, though, was more than a function of metropolitan praxis, and it would have come, if not quite to naught, to much less than it did in the contact zone were it not for felicitous prevailing conditions. For group singing, no less than spirituality, was not only the preserve of the mission. It existed already in the Cape.

musicalising race: a discourse of alterities

There are numerous refrains in the colonial discourse on black South Africa. Black musicality is one.²⁴ For all the early ethnographer’s revulsion at black musical practices, he could not but help note the sheer amount of musicking in the Cape. At times, so it came to

²⁴ This is not to be confused with what Klaus Wachsmann called “the Western fantasy about African rhythm” (1969: 187), a more limited construction of musical otherness that has been roundly critiqued, most famously by Kofi Agawu (1995). For a discussion of the black musicality trope in ante-bellum America, see Radano (1996: 510).

seem, only the limits of human endurance could put pay to “primitive” singing and dancing (see Wallaschek 1893: 231-2). In the logic of nineteenth-century biological racism, quantity was quality, and blacks became innately musical. To sample only notable literary opinion on black choralism: a whirlwind tour of the eastern Cape missions convinced Anthony Trollope that the “singing of hymns [was] a thoroughly Kafir accomplishment” (1973 [1878]: 169); and for the colonial poet Francis Carey Slater, reflecting back on his childhood at Lovedale, the “Natives” were “*born choristers*” (1954: 85; my emphasis). The trope of black musicality, as these examples show, continued from the last quarter of the nineteenth century on when white writers more typically encountered mission station choralism.

Like all colonial myths of alterity black musicality had its “other” back home, in the “deplorably unmusical” Englishman. John Spencer Curwen testified to a pan-Victorian problem when he spoke of the Englishman’s singing “*vis inertiae*”: “the majority of the men stand silent [in church], and we must charitably suppose them to be making melody in their hearts” (1888: 329, 321).²⁵ Bred on this counter-myth, the English middle-class male must have found the singing black converts different, musical. Thus, as a matter for not irregular refute, the mission put out public disclaimers that their students did not spend all their time singing hymns.²⁶

Importantly, the portability of the trope – from precolonial through to mission musicking – also marked black musicality’s autonomy from “music”, from a specific repertory of song. While early travellers were busy observing, or recounting others’ observations of, all-night singathons, the singers were curiously said to have no music. Quite late, *The Kaffir Express* restated the myth: “The Kaffirs do not appear to have had any airs of *their own*” (Aug. 1874: 1; my emphasis). The basis of the claim was that a land without any music was fair game for the musical colonist (see Pratt 1992: 52 for the application of this argument to colonialism in general). So when Lovedale’s singing evangelists ventured into “heathen kraals”, it was with the conviction that the people “have no music of any kind”, that the missionaries were giving music *per se* along with the Word (*CE* Feb. 1877: 1). Less nefarious, the myth was also simply an all-too-common instance of cultural miscomprehension. When “K.”, in an article on “Native Literature”, wrote that there was “*no heathen literature*, no records of past events or thoughts”, but added that there were “oral

²⁵ For pre- and early Victorian statements of the myth, see La Trobe (1831: 403), Druitt (1845: 22), *Parish Choir* (April 1847: 127) and Pears (1852: 21-2).

²⁶ The Lovedale principal, James Stewart, thought it sufficiently important to footnote in his *magnum opus* that travellers “erroneously supposed that hymn-singing form[ed] a large part of daily instruction and occupation” (1906: 251-2).

traditions already waxed dim enough, and ... a folklore that has never been gathered", he was not being inconsistent (*CE* Dec. 1877: 2). Literature, for "K.", entailed the written word; note its shared etymology with literacy. With music too. The drive to get converts to read music, then, would finally give them music (see chap. 2).

The idea of a land, a "race", without music was not a uniquely colonising *trompe l'oreille*. Victorian England, lest we forgot, had suffered the same discursive violence. And certainly some of the arguments offered for constructing "the Colony without music" have a sense of metropolitan *déjà vu* about them. The claim, for instance, that a "want of airs of their own must have been due to the want of inventiveness" (*KE* Aug. 1874: 1), repeated a stock idea in the Victorian self-analysis of their own "das Land ohne Musik" status. As I explored in the introduction, England's musical lack was a compositional lack, in part because the "great curse" of the Victorian composer was that "he would not dare to invent anything" (Davey 1895: 496-7).

Creativity was also gendered in Victorian Britain. When in the late nineteenth century, for example, answers were sought for "woman's" apparent failure as composer – her "musical barrenness" in *The Musical Times*' apt phrase (Oct. 1882: 521) – a standard claim was her lack of inventiveness, a function no less of physiology, of "the inferiority of woman to man in the cerebral sub-stratum of ideo-motor energy" (*The Lancet* 14 May 1892: 1097; also Praeger, quoted in Stratton 1883: 134; and more recently Gillett 2000a: chap. 1). None of which, however, meant that woman was not musical. Quite the opposite. As a matter of point in the woman composer debate she was routinely heralded as the ideal performer of man's music. The gist of "The Feminine in Music", then, was that "woman [did] not originate, she only interpret[ed] or reproduce[d]" (*MT* Oct. 1882: 521, also Stratton 1883: 122). Similarly, the black man became known for his legion mimetic capabilities (for example, *KE* April 1872: 2).

Musicality itself, we have long been told, was gendered, music-making a gendered activity in Victorian Britain.²⁷ One of the moves by which musicality was feminised drew a correspondence between the "natures" of music and woman. For example, the Victorians typically concluded that woman gave expression to, and so was ruled by, "emotion". We

²⁷ Musicality seems to have been a perennial marker of otherness. In addition to its gendering and racialising work, it also, argues Philip Brett (1994), has a history of queering. Tolstoy drew on this repertoire in his novella *The Kreuzer* when describing the musician Trukhachevsky: "He was of slight physique ... and he had a particularly well-developed posterior, as women have, or as Hottentots are said to have. I believe they're also said to be musical" (quoted in Leppert 1993: 169). For recent explorations of the gendering of musicking in Victorian Britain, see Gillett (2000a) and Weliver (2001).

know that this was the one element of a well-worn and long-standing binary, which *The Magazine of Music* digested thus: “Because [women] are easily moved, because they habitually judge and act by their feelings, it is assumed that as emotional beings they are the superiors of men, who rarely show feeling, but are the embodiments of reason” (June 1894: 15). Music, too, as the history of aesthetics and a popular saying – “the language of emotions” – tells us, had been emotionalised in the nineteenth century. A discursive union of the emotional art and “the sex” thus became an orthodoxy, such that in Victorian discussions of music’s emotional content woman was seldom far (see, for example, Krebs 1893-94: 76).²⁸

Neither was “the savage”, and the same reasoning for the feminising of musicality pertained for musicalising black South Africans. Eustace J Breakspeare drew on the association in distinguishing between the “ordinary listener” and structural listening in a lecture on Hanslick to the Royal Musical Association:

The ordinary listener enjoys music in the passive reception of its sensuous elements. His relation towards music is not introspective, but “pathological.” ... The true musical listener, however, attends more to the structure of the composition ... Upon savages, music exerts a more direct emotional influence than it does upon cultivated people ... The man of sentiment inquires whether a piece be joyful or sad; the musician, on the other hand, whether it be good or bad. [Hanslick] sets, in opposition to what he understands as the true way of hearing music, the rough emotion of the savage in the same class with the dreamy intoxication of the musical sentimentalist (1880: 67).

The “man of sentiment” might more profitably have been, and typically was, cast as a woman in late Victorian Britain; sentimentality – crudely to do with emotional excess – had been gendered feminine in Britain since at least the late eighteenth century (see Todd 1986: chap. 2, 140). In propping up the scenario of a populist, emotive listening, though, the savage as that other signifier of emotionality was unambiguously named.

As with investigations into the biological basis of female emotionality, black emotionality became the subject of science. Dudley Kidd’s *The Essential Kafir*, for instance, was written “in order that when the reader puts down the book he may feel not so much that he knows a great deal *about* the Kafirs ... but that he *knows the Kafir*” (1904: vi). As part of that essential knowledge, a chapter on “Mental Characteristics”, with a section on “Emotional Nature”, reified black emotionality in elaborating racial mentalities. The discourses of scientific racism, though, often only gave coherence to older, commonplace

²⁸ Richard Leppert has suggested that the relation between the categories “woman” and “music” is fundamental to the social construction of those categories (1993: 219). To pick up on an earlier point: as composition was a product of rational activity, went the argument, female emotionality was the reason for woman’s compositional ineptitude.

threads, tales spun already from the first white imaginings about and experiences of life in Africa.

Straddling these worlds of Victorian science and the African “reality” was Lovedale’s second principal, the Rev. Dr James Stewart. Trained at first as a medical student in Edinburgh during mid-century – the British locus of the rise of racial science (see Young 1995: 123) – the influential Scottish churchman was at the forefront of developments in the Cape mission, and to a lesser extent in Cape government native policy.²⁹ He was also, I suggest, and the context of his early education is significant, an important broker in discourses of racial science to the Colony.³⁰ Stewart’s life’s work received summation in his *magnum opus*, *Dawn in the Dark Continent*, a distillation of the Duff Missionary Lectures he had delivered in Edinburgh University in 1902 as elder statesman of the African mission. In its sweep, the “epoch-making” volume’s analysis of mission is impressive, written, noted the *Expository Times*, “as a man of science rather than as a missionary” (quoted in Stewart 1906: n.p.).

One of the themes of *Dawn in the Dark Continent* was precisely the rapprochement between science and mission. Drawing on the work of the social evolutionist Benjamin Kidd, Stewart took as his premise that “any future progress ... either in civilisation or in Christianity” would have their ground in “the elements of native African character” (1906: 362). Accordingly, he began with an analysis of “the contents and contradictions [found] in the character and mental constitution of the African”. To be sure, Stewart did a good deal of debunking: “the African” was no child, s/he did possess powers of ratiocination. But the myth of African emotionality stuck. And old evidence for the claim was summoned: “This prevalence of emotion leads to the belief that there are certain yet undeveloped elements in his character. He is fond beyond measure of music, seems to have an instinctive knowledge of harmony, and an extraordinary power of keeping time” (366). Two points suggest themselves from the juxtaposition. Most obviously, musicality, as for Victorian women, signified emotionalism. More interestingly, and in an act of doubling, musicality, as “native African character”, could be used for the black African’s “future progress”, to cultivate

²⁹ For “official” accounts of Stewart’s life and work, see Wells (1908) and Shepherd (n.d. [1941]: chap. 5). Brock (1974) gives a more critical reading.

³⁰ Historians of racial discourse in South Africa have, I think, tended to post-date the appearance of explicit theorising on race in South Africa due to an over-reliance on the major monograph publications of the early twentieth century and, conversely, a neglect of the more ephemeral missionary archive, for instance. To take but one, albeit it perhaps atypical, example that unsettles this thesis: the widely-read *Christian Express*, under Stewart’s editorship during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, not infrequently reprinted the metropolitan insights of scientific racism, either matter-of-factly or as matters for dispute.

“certain yet undeveloped elements in his character”.³¹ In the following chapters I suggest what these might have included. Here, I note that Stewart’s discussion of black musicality occurred in a section on “The Future of Africa and the African”, an extended apology for the potential of South African blacks for civilisation (366), made in the face of an increasingly ambivalent colonial government and imperial policy towards the civilising mission (see Dubow 1987: 74). If musicality, then, was set to work in the construction of “race”, it was also a potential deliverer from blackness.

This formulation was by no means novel, the construction of black musicality had long been theorised to coincide with the mission’s civilising imperative. Just as Lovedale announced the formalising of music education in the mission, *The Kaffir Express* pondered “the best means ... to use in order that all the different sides of the African character may be reached”. This entailed a prior knowledge of the African’s “different constitution”, with “an ear for music” appearing top of the list. Through the agency of black musicality, working in combination with the black “faculty of imitation”, the “race” could be “rais[ed] and train[ed]”. Provided the “right example”, say Victorian choral music, was given (*KE* April 1872: 2).

Here, banal though it may be, is the crux: Victorian choralism seemed eminently substitutable for precolonial musicking because they were both sung. For Xhosa musicking in early ethnographic accounts is *singing*; “as for instrumental [music]”, claimed the missionary WC Holden, “they [had] none” (n.d. [1866]: 271). This, we know, is not the whole truth, but Xhosa musicking *is* overwhelmingly vocal, a fact that pre-twentieth-century commentators noted, and that missionaries, I suggest, appropriated for their own ends.³² Skeptics may argue that singing is, if not “universal”, then pretty well nigh. But there are also more specific similarities between precolonial Xhosa musicking and that of the Victorian churchmen.³³ In short, choral song was taken as axiomatic to both ways of living. Hence the Xhosa converts seemed to have taken quickly and easily to the new practices. To

³¹ The early ethnomusicologist, Richard Wallaschek, summed up Victorian wisdom in concluding that “[a]mong savages the influence of music is far more distinctly noticeable than among people in a higher state of civilisation” (1893: 163). Africa’s most famous missionary, and Stewart’s model, David Livingstone, added a suitably evangelical twist: “Music has great influence on those who have musical ears, and often leads to conversion” (1874: 201).

³² A good example of the absent presence of Xhosa instrumentality in the colonial archive occurs in Percival R Kirby’s classic *The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa* (1934b). Drawing heavily on early travel literature in his account of Xhosa instruments, Kirby at the same time cites various sources in concluding that “[m]ost writers content themselves with saying that the Kaffirs made little or no use of music instruments” (204).

³³ I discuss some of these in chapter five. One that has received much notice was the shared preference for multi-part singing. The colonial administrator, WC Scully, remarked that “the mission-trained native ... pick[ed] up part-music with strange facility” (1907: 285; also Erlmann 1996: 54; and Coplan 1985: 29).

be sure, choralism was part of the entire reformation package, bound up with black class aspirations and missionary civilising prescriptions. But so were other Western practices that never caught on in spite of their exemplary bourgeois status and missionary promotion. More to the present point, it was the window on to singing blacks that opened up the missionary discourse on the utility of black musicking: for evangelising but also, as we will see, for other ends.

Chapter 2
The Rationality of Sol-fa as Reform

irrational musicking, or music before reform

“Bad” music existed in abundance in the colonial Cape. Its character may be discerned when we begin to explore the places that black musicking occupied in the colonial terrain of difference. On the one hand, white colonial writing on South African black musicking is at once a predictable affair. The first accounts by heroic travellers and missionaries were narrated to the script of absolute alterity that we now know so well (see, for example, Pratt 1992; and Bigalke 1984 for early accounts of Cape Nguni music). As “scientific” knowledge about the other was set to work for diverse Euro-imperial ends, so obviously it behooved the missionaries to construct their potential converts as black, “heathen” Africans. Early accounts of black South African musicking were therefore less than complimentary. Later white writings, for instance of the end of the nineteenth century, on the other hand, index a discernible shift in the discourse on black musicking, an epistemological reorientation in which absolute musical difference no longer organises the narrative. Although the fantasy of musical difference – I am by no means denying the “reality” of differences – seems to be an ever-present subtext that occasionally surfaces, there is also a narrative of “saming”, even of critical compliment. The shift that I have outlined speaks of a change in the writer’s objects, from precolonial musicking to the sol-fa choralism of the colonial mission station.

The regimes of white knowledge on black colonial musicking were not always as distinct as I have made out, and could, in fact, work together, as in the Wesleyan missionary, William C Holden’s *The Past and Future of the Kaffir Races* (1866). Holden’s amateur ethnography was written largely to the first script, and traded in alterity in its strongest forms. The chapter on black “Amusements” begins with a sketch of wedding songs, one of the same songs perhaps that Ntsikana appropriated for his hymns:¹

these songs [are] filthy in the extreme; those terms which relate to sexual intercourse being freely used in the most repulsive and loathsome forms ... there is all the animal passion of the beast, with the addition of language, song, and dance, to fan every impure sentiment and gratify every lustful feeling; until [the singer-dancers] become perfectly mad, every man neighing after his neighbour’s wife, and every youth and girl and woman seeking to gratify impure desire and vicious habit (n.d. [1866]: 270-1).

¹ There is some contemporary evidence to suggest that Ntsikana may have appropriated wedding dance-song music for “his” hymns (see Hodgson 1980: 69-74). Recent ethnomusicological evidence seems to support this (see Dargie 1982).

The harangue employs familiar missionary tropes, in which black musicking is sexualised as it is bestialised. In addition, it is nature-ised:

Their singing is also very monotonous, both in sound and time; but, when there are many together, this defect is somewhat compensated for by the strong effect produced, especially at the midnight hour, when the beast is quietly lying in his lair, the world is in peaceful slumber wrapt, and the pale moon is pouring her silvery beams upon the silent scene. All nature then combines to give effect to the song; the sound reverberates among the hills and across the plains, echoing and dancing from rock to rock, penetrating the dense forest and deep ravine; and is answered by the scream of the jackal, the howl of the wolf, the thunder of the elephant, and the roar of the lion (272).

In this colonial guide to the African wilds, where the black voice is perfected in the chorus called Nature, the dancing black body that has perennially fascinated and horrified the West is as a matter of course also to be found:

And as they are naked, the bystander has a good opportunity of observing the whole process, which presents a remarkably odd and grotesque appearance, – the head, the trunk, the arms, the legs, the hands, the feet, bones, muscles, sinews, skin, scalp, and hair, each and all in motion at the same time, with feathers waving, tails of monkeys and wild beasts dangling, and shields beating, accompanied with whistling, shouting, and leaping; thus setting at defiance all the rules which prevail in civilized communities, in the light step and the graceful motion (273-4).

Precolonial musicking thus indexed a state prior to civilisation, a state of nature. In short, it was music of the irrational.

We know that race and class were twinned in the dialectical fashioning of each's other in some Victorian imaginations (see Lorimer 1979 for an early account). Where metropolitan discourse sought to classify domestic musical space, for instance, it occasionally drew on the tropes of race music. An ethnography of the Salvation Army's musical evangelising to the East End worked according to this representational displacement. The anonymous writer constructed the slums as an "anachronistic space", without history, reason and language – and, like black Africa, without music (McClintock 1995: 120). Or, at least "proper" music properly performed. For after a somewhat detailed description of the Army's musicking, the writer concluded that the "Army disown[ed] anything like a musical performance" (*TS-fR* Aug. 1884: 325). More to the point, markers of the musically racial were discovered: "The big drum [was] especially popular", for rhythm being "the first and lowest element of music ... the big drum stir[red] the blood of the densest nature" (324). And more: a "grotesque animation [was] given to the scene by the gesticulations and movements of the company ... as if the utmost bodily exertion were necessary to prevent the music from breaking down" (325). Here was the "general character of African music" outlined by the authority of *Primitive Music*: "preference for rhythm over melody ...

physical exertion and psychical excitement” (Wallaschek 1893: 15).² To drive home the point, the music of the slums was explicitly racialised:

These services are very much like the negro camp meeting. The gesticulation, the rhythmical clapping, the yell before entering upon the chorus, are points of a resemblance which is almost complete. Probably there has been no copying by the Salvation Army, and the conclusion must be that both are the natural result of strong feelings unrestrained, acting upon the raw material of humanity (*TS-fR* Aug. 1884: 325).

As in Holden’s account of Xhosa musicking, musical irrationality was signified in an excess of emotionality and corporeality. A double, related argument for the irrationality of black musicking pertained: first, its spectacular embodiment seemed to radically undermine what we are told was the Enlightenment injunction to privilege actions of the mind; second, and as the discourse of irrationalities was obsessed with an aesthetics of order, the black body was represented as flagrantly undisciplined, unclothed and seemingly disordered in movement, in “violation of all rule and order” (Holden 1866: 274).³ In John Knox Bokwe’s story of Ntsikana, a narrative not just of conversion but of musical civilising, the Christian Ntsikana thus instructed his “disciples” to “[h]ave nothing to do with heathen dances” (*CE* May 1879: 15).⁴

It was here that the other white story of black musicking, of black mission choralism, entered the ethnographic narrative. And it did so to impress a point: “When [blacks] become Christian, and are taught the *rules* of music and singing, their performances are of the very first order in vocal song”; indeed, “far superior” to anything Holden had “ever heard from any other persons” (1866: 273, my emphasis). More specifically, as *The Grahamstown*

² Too often in the ethno/musicological literature “the body” is synonymous with its manifest movement, namely, dance. “The voice”, as I explore in chapter six, is of course no less bodily.

The association of bodily movement and “rhythm” occupied some of the most eminent Victorian scientists. Richard Wallaschek could thus borrow from the writings of Herbert Spencer, James Sully and Edmund Gurney on the matter in fleshing out his hypothesis that music originated in rhythm, and for which the singing-dancing black was summoned as a “survival”. In Wallaschek’s evolutionary scheme, *Primitive Music* both rhythmicised and corporealised Africa – the “rhythmical phenomena” – while rationalising Western harmony and melody – the “unrhythmical noumena” (1893: 259; see 3-5 and 230 for the rhythmic Kafir; and 15, chaps. 7 and 9 for the moving black body).

³ The rationality of what the Victorians called “rational recreation”, which included choralism, resided in part in its proscription of physical pleasures (see Cunningham 1990: 297, 327).

McClary and Walser explore similar themes in discussing the representation of black American musicking. They do not, however, so much refute the embodiedness of black musicking – they speak of “the kinetic aspects of much black music” (1994: 78) – as put a positive spin on it by assigning rationality to it. Importantly, they also remind us of the bodily-ness of Western performance.

⁴ In an act of ethnographic time-travelling, Bokwe imagined the pre-conversion dance scene as an instance of the musical irrational:

The singing, or rather – what shall we call it, for, to an ear trained in civilized music, the discord is something unbearable, – the yelling, howling, and bellowing, each one at the top of his or her own voice! For an accompaniment we have loud clapping of hands ... They manage to keep pretty good time, though! ... and all in a state of absolute nudity! ... Their dancing displays extraordinary contortions of body; now a jump, and then a quivering of the chest, ending with a twist ... with very little regard to regularity of motion, not to speak of decency (*CE* Nov. 1878: 14).

Journal in a review of a sol-fa concert given by a choir of “Fingoes and Hottentots” pointed out: sol-fa choralism “subdue[d] and discipline[d]” its singers “at a moment when the taming of our [the settlers’] savage neighbours [was] looked upon by many as an utter impossibility, namely, the capacity of these savages for civilization” (4 Sep. 1863).⁵ The Victorian choir, of course, looked the visual antithesis of Xhosa dance-songs. Its practices orderly exercised the anatomy in a detailed, sometimes invisible way; its ideal of individual, chorister bodies quiescent and still in their singing; the corporate, choral body uniform in sound as in appearance (see chap. 4). In fact, the manifest change from dance-song to “bodiless” song has made it one of the few performance practices of Victorian choralism to receive mention in work on black South African musicking (see, for example, Allen 2000: 44; Pewa 1995: 9; and Coplan 1985: 29).⁶ Sol-fa choralism was just one means-ended, highly rational, it seemed, disciplinary offensive against dance.

**singing to “the rules”, reading to sing rightly:
the institutionalising of sol-fa in the mission**

Tonic sol-fa had its origins not only in religion but also in “reform”. Its genesis within and as religion was at the same time part of the early Victorian reforms of church musicking and of music education. It is well known that in these spaces of reform, music’s utility was constructed as its civilisability or “morality” (see, for example, Cox 1995-6; and esp. Russell 1997: chap. 2 for a more extended discussion). The early-nineteenth-century reformer, John Turner, recommended the “cultivation of music as a means of soothing the evil passions, softening the manners, improving the mind” (1833: 1). Authorities such as Plato were selectively cited in support. Luther, for one, was said to have called music “a half discipline

⁵ The mission was not alone in legislating against the dance-songs, and in 1891 an act of Cape law prohibited certain types of dance (see Bigalke 1984: 45). The ban was not out of place in frontier politics, where the “native problem” was at first one of war and peace (see *CE* Oct 1877: 3), and a popular white myth the dance as warlike (see esp. Hanna 1978; also McLean 1986: 30-1).

⁶ This speaks, I think, of the academy’s continued romanticising of the body as a site of authentic black expressivity, the body and its movement being regarded as a *sine qua non* of black South African musicking. In the case of black choralism, an essential Africanness has been located in the re-moving of the Western choral body (see, for example, Allen 2000: 42; Muller 1999: 135; and Pewa 1995: 10, 23). This move is particularly pronounced in work on the hymnody of the Independent African Churches. The Comaroffs, for example, privilege “dance”, loosely any bodily movement, as an instance of the indigenisation of ritual practice, which they contrast with white devotional style: “The posture of piety required by the ‘white man’s dance/service’ showed itself in the sedate, ‘starchy’ worshipper seated in a straight row, body reverentially subdued ... what was kept apart in *sekgoa* [basically, Western ways] was indivisible in *setswana* [Tswana ways]. In the vernacular, the verb ‘to venerate’ (*go bina*) also meant ‘to dance’ and ‘sing’ ... In the different corporeal culture of Southern Tswana, the act of worship was ‘moving’ in all senses of the word ... The production of rhythm and harmony compelled a body of people to move ‘in time’” (1997: 113-14, and 116; also Muller 1999: 105-6).

and schoolmistress to make people gentler, milder, more moral” (3, 6-7). Music’s mission to Africa was stated in similar terms. The views of the Lovedale principal, James Stewart, are exemplary:

In his estimation of the educational power of music, Stewart agreed with Plato, who said, “The movement of sound, so as to reach the soul for the education of it in virtue (we know not how), we call music, under which the soul becomes gentle and pliable as metal in the fire” (Wells 1908: 190).

From the outset, then, the claims for music to civilise were promises that it would discipline – minds, bodies, habits, and society at large we will see. It was a discourse that was spoken in the language of class and race. For if music’s civilisability was pertinent to all, its disciplinarity was especially applicable to blacks in the colonies – as the *Journal’s* review and Stewart’s views indicate – and the working classes at home. There, music would reform the “habits” of the “industrious classes”, “the working classes [who] in their hours of leisure, [were] liable to be enticed into places of common resort for the idle and dissolute, where they [were] (almost unconsciously) drawn into the vortex of low pleasures” (Turner 1833: 29-30; also Hickson 1836: 3). As these sentiments indicate, the reforms of early Victorian musicking were part of a larger initiative to discipline leisure time, in which leisure was invented or reinvented as “rational recreation” under an elite-led programme that aimed to incorporate activities and participants within the ideology of “respectability”.⁷

Sol-fa was one of the rational practices. Its reformist nature was indexed by the fact that it was intended to proscribe as it prescribed, making possible the “desire to supply a cheap, a rational, and an agreeable source of amusement to all – a wish to supersede musical entertainment of a much lower and questionable character” (*TS-fR* June 1855: 46; and McGuire 2002: 17-19; and forthcoming(b) for some of sol-fa’s specific reform contexts). In the Cape too, as we saw, it was hoped that the sol-fa movement “would supply the great desideratum for social amusement that now exists, and keep away those more questionable and less moral means of recreation” (*GTJ* 4 Sep. 1863). This pattern of proscription-prescription to which rational recreation worked is widely known. What has been less explored is how the reformed leisure, how sol-faing, was constituted *as* “rational”.

⁷ Two issues in particular have occupied recent Victorian leisure historiography. First, while the ideology of respectability has been associated with embourgeoisement, middle-class leisure was not wholly respectable, nor was the project to remake it so only a middle-class concern. Rather, it was led by a working- and middle-class cultural elite, and part of a discourse of civility that operated relatively independently of the structures of economic class. Second, the provision of leisure by an elite cannot be understood within a model of social control alone. For an overview of these issues, see Bailey (1989) and Cunningham (1990), and for choralism, Russell (1997: esp. chap. 11). My own concern here is to show how sol-fa choralism was inscribed within dominant discourses of reform, which does not of course mean that it was not appropriated for other ends.

For the early reformers the new music was to be acquired by what Turner called “the rules of art”, which included the “names of the notes, and other marks of music, their nature and their use” (1833: 25-6). For Holden, recall, it was specifically singing to the rules of music that distinguished the Christian from the heathen, the savage from the civilised, where “the rules”, I suggest, included the rule of music literacy (n.d. [1866]: 273). This disciplinary act of notation, noted in so many contexts, is inscribed in an earlier, eighteenth-century semantics of “rule”, where singing by rule meant to read music (see Temperley 1979: 143).⁸

In the nineteenth century, literacy in general was central to programmes for the “improvement” of especially the working classes. At the same time it was conceived as a “pedagogy of containment”, to “disinfect” the working-class reader from the influence of a “low, enfeebling, and often pestilential literature”, to supply a body of suitably edifying texts (Roberts 1998). Similarly, the entire point of Victorian mass music literacy was not an exercise in radical readerly empowerment but the teacherly power of proscription and prescription. To read music, to sol-fa, was to sing only some songs. It was, of course, as a quest for music literacy that tonic sol-fa had been born. Curwen’s original brief had been to get children to read psalm-tunes, but almost immediately sol-fa’s wider pedagogical potential was transferred to the school classroom; his first book was *Singing for Schools and Congregations* (1843). No less concerned with literacy, verbal and musical, was the overseas mission. As I showed in chapter one, the redemptive workings of the Word were attendant on its reading *and* its singing. More generally, and as with the working classes in Britain, it was hoped that literacy would bring the black converts within the ambit of a logocentric western civilisation.⁹ In short, sol-fa literacy facilitated the substitution of “civilised” culture, like hymn-tunes, for irrational musicking such as the precolonial dance-song.¹⁰

⁸ “The relation between musical notation and surveillance is closer than the history of musical aesthetics has preferred to consider. To express this matter still more scandalously, musical notation was developed to give people orders to follow” (Leppert 1993: 133).

It has often been remarked that the early missionary-linguists’ endeavours to “reduce” the vernacular to written and readable form standardised a range of dialects into, for example, isiXhosa; the same can be said for other lexicographical projects elsewhere. It is in the textualisation of orality that ethno/musicologists have read the disciplinary acts of notation. In addition to the commonplace ethnomusicological claims, see Radano (1996) for the transcription of spirituals, and Harker (1985) for nineteenth-century British folksong arrangements. The corollary, of course, and an ethnomusicological cliché, is the poverty of (Western) notation’s representational abilities; again, this is a truism for the notation of any music (see Agawu 1995: 390-3).

⁹ Leon de Kock’s work on missionary, largely Lovedale, narratives, *Civilising Barbarians*, is in one sense about the colonising agency of literacy, and especially the “linguistic colonialism” of the English language (1996).

¹⁰ The canonising work that notation performs has received little attention on the South African scene (though see Dargie 1986: 25). By setting up literacy as a precondition of Christianity-civilisation, the mission disciplined black musicking in the most revolutionary manner: the wholesale overthrow of one repertory for another. Nor was this a novel colonising trick. Elsewhere (forthcoming 2003), I have suggested that the mass

Indeed, hymns and their tunes were some of the first of the missionary gifts to Africa. They were, as we have seen, part of the evangelising machinery. Wherever mission printing presses sprung up their first products included hymns, though initially without their tunes. Later, after sol-fa had found its way to the South African fields, tune-books were added to the publishing catalogue. Christopher Birkett's booklet of tunes in sol-fa (n.d. [1871]) was at the vanguard of these developments. Needless to say, the textualisation of music in sol-fa presumed and fostered a certain amount of verbal literacy. By corollary, music literacy fuelled the civilising mission's quest to reculturate completely and "correctly".

How the reformist character of sol-fa music literacy worked in the Cape mission is clear from a running correspondence titled "Kaffir Songs" that commenced in the first volume of *The Kaffir Express* and continued intermittently over the course of the next few years. The case opened with the "facts" stated plainly enough: Christian natives were singing Psalms and Hymns "very much out of place", namely, at "weddings and other gatherings". The good-to-do complainant suggested that "Kaffir songs composed on different subjects" would be more suited to such extra-church occasions (Dec. 1870: 4). Another correspondent presented additional evidence: "I often pass groups of children, out of school, singing, as they play, snatches of hymns which they have been taught at school, and I have often thought that the repetition of 'Come to Jesus,' and the familiar thoughtless way of using the Sacred Name, might be replaced by bits of secular poetry". This time the solution was more considered, more insidious: "A collection of school-songs brief, cheery, and well-worded, is needed for two purposes – to get the steam up, and let the steam off ... the effervescence of juvenile spirits will show itself in uproar, or mischief, or some abnormal way. A spirited song, then, is a safety-valve" (Jan. 1871: 6). The issues were summed up by another correspondent: first, the "misuse" of "sacred things" was sinful; second, the call for an alternative repertory was a project in discipline – "Give me the writing of all the songs of a people, and I do not care who makes the laws" (Jan. 1872: 4).

It is now well known that from the outset missionary culture was misread by converts, appropriated for unintended, "wrong" purposes; more fashionably, domesticated for local needs. This state of events, one might argue, was par for the Xhosa cultural course. While ethnomusicologists have identified certain "categories" of songs that are typically performed at specific social events, these songs, they have noticed, are not bound to the event; one type may be sung on other occasions (see Hansen 1981: 87-98). But we should

textualisation of hymn-tunes that began at the start of Victoria's reign was a reform project that both displaced one type of tune and normalised the replacement tunes (see also Gammon 1981).

remember that hymn-tunes, say, have always been re-used in this way. They were regularly heard, for example, in Victorian streets and factories (see Tamke 1978: intro.).

“Kaffir Songs”, it was hoped, would put an end to such transgressive performances, filling the cultural lacunae the mission had began to create in its destructive mode.¹¹ But none were immediately forthcoming. There were no musical offerings, and several translations of English texts were “declared inadmissible”; “God Save the Queen”, though, gained two translations in isiXhosa (*KE* Nov. 1871: 4). Slightly later John Knox Bokwe’s secular songs did take up the brief (see chap. 5). But in the interim the mission drew on the large corpus of English vocal music, a repertory primarily of part-songs and miscellaneous choruses. And in the logic of reform, the disciplining of repertory was at the same time the civilising of its singers. For as a supplementary musical culture to hymn-tunes, the Victorian choral repertory would both make “much easier [the] work in civilising the Kaffir” – civilised people did not misuse hymns – and also, according to the sound marxist logic of Victorian rational recreation, “mak[e] him a happy and content member of civilized life” (*KE* March 1871: 4). Victorian choral music, as we know, did function as a sign of the civilised for a range of parties, and did so until at least the mid-twentieth century (see, for example, Allen, 2000: chap. 2; Coplan, 1985: chap. 4).¹² It did so partly, I suggest, because of its association with education.¹³ Not simply because it was practiced within the mission “school”, but, more to the point, because it schooled its singers in music literacy.

The Victorian repertory’s claims to civilised status, then, were inseparable from that repertory’s claims on literacy, and literacy’s own claims to civilisation. Traces of black choral concerts in the colonial archive attest to this: wherever there was Victorian choral music, there was sol-fa.¹⁴ The relationship between sol-fa literacy and choral music text

¹¹ “We must bear in mind”, wrote one of the more insightful “Kaffir Songs” correspondents, that “while we try to win the Kaffir over from his uncivilized state, and endeavour to bring him under the influence of religious and civilized habits, that we entirely deprive him of all the amusements to which he was before accustomed – amusements in song and dance into which he entered body and soul, and that we supply him with no substitutes for these amusements” (*KE* March 1871: 4).

¹² From the work of revisionist ethnomusicology, Victorian-type choralism, including the Victorian choral repertory itself, was still, amongst other musical practices, an assimilationist sign of Western civilisation until the Second World War. This music remains in the black choral repertory today (see the introduction to part 2), but when exactly it shed its civilising sign for both black singers and white missionaries and others is a different story.

¹³ A recent CD of black choral music by the SABC Choristers is simply titled *Education* (Gallo CDGMP 40817).

¹⁴ The first half of the programme for the Grahamstown sol-fa jubilee celebrations in 1892 was as follows: “God Save the Queen”; CC Chase’s anthem, “I Will Praise Thee”; another anthem by J Kent, “Thine, O Lord”; LO Emerson’s “scared part-song”, “Forth to the Fight”; RA Smith’s missionary anthem, “How Beautiful upon the Mountains”; Dr JC Whitfield’s “In Jewry is God Known”; the well-known Henry Coward hymn, “Gathering Round our Banners”; two part-songs by J Barrit and C Darnton; and a glee, “A Dream”, by T Crampton (*Programme of the Tonic Sol-fa Jubilee*).

pertained, quite obviously, also in Britain, where it was inscribed in the pages of *The Tonic Sol-fa Reporter*, each number including several choral works in sol-fa. Similarly, lessons in literacy and prescriptions of repertory had made up the sol-fa packages that Curwen presented to departing missionaries (see *TS-fR* Jan. 1859: 4). Thus, when the first music instructors of the Cape Education Department commenced their rounds of the mission schools in the last years of the century they found that “the part-songs of the *Tonic Sol-fa Reporter* [were] so much in vogue” (*RS-GE* 1903: 165a; also 1900: 149a).

To summarise: music literacy as sol-fa was an agent in civilising, used for the purpose both by missionaries and black converts, as well as an aid to evangelising. The twin discourses of Christianising and civilising within which sol-fa-ing was inscribed were, of course, mutually inclusive. For a legacy of didactic philanthropy in postenlightenment Britain meant that evangelism, for the missionaries as for the early sol-faists, was inseparable from education; “[s]chooling actually provided the model for conversion; conversion, the model for schooling” (Comaroffs 1991: 233). This much is evident from the discourse on Christianising or/as civilising that waged in the Cape press throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century. But if the mission insisted on the primacy of the former, it was only because their Christianising worked towards civilising. Thus near the end of his tenure at Lovedale, Stewart recalled Christianity’s other names: “the Universal Educator as well as Civiliser” (1906: 179, 35; also, for example, *CE* Feb. 1876: 1).

In fact, the evangelical mission to the Cape became increasingly a civilising mission. Lovedale is exemplary of this larger transformational process by which the mission, worried about its evangelising failures, “sought remedy in ever more institutionalized schooling ... pedagogy was to replace the Word, and hence preaching and ‘kind conversation,’ as a panacea for the late nineteenth century” (Comaroffs 1997: 85). Within half a century, and from humble beginnings as a station in the bush, Lovedale had become a great centre of education, the Lovedale Mission Institution. Its true mission was stated in the inaugural issue of its most public organ, *The Kaffir Express*: “The newspaper of the present day is undoubtedly a great educator. And were *The Kaffir Express* to become an established fact, it might be the double means of educating and informing” (Oct. 1870: 1).¹⁵ Some years later the first known notated composition by a black South African – John Knox Bokwe’s

¹⁵ The rhetoric of Christianising as civilising was, perhaps, a defensive internal memo, an unconvincing corrective to the general perception that the mission’s *raison d’être* in Africa was largely a matter of education. Till the apartheid state’s intervention in the early 1950s, black education in South African was almost entirely the preserve of the mission.

“Msindisi Wa Boni” (“Saviour of Sinners”) (*CE* June 1875) – would be published in the paper in tonic sol-fa.

Coinciding with the institutionising of the South African mission was the institutionalisation of sol-fa itself in the Cape mission. So, while the “Kaffir Songs” letters poured into Lovedale, the Institution, in its own answer to the suggestion that “[m]uch may be done by influencing the Songs of a people”, announced under “New Efforts During the Year” of 1871 that “instruction in music” had begun. There were “two distinct classes for singing: – one containing all the pupils and students in the Institution; the other consisting of a select number in which the theory of music [was] carefully taught” (*KE* Jan 1872: 4). Long before the colonial education authority’s intervention into music education in the early 1890s, it was institutionalised in the mission school. One might conclude that the letter-name notation tonic sol-fa was quite literally, what *The Christian Express* talking about linguistic literacy called, “the alphabet of civilisation” (July 1879: 3).

sol-fa and the reform ideology of work

As rational recreation, sol-fa’s reforms went beyond “the purely musical”. *The Reporter* went so far as to declare that the “musical aspect of [sol-fa’s] work [was] indeed insignificant by the side of its moral and religious influence” (July 1878: 153). Importantly, sol-fa’s policing of Victorian morality entailed more than replacing non-bourgeois entertainments and the consequent prevention of uncivil actions. Its effects, I want to emphasise, did translate from the diffuse terrain of morality in which they were discursively professed to the “material”. For sol-fa’ing also had social consequences that reformed its singing subjects in more mundane, subtle ways.¹⁶ This fact was recognised by *The Illustrated London News* when it noted that sol-fa’ing, while an example of “enlisting music in the cause of religion and morality”, brought with it “refinement of habits and manners” (10 Nov. 1855: 566). I want to explore one of these habits that the notation-method re/formed by examining sol-fa’s relation to a specific set of reform institutions.

Sol-fa’s success in institutions for the down and out was a common story. As the notation-method’s founder, John Curwen, noted of such places: “Our Sol-fa movement

¹⁶ Sol-fa’s social reform credentials have long been noted, though only sketchily drawn, by post-Victorian writers. Percy Scholes, for one, remarked on its part in the “larger movement for the general betterment (intellectual, moral and religious) of the working classes” (1947: 8; also Mackerness 1964: chap. 5). Its relationship to reform, however, has tended to be subsumed under general discussions of music and/or sight-singing and moral reform, a case in point being Dave Russell’s extended account of “music and morals” (see 1997: part 1). Sol-fa’s own social history, including an account of its specific reform contexts, has yet to be written (though see McGuire 2002: chap. 1; and forthcoming(b)).

permeates other movements. It works quietly. The great world does not see it" (June 1876: 165). But, by all accounts, it seems to have been very visible in Scotland, which became a productive field for tonic sol-fa work, and another of the non-establishment spaces sol-fa made its own (see Curwen 1888: 170). It was in a mid-century report, titled "Harvesting in Scotland", that the notation-method's progress north of Hadrian's Wall was told as the story of its practice within three classic reform institutions. At the Boys' House of Refuge, "the true moral fruits of ... Tonic Sol-fa labours" were "strikingly developed". "Sol-fa music echoe[d] through the workshop, and even the disorderly ones who [were] locked up for a time beguile[d] their imprisonment with Tonic Sol-fa" (*TS-fR* July 1859: 101). At Dr Guthrie's Ragged School, the sol-fa inspection team was "astonished to find that the very staircase smelt of cleanliness, and that the children showed hands, face, and pretty feet as clean as clean could be". It was "[n]o wonder that music [was] found to infuse a happy, humanizing influence amongst th[e] clean and busy throng". Finally, sol-fa kept company with temperance work at the Magdalen Institute for young girls convicted of crime (Aug. 1859: 114-15). The practice of sol-fa within places of reform was indexed by its relationship to the primary preoccupations of social reform. In stories of its success within reformist organisations, sol-faing was accompanied by narratives of hygiene, temperance and, above all, industry.

The Scottish-sol-fa connection resonated far beyond Britain. For sol-faing was practiced in the missions of the Free Church of Scotland, and especially at Lovedale, a "small Scottish colony planted in the heart of Kaffraria" (Aitken Aug. 1899: 183). The kinship between the foreign mission and the reformist organisations mentioned above is clear from the frequency that stories from home of working-class socio-moral reform appeared in the Lovedale paper, *The Christian Express*; tales of things to come from the mission's own programmes. One such report was on the Glasgow Foundry Boys' Association, a Sabbath school for "boys from the lower classes of society ... imps hardened in sin, and callous to every good influence". And among the several things that the foundry men, "nearly as black as Kaffirs", shared with the Cape mission's blacks were tonic sol-fa, hymn singing, and the fostering of habits of industry (see *CE* May 1876: 5-6; June 1876: 6; and *TS-fR* June 1877: 126).

It is a commonplace that the Victorians made a virtue of work, a legacy of the eighteenth century when evangelicalism's message of salvation through work and the requirements of the nascent factory industrialism coincided. As Walter Houghton wrote in his classic text on "the Victorian frame of mind": "The arraignment of idleness, the value of

work for the development of the individual, and the sense of a mission both to serve society in one's particular calling and to further the larger destinies of the human race, were almost as much the ideals of business as of Protestantism" (1957: 247-8). In brief, work had acquired moral force, making it key to both personal and national progress, while its antithesis, idleness, had become economic and religious sins. EP Thompson noted that while there was nothing new in preaching industry or in the moral critique of idleness, the insistence with which this was done by reformers who had accepted the discipline of work and who enjoined it upon others was novel (1967: 87). Moreover, the meaning of work to reform took on as much relevance outside the factory as inside it. Leisure, for instance, was called recreation in Victorian officialese, its purpose, Hugh Cunningham suggests, to "re-create a person for the more serious business of life, work ... Leisure was justified not for its own sake, but for its ulterior function in re-creating men for work" (1990: 296). In short, during the reform century recreation reworked leisure to approximate work.

Popular choralism has long provided an example of the relationship between work and leisure. ED Mackerness suggested that "the English choral tradition has its origins in the period of the Industrial Revolution", and certainly the first patrons of working-class choralism, in the late eighteenth century, were industrial entrepreneurs (1964: 127-9; Russell 1997: 26). For early Victorians, the choral feats of the northern county weavers of Lancashire and Yorkshire and the manufacturers of Norfolk were an example to the rest of the country (see, for example, Kay-Shuttleworth, quoted in Hullah 1841: 3). And later, when a bid for the inclusion of music in state elementary education was made, the association of singing and work-discipline was among the list of music's attributes that recommended it to the authorities (see "Prefatory Minute of the Committee of Council on Education", reprinted in Hullah 1841: 3-8).

Sol-faists were no different. Curwen believed that it would be "a matter of wonder" for future generations how people in his day "managed to exist without any definite *occupation* for their leisure hours" (*TS-fR* Dec. 1876: 339; my emphasis). Because for sol-faist reformers leisure no longer allowed for the idea of rest or idleness. Rather, it entailed some kind of productive, directed work; an occupation, only different to that other occupation. As Joseph Cowen, MP, put it in an address to the sol-faists: leisure "without some interesting pursuit [was] vapid and insipid ... A man must have bodily and intellectual work different from his bread-getting work" (*TS-fR* Aug. 1884, 322). Sol-fa we saw was one of the new rational recreations. It was attendant on it then to provide a whole regime of



work. What made it reformist was not that it occurred within places of work, beside other work, but that sol-faing *was* “work”.¹⁷

the work of the certificate

In 1852 the Tonic Sol-fa Association announced the innovation of awarding a music “certificate” to those who had passed through its music literacy course. The motivations for the initiative were many, but one had to do with the format of the mass sight-singing classes popular at mid-century where little control over individual singers was possible. Even in the more circumscribed arena of the school classroom, noted *The Reporter*, the teacher could not always attend to the individual pupil. It was thus proposed “that each member of a class should determine to teach himself. It cannot be too soon or too well understood that *class-teaching is only an aid to self-teaching*”. In the sol-faists’ bid to restructure popular choral education, the certificate became the incentive to “personal effort” (1853-54: 89). It also brought choralism more securely within the Victorian ideology of self-improvement through work that was immortalised in Samuel Smiles’ best-selling *Self-Help* (1859: esp. chap. 2). There was of course a moral implicit in the rhetoric of “self-culture” which *The Reporter* did not fail to draw: “the Tonic Sol-fa movement [would] be judged, not by the inattentive and careless, but by its certificated members”. “[I]dleness and inattention”, conversely, hindered “progress” (1853-54: 89).

The certificate involved the sol-faist in more than a narrative of personal progress. For the “amount of individual effort and self-cultivation which it ha[d] called forth [would tell] wonderfully on the general progress and good singing of the class itself” (95; cf Smiles 1859: 1-2). In other words, a trained singing body in the singular would improve the economy of the choral body as a whole. This insight was central to Foucault’s analysis of the disciplines, which, he argued, produced “the docile body” only as a means to its incorporation in an “efficient machine” of larger dimensions. He illustrated the point with the example of the military machine: “The soldier whose body had been trained to function part by part for particular operations must in turn form an element in a mechanism at another level ... The body is constituted as a part of a multi-segmentary machine” (1979: 164). Probably the most potent idea of disciplinarity in the nineteenth century, the factory-army,

¹⁷ Social historians have detailed the institutional links between choralism and industry, but have been less forthcoming in analyses of their complementary practices. Russell, for one, remarks that rational musicking taught the new work codes and disciplines, but does not elaborate on the insight (1997: 26-7).

the “work-force”, became the single most common metaphor through which the Victorian choir was imagined.¹⁸

As Foucault has shown, at the heart of all disciplinary systems functions a “small penal mechanism”, enjoying a judicial privilege with its own laws, offences, forms of judgment and punishment (1979: 177-8). Its overall effect is to normalise, which it achieves through, amongst other operations, “hierarchising” (183). This was a basic premise of the sol-fa certificate. In every town the “certificated pupils” were encouraged to form themselves into an “‘upper class,’ or ‘association of Tonic Sol-faers’”. No one was to be admitted to this club who could not show “a certificate within the cover of his music book” (*TS-fR* 1853-54: 96). Not only did the designation “upper class” function as a penalising exclusion of the uncertificated, but of those members of the lower classes who had not internalised the message of social betterment through self-improvement. *The Reporter* moralised the relationship between work, certificate and punishment as follows: “It will be esteemed a discredit for one who has passed through a course under an able teacher not to possess it” (89). In the hierarchising work of the certificate, then, rank served as both reward and punishment, congratulating the disciplined singer-worker as it penalised idleness (Foucault 1979: 181). One certificate, though, was soon insufficient reward-punishment, and in 1858 a graded series of certificates was introduced: elementary, intermediate and advanced; the last leaving no doubt as to the progress achieved. The hierarchising principle implicit from the outset in the certificate idea had become fully elaborated in the examining machinery of popular Victorian music education.¹⁹

Finally, the certificate not only distributed pupils according to rank, but also exercised over them constant pressure to conform (Foucault 1979: 183). In a parallel initiative to the threefold elaboration of the certificate idea, *The Standard Course* (1858) formalised sol-fa instruction as a highly structured set of “lessons and exercises” divided into a series of progressive “steps”. Each step was defined as “a certain stage of the pupil’s progress at which he is expected to stop and examine himself ... enabl[ing] all the members of a class to march together, – to keep step” (Curwen 1896: n.p. [v]). *The Standard Course*

¹⁸ One example of each from *The Reporter*: the conductor’s task was “to play as it were on the vocal machine before him” (April 1878: 85), and a good choral performance was likened to “the light and easy manoeuvring of a crack regiment perfect in accoutrement and accurate in discipline” (Feb. 1876: 35). In chapter four I read the practices of Victorian choralism, performance and compositional, as disciplinary acts.

¹⁹ Graded musical examinations, especially the British-based ABRSM and Trinity, are familiar to most of the world touched by British imperialism. But at mid-nineteenth century the sol-fa certificates were a novelty, and the scale of examining unequalled. By the time of the sol-fa jubilee in 1891 over half a million certificates had been awarded (Curwen 1891: 11).

and awards, then, standardised; all involved in the quest for “the magic pieces of paper”, as Ernest Walker later called the certificates, were compelled to conform (1907: 335). In the end, this was the grand aim of Victorian reform movements, of the disciplines. Sol-fa did not just style itself as a reform movement, it operated as one.

Just prior to the disciplining effects of choralism that *The Grahamstown Journal* had noted in the performance of the “Fingoes and Hottentots” that I cited earlier, the paper ran a series of reports explaining what tonic sol-fa was all about. The concluding article emphasised that sol-fa’s success was due “not to its simplicity and comprehensiveness solely”, but also to the disciplinary nature of its organisational set-up:

The success of the army depends as much on the skill of the commander as the proficiency of the corps; and undoubtedly a person endowed with Mr. Curwen’s skill as a General could accomplish wonders with any system or code of discipline; but Mr. Curwen seems to have been aware that the powers of generalship are not delegated to every man; and having introduced a system of notation adapted to the humblest capacities, he found it necessary to establish a code of discipline which in itself might supply any short-comings on the part of persons who might find the duties of teacher pressed upon them (19 May 1863).

The “code of discipline” incorporated sol-fa’s entire operational paraphernalia, which included the practices of the certificate: “Mr. Curwen subjects them to individual examination by authorised teachers; and a certificate of the student having satisfactorily passed the ordeal of such examination, is the only passport to the next course of lessons”. To cap his colonial apology for sol-fa, the writer gave as an example of its disciplining efficacy the performances of the “Kafir choir” (*GTJ* 1 May 1863).

There is not much evidence to tell how closely the South African mission followed this sol-fa regime, exactly when and how many of its constituent parts it took up. But by the mid-1890s at the latest, Lovedale had apparently become an exemplary outpost of sol-faing. The *Reporter / Musical Herald* circulated, visiting examiners examined, certificates were awarded – one sixth of all pupils received the elementary certificate in 1895 (*CE* Oct. 1895: 160) – and the names of the successful were published. The official missionary record showcased well-disciplined black singers.

Less partisan sources, however, tell a somewhat less sure tale, one of black miscomprehension, indifference and (dare I say) resistance to the sol-fa mission.²⁰ Indeed, reports of the mid-1890s, precisely when sol-fa appeared so entrenched at Lovedale, suggest that the missionary norm in the eastern Cape was sol-fa-less. Time and again, Education

²⁰ I discuss the issue of “resistance”, and its relevance for thinking about black musicking within the mission, in part two.

Department inspectors recorded that where music education, namely sol-fa class singing, was “professed”, literacy was in fact a sham. Henry R Woodrooffe’s observations from the Transkei are representative: “Except in rare instances singing is taught by ear only, the eye meanwhile being supposed to look at the sol-fa notation on the black-board ... The simplest questions in the theory of music are met by a vacant wondering aspect” (*RS-GE* 1894: xxxvii; also xiv-v; and 1985: 10, 29). While singing in the mission schools flourished – the reports are unanimous on this – sol-faing itself was either non-existent, a pretence, or partial. Or, it was misunderstood. The modulator in particular seemed to elicit unintended uses. It was “not unusual to find that the scholars [were] only exercised in singing up and down the scale” (*RS-GE* 1898: 111a). Nor did this “unsatisfactory” use function felicitously to retrain “the Xhosa ear”, for the singers invariably retuned the modulator’s Western modes. Writing from East London, amongst other places, Inspector F Howe Ely complained that “not one [singer] – I do not think I am exaggerating – has the least idea why the spaces between m and f, and t and d^l are less than those between any other two consecutive notes” (*RS-GE* 1894: xiv-v). So much for sol-fa’s “universal scale”. Other instances of minor rereadings of sol-fa’s rules abound.²¹ The point is that the discipline of sol-fa in the mission schools was by no means hegemonic, in both senses of the word: as dominant and as dominating ideology.

Nevertheless, we should not disavow the coloniser’s avowals, the narrative of domination which is my concern here. For white reformers in the Colony, echoing their counterparts at home, took the disciplinary utility of sol-fa choralism at face value, endeavouring, as we have seen, to put it to work. Sol-fa choralism, as such, was one of a complex of complementary techniques that went to make up the mission’s disciplinary regime, that made the mission a place of reform.

music in the mission, or another work-discipline

Racialising class, we saw, was a familiar strategy in the metropolis. No less did race function, in discourse and practice, as class in the Colony.²² As an important broker in

²¹ Often they are humorous. Frederick Farrington, the first music instructor proper to the eastern Cape, reported that on asking if ear exercises were practised the teacher demonstrated by removing desks from the classroom to make room for an exhibition in drill (*RS-GE* 1898: 111a).

²² A fair amount of work has been done on the interplay between class and race in South Africa. Broadly, this has divided into analyses at first of political economy and more recently of the politics of representation. As might be expected, the marxist influenced revisionist historiography concentrated largely on matters of political economy, while the rise of postcolonial studies, with its initial focus on discourse analysis, has provided the context for work on representation. The literature is extensive, but for a few examples that consider the eastern

classifying a racialised colonial space, the mission was, on the one hand and as has long been recognised, implicated in the formation of black class consciousness, and, on the other, involved in class formation more generally. In short, as the Lovedale mouthpiece, *The Christian Express*, proclaimed: the “native races” were a “lower class” (July 1879: 2).

Revisionist histories have shown how the mission was instrumental in “modernising” precolonial economies. The churchmen made no secret of this (see, for example, Comaroffs 1997: chaps. 3-4). A running topic in *The Christian Express*, for example, centered on the material nature of Christianity, the beatitude inverse: “God’s Word constantly promises prosperity to the nation that serves God, and denounces material loss on the ungodly” (Oct. 1877: 2). Indeed, “the speediest way of creating needs” among the Cape’s black population was “to Christianize them. As they become Christianized, they will want more clothing, better houses, furniture, books, education...” (Aug. 1878: 2). More than simply aligning mission within the Colony’s nascent capitalist economy, the churchmen reflected on their task as suppliers of labour. The mission thus spoke of Christianity’s influence in securing manual labour by raising it to the “rank of a Christian duty”, of “convert[ing] the lazy, unworking Kaffir into an honest working man ... mak[ing] him more and more, year by year, the material out of which a reliable and sturdy peasantry and working class [would] be formed for the Colony, – a class of which [was] greatly in need” (June 1881: 3; Aug. 1881: 3).²³

But the making of blacks into workers, “a population of peasant-proletarians” (Comaroffs 1997: 164), entailed their total re-formation, including their musicking. The racination of social class, then, speaks more generally of the mission’s reformist nature – and also of its disciplinary intent.²⁴ In Stewart’s formulation, “The Experiment of Native Education” involved an “extensive programme” underwritten by a “philosophy of discipline” that worked invisibly on black students, its success calculated by the “*capacity it bestow[ed] for work*” (*CE* June 1884: 86, 89). Elsewhere Stewart identified industry and discipline as part of the fourfold aim of the South African mission (1887: xii). These were enacted most

Cape mission, see Bundy (1979) and Trapido (1980) for the former, and Cornwell (1995) for the latter. The Comaroffs’ work draws on both modes of analysis (see esp. 1997: chaps. 4 and 6).

²³ Of course, the discourse of industry had its flip-side in black idleness, a congenital feature of white colonial writing, and, in the terms of the Protestant mission’s “Gospel of Work”, a sin (*CE* Aug. 1878: 1-2; also, for example, Stewart 1984a: 10, 12, 16; and Coetzee 1988: chap. 1).

²⁴ If the disciplines aimed at reforming subjectivities in, for example, the interests of new relations of work, they more generally manufactured a state of subjectness (see Foucault 1982). Hence Lovedale could claim “that where the natives are under Christian instruction ‘order and peace rule,’ and the people ‘give the Government little trouble’” (*KE* 6 Jan. 1874: 3). For a detailed account of the mission’s endeavour to reform black personhood, see Comaroffs (esp. 1997).

literally in the daily two hours of manual work; students, children not exempt, were mustered into military-like companies under “native captains” (1894a: n.p.) – see figure 3.²⁵

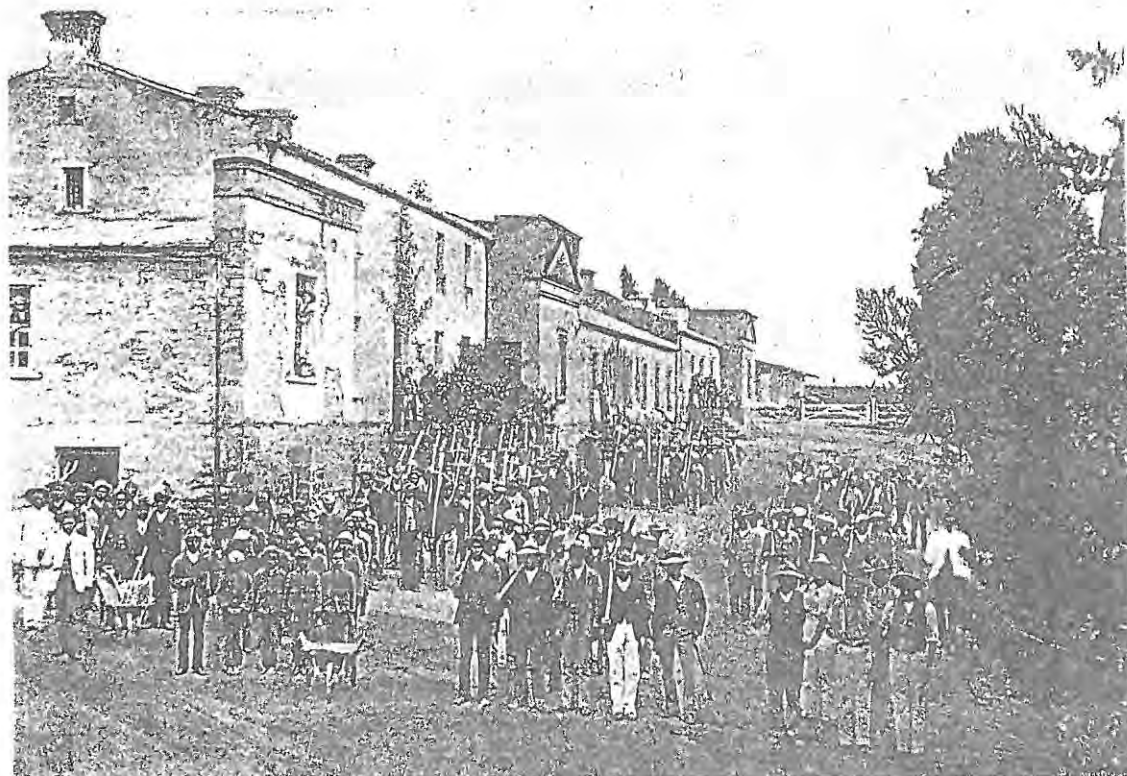


Figure 3. Lovedale work company. James Stewart, *Lovedale Missionary Institution, South Africa: Illustrated by Fifty Views from Photographs* (1894).

Mission musicking was part of the programme of work-discipline. In chapter four I explore how choralism operated as a “discipline”. Here, I want to conclude with a different example of rational musicking: the brass band. Just how seamlessly it slotted into the mission’s agenda was captured in the story of *Lovedale ... Illustrated by Fifty Views from Photographs*, a sort of coffee-table book about black Africans tamed. One more product of the institution’s extraordinary propaganda machinery, it told of how work and music were part of the same grand plan:

To keep the African always on the grindstone of work, or to be ... always pounding Christianity into him, would be to defeat the object of the Mission, and render its success either limited or non-existent ... Hence, though work rules the life of all who dwell at Lovedale, all rational relaxation and amusement are encouraged. And as all

²⁵ It was not uncommon to metaphorise the workings of the ultra-disciplined institution in military terms: the management of the mission compared with the “best regulated military barracks”, worshippers “march[ed] to Divine service in ‘fours’ with all the aplomb of well-disciplined troops”, and “military drill ... account[ed] in great measures [sic] for the method and precision which characterise[d] the daily routine of the place” (Aitken c.1900: 24, 28, 27). After a tour of the mission fields, Bishop Merriman of Grahamstown remarked that the “results might have been greater, were the discipline on many of the stations not so severe” (*KE* Nov. 1871: 1).

Africans are musical, there is a fairly good instrumental band (Stewart 1894b: 80).

The crucial word is “rational” amusement, of which the sol-faing band is the example; so was it in Victorian Britain (see, for example, Russell 1997: esp. chap. 9).²⁶ The distinction between work and play that Stewart seems to make is part illusion, the practices of rational recreation, we have seen, being ideally to recreate the disciplines of work in leisure. Thus the ambiguous space the band occupies in the pictorial narrative, sandwiched between a series of photographs of black students at “real” work: preceded by Muster for Afternoon Work, In the Fields and Gardens, Interior of Carpenters’ Shop, the band is followed by In the Fields, and After Sweeping Up. Mission musicking breaks up the images of manual labour as it is a break from work. But no less is it a continuation of the work theme, part of the regime of work.²⁷ Herein lay part of the rationale for the mission’s reformed musicking.

²⁶ The Lovedale Brass Band was not representative of mission musicking; in its “fitful existence” it was dormant for lengthy periods in the absence of a brass instructor. Choralism, by contrast, was “decidedly the strong feature of the place” (Aitken Aug. 1899: 184). The preference for a band over a choir illustrates, I think, Stewart’s acute sense of audience. Writing from Scotland to his deputy, Stewart emphasised that “no time should be lost” in reviving the band when the new instructor arrived: “It is necessary for us to keep these things prominently in view ... otherwise we shall lose our hold on the home public” (Stewart-Roberts 18/1/1901; 22/3/1901). It was perhaps the metropolitan audience’s familiarity with singing blacks – the late Victorian tours by the Fisk Jubilee Singers and the “African Choir” received extensive press – that prompted Stewart to give another, less usual, because instrumental, example of the musically civilised. In addition, the marching band’s historical, and all too visual, military association must have recommended it to the narrative of disciplined work. Yet further, and in the words of the photograph’s caption, the band was a picture of “Black and White in Harmony”; in Stewart’s verbal narrative: “Black and white mingle in the band, as they do elsewhere and in the classes” (1894b: 80). More in line with late-nineteenth-century Lovedale policy was the domestic segregation of white and black students. An all-black choir would have been a more truthful, though, for a liberal British readership, less apt, picture.

²⁷ A different story was told by part of the settler press, which persistently represented mission musicking as an example of black education that worked against the “labour market”. Psalm singing, for example, made the mission stations “nests of idleness” (*CE* Feb. 1876: 7; also Trollope 1978 [1878]: 166), and “concert singing ... having become the established thing among Kafir servants”, *The Port Elizabeth Telegraph* “advise[d] distressed white housekeepers to meet and investigate some other source of labour” (23 June 1876; for a response, see *The Alice Times* 30 June 1876).

Educating Music, Institutionalising Class and Race

politics, performance, notations

In the early 1890s London was rocked by the “piano question”. Briefly, education authorities had proposed to install one hundred pianos in state elementary schools in the city, but the ensuing outcry forced the plan’s abandonment. *The St James’s Gazette* exemplified the reaction: “What must be the feelings of the middle-class householder when he is asked to take money out of his ill-lined pocket in order that the children of ‘the poor’ may be taught to dance and sing under the auspices of smug philanthropists?” (quoted in Scholes 1947: 619). The heated debate was as much about money as about the transgressive potential of the piano under the wrong, non-bourgeois hands. For the piano was the predominant instrument of the Victorian hegemonic class; its status as bourgeois furniture such that piano purchase by the lower middle and working classes was often an act of social emulation (Leppert 1993: 150; Russell 1997: 181).¹ As spokesman for the musical welfare of “the people”, *The Musical Herald* offered a concession to those “[g]entlemen who talk[ed] about ‘the labourer’s child playing the “Moonlight Sonata” to its father on his return from toil””: the pianos were to be used only for accompanying physical exercises, not for teaching singing, and certainly not for piano instruction. Such common sense, thought the paper, would keep all content. Alas, the matter referred (Jan. 1891: 25; also *Magazine of Music* Dec. 1895: 254). The piano question was part of a larger process of classifying music education in Victorian Britain. Briefly, I want to give a sketch of that scenario for what it tells us about the structures of music education in the Cape Colony.

The history of the educational institutionalisation of class in Victorian Britain is well known. The rapid growth in state provision of elementary education for the masses was paralleled by a burgeoning of the public school system from especially mid-century on to provide for the education of the new middle classes. Music education, too, was differentiated by school type, and for reasons that can be attributed to what one might call “tradition”. First, with few exceptions, music education was admitted to the public school curriculum late and then tentatively, long after its introduction in elementary schools. One reason that has been offered for the delay was that for much of Victoria’s reign the practice of music,

¹ Conversely, as Mary Burgan has shown, in the Victorian novel a heroine’s loss of piano often signifies economic misfortune or serves as punishment for a class-related transgression (1986).

either as profession or amateur pursuit, did not satisfy the requirements for the English idea of gentility (Rainbow 1967: 23-6), whereas the new public schools were an important training ground precisely for the Victorian gentleman (Gilmour 1981: 182).

In addition, the form that music education assumed in public schools differed from that in elementary institutions. The former facilitated individual teaching of an instrument for those who chose, the latter offered class teaching of vocal music for all pupils. Hence *The Herald's* solution to the piano question that elementary school pupils keep their hands off the piano, and the conclusion of its predecessor, *The Reporter*, that public schools were "in a state of musical heathendom" because there was no singing (Aug. 1888: 466; and see Rainbow 1986: 41-2). Already near the start of Victoria's reign Sarah Glover had noted that among "the superior orders of the community, singing [was] very rarely cultivated at all by gentlemen; and few ladies ha[d] such an acquaintance with intervals, as to venture to sing the simplest psalm tune ... Psalmody [was] therefore usually abandoned to the care of the illiterate". And although the reform of congregational singing was one of the initial objectives of class singing, Glover's call to make singing "a branch of national education, not only in schools for the children of labourers and mechanics, but in academies for young ladies and gentlemen", was misdirected in the public school where only the select chapel choir sang (1835, quoted in Rainbow 1986: 45). Above all, suggests Bernarr Rainbow, the "civilising" discourse of reform that accompanied early and mid-Victorian choralism made it a redundancy for the already cultured public school pupil (45).

Choralism, in addition I argue, did not cater for one of the objectives of public school education: to inspire individual competition. In a society in which meritocracy, rather than rank, is said to have increasingly become the guide to social position, individual ambition was newly celebrated. As the breeding ground for government and business the public school was to instill the spirit of competition (Vance 1985: 24-5). One of the arenas in which it did so was on the games field, where public school team sports such as rugby and cricket encouraged individual brilliance.² Choralism, by contrast as I explore in the following chapter, was predicated on the invagination of individuality. For John Stainer, it was essential that choristers "sink their individuality in the choral body" (*MH* July 1897: 204). The manner in which the Victorians applied the military metaphor to sport and choralism tells of the different values that were attributed to them: the sport field was a battle ground,

² Hugh Cunningham says that Victorian public school games were training for, amongst other things, war and business: "As rules were drawn up and enforced, moreover, sport became an analogy for male middle-class life: a competitive struggle within agreed parameters" (1990: 297).

the choir a regiment (Vance 1985: 13-15, 189-95; and *TS-fR* Feb. 1876: 35 respectively); captains and leaders were made on the one, rank and file uniformity drilled in the other.³ Compare the solo instrumentalist from the public school, whose performance more easily approximated the idea of individualist ambition.

As much by performance medium, the structures of Victorian music education were distinguished by notation: tonic sol-fa dominated in the elementary school classroom, staff notation in the public school; in “High schools and Middle-class schools ... Tonic Sol-fa [was] all but unknown” (*MH* Feb. 1891; 48). Rainbow has attributed the absence of sol-fa in public schools to a musical and social “snobbery”. In short, music teachers in public schools were often professional musicians, whereas sol-fa teachers were musical amateurs; general teachers with some sol-fa and choral knowledge. As a preacher with no formal music training, sol-fa’s founder, John Curwen, had set the pattern. It was in a protectionist move, then, that staff using professional music teachers excluded the sol-fa amateurs from public schools (1986: 48).⁴

But it was also in their relation to each other that instruments and notations were bound by the relations of class. In chapter one I showed how sol-fa’s choralism was constructed in the terrain of theory. It was a relationship that was constituted also in pedagogical and compositional practice. Sol-fa’s original use was for singing, and this remained its primary use.⁵ Consequently, the majority of music published in sol-fa was choral. When the music educationalist WG McNaught complained that the entry for notation in Grove’s *Dictionary* confined sol-fa to the music of “very commonplace part-singing”, he pointed out in correction not the instrumental literature available in sol-fa, but that large-scale choral works were also performed from the notation (*MT* July 1880: 360-1; also Davey 1895: 453-4; and see below). A further obstacle to sol-fa’s acceptance in the public school, then, was its seemingly irredeemable relationship to popular choralism. As public schools encouraged instrumentalism and trained only a few select chapel choristers, sol-fa was irrelevant to the task.

³ I discuss the disciplinary nature of Victorian choral performance practice, and its relation to drill, as a quest for sonic uniformity in the following chapter.

⁴ Part of a more general move by professionals to regulate their profession during especially the last decades of the century, Paula Gillett suggests that the polarisation between amateur and professional musicians was exacerbated by class distinctions (2000b: 322, 340).

⁵ Attempts to “adapt” sol-fa for instrumental use were made periodically but never seem to have been wholly successful. By the end of 1864 already music in sol-fa for the piano, organ, harmonium, and brass band, amongst others, had been published. This prompted a letter to *The Reporter* from a sol-faist who had had “a strong contest with ... an old [staff] notationist” about the suitability of sol-fa for instrumental music (April 1864: 240). Sol-fa’s apparent unsuitability for instrumental music became a recurring feature of Victorian debates on notation (see, for example, *MH* Nov. 1896).

This polarisation and politicisation of instruments and notations in the terms of class was worked out more widely than in the structures of formal education. In part, it drew on the classification of sol-fa choralism from its other institutional contexts. I explored in the previous chapter, for example, sol-fa's affiliations with a variety of reform organisations, charitable institutions for the "underclasses": children of the poor, orphans, criminals. The near monopoly that sol-fa enjoyed in these institutions, as well as eventually in state elementary schools, themselves born in the spirit of reform, seemed to mark it as a working-class phenomenon. This is misleading on two accounts. First, the working classes were, of course, no homogeneous entity, and second, it denies middle-class involvement in the movement. The Victorians were themselves ambivalent about sol-fa's social base. Sometimes it was associated with only the "lower orders", sometimes others were included. Fuller Maitland commented on the "enormous success of the Tonic Sol-fa movement" in "improving the musical proficiency and taste of the lower classes" in one breath, while in the next commended it for "bringing music home to all classes of the community" (1902: 163).⁶ Often, its audience was figured simply as "the people" or "the masses", the non-specificity of these categories suggesting that sol-fa bridged larger economic class divisions, at least to an extent.

A clearer picture of sol-fa's constituency can be gleaned from the audiences of the main venues of its use.⁷ One of sol-fa's original strongholds was the church, especially the Nonconformist chapel.⁸ The extent of working-class participation in sol-fa classes at church, however, would have been limited by working-class attendance at church. For if the working classes generally favoured Nonconformism to Anglicanism, it should be remembered that on the whole "popular abstinence from worship was an inherited custom among the working classes" (Hopkins 1979: 82). Besides, as the Curwens frequently lamented in their reports on the state of congregational hymnody, congregational singing classes never seemed to have caught on. An exception was the famed Union Chapel in Islington, where both the choir and congregation took sol-fa classes. Here, the minister, Dr Allon, used his influence "to induce ladies of good social position" to join the church choir, a situation which "soon killed all class feeling" (quoted in Curwen 1888: 369-70). But the pastoral intervention required to

⁶ The secondary literature rehearses Victorian generalisations.

⁷ No empirical study of the social base of sol-fa has been undertaken, and what follows is, to an extent, speculative.

⁸ In John Spencer Curwen's extensive ethnographic survey of worship music in Christian churches of almost every kind with a presence in Victorian Britain, sol-fa activity is reported only in churches of Dissent (1888 and 1885).

entice the gentility – and only the *gentlewomen* – into the choir tells of a space and practice that was classified: sol-fa singing was not genteel and the choir was not constituted of the gentility (see the introduction). Neither, though, was the choir wholly working-class. In the choral society, a second major venue for sol-fa activity, Dave Russell has shown that choirs were not the proletarian institutions claimed by both Victorian and latter-day critics, but drew their members predominantly from the skilled working and lower middle classes (1997: chap. 10). These same groups supported the self- or mutual-improving associations, a third institution through which sol-fa choralism was routinely practiced.

An exemplary institution of Victorian self-improvement was John Cassel's *The Popular Educator*, its professed mission the "Education of the People", the improvement and elevation of the masses (1852: 97). As a measure of the general acceptance in mid-Victorian Britain of music's place in the civilising scheme, the magazine proclaimed that the "success of a sound and practical acquaintance with the harmony of sweet sounds, and with the principles of vocal and instrumental music, will not be questioned in our day" (97). Lessons in tonic sol-fa accordingly appeared from the first volume, along with Latin, natural history and English grammar. In addition, the magazine, acknowledging the inadequacy of its text-based lessons for subjects such as French and music, recommended the need for "public instructors" and "living instructions". The numerous evening sol-fa classes, typically associated with self-improving clubs, provided such a forum. But as places of self-improvement they excluded the majority of the working classes on two accounts. First, while they operated according to the ideology of civility – Samuel Smiles would famously say that "civilization itself [was] but a question of personal improvement" (1859: 2) – not everyone was overly anxious to subscribe to elite-led notions of civility and rational recreation, within which sol-fa was inscribed (see Bailey 1979).⁹ A second obstacle to broad working-class engagement with sol-fa was its textedness. For if a precondition for sol-fa is basic non-musical literacy, this would surely have excluded some of the mid-Victorian adult working class from participation, as they were from *The Popular Educator's* textual improving mission.

To summarise. Amongst adults it would appear that sol-fa, like most other forms of rational recreation, captured a lower-middle- and upper-working-class audience.

⁹ George Bernard Shaw satirised sol-fa's claim to respectability in an anecdote from his youth. Having consulted a "sage" as to how he "might achieve the formation of a perfect character", Shaw was told, amongst other things, to become an "adept" of sol-fa. He took up the other suggestions, but "resolutely refused to learn the Tonic Sol-fa ... determined to prove that it [was] possible to form a perfect character without it" (*The Star* 1 June 1889, quoted in Laurence 1981: 652).

Paradoxically, as we will see, those sections of the working and middle classes that did become sol-faists would ultimately find themselves shunned by the dominant respectability to which they believed they were gaining access. Children sol-faists had a similar social background, though with a broader working-class profile as more working-class children were gradually brought into the state elementary school system, and sol-fa maintained its traditional base in voluntary organisations for the poor throughout the century.

In early 1891 the Tonic Sol-fa College organised a symposium on “The Future of Tonic Sol-fa”. Papers were invited on the following theme:

Undoubtedly a fusion is going on between the Staff Notationists and the Tonic Sol-faists. Is this a desirable and healthy thing? And what will be the result? Will the Sol-faists impress their principles on the old notationists, or will the old notationists absorb the Sol-faists and cause them to lose their identity? (*MH* Feb. 1891: 48).

Dr S McBurney opened proceedings with the standard call to action: sol-fa’s work was not yet done as professional musicians did not employ it in “High schools and Middle-class schools [where] Tonic Sol-fa [was] all but unknown”. The consequence was that “until it [was] a regular part of every high school curriculum ... the upper and middle classes in England [would] remain unmusical” (48). Arguments for and against the immediate matter at hand were offered. WG McNaught announced that sol-faists were “in danger of a loss of identity”, and a certain Mr Litster that it should “continue to be sectarian” (*MH* Feb. 1891: 50). Others, such as the conductor Joseph Proudman, regarded the “undoubted mixing of the New Notation readers with Staff notation singers” as “a very healthy sign ... an indication of dissolving prejudice” (50). This slippage between the language of class and matters of notation indicates, I suggest, that whatever the “reality” of sol-fa’s social base, the representation of that reality often assumed more rigid definition in the social classification of notations, particularly in discussions in which they were compared.

It has been argued that the choral society’s potential to reduce class tension was a founding middle-class assumption (Russell 1997: 287; also McGuire 2002: 3-4, 20). While this ideal for choralism was grounded in its respectability, sol-fa’s classedness, I want to suggest, could also frustrate class mobility. The famed choral conductor and composer, Henry Coward, thus listed what he termed the “social aspect” as among the factors inhibiting the spread of sol-fa:

There had long been the notion that Sol-fa can only be obtained in cheap classes, and the look of ineffable disgust which comes over the face of a “four-guineas-a-term young man” at the sight of a book which shows the possessor to be a “penny-a-week fellow,” has caused many a Sol-faist to do the “chameleon trick” (*MH* Feb. 1891: 49).

If cheap sheet music was a marker of sol-fa – *The Reporter's* front-page motto was “cheap, easy and true” – the “chameleon trick” was nothing other than the chorister’s bid for bourgeois respectability as promised by literacy in staff notation. Notions of class, it seems, had become inscribed in musical notation to the extent that the first generation of children educated in sol-fa, and inculcated with the improving ethos, found that by adulthood, when the choral society had replaced the classroom, they had outgrown their social-notational origins in the quest for respectability. Hence the necessity for the symposium. If by the 1890s sol-fa was predominant in the elementary school, popular enthusiasm for it in the choral society was on the wane.¹⁰

Sol-faists themselves had always represented sol-fa-ing as a movement for the people. At first this coincided with their philanthropic reform agenda. By the end of the century, though, their sectarian attitude only confirmed long-established perceptions about the class make-up of sol-fa choralism’s audience. The politics of insularity and classification of notation combined at the symposium. McBurney, for one, spoke of the need for “the prosecution of Tonic Sol-fa pure and simple” if it was not to be “swallowed up in a miserable hybrid condition”. And “for the great mass of the people” attention was to be confined to sol-fa alone (*MH* Feb. 1891: 48). Originally, Curwen had envisaged sol-fa as an introduction to staff notation. In the first book publication of the method in 1843, an appendix on the “Introduction to the Old Notation” concluded the sol-fa course. As sol-fa became more successful and spawned its own publishing industry, however, it was taught as an end in itself. In the *Standard Course* of 1872, for example, the section on, and all examples in, staff notation were dropped (Rainbow 1967: 164-5). But this needs qualification. In their desire for expansion into the public school, the sol-fa hierarchy conceded that sol-fa was to be treated as a preliminary notation for the middle- and upper-class pupil – McBurney spoke of sol-fa’s “potentiality of great things”, “including a complete mastery of the staff” (*MH* Feb. 1891: 48) – while for their core constituency many were adamant that sol-fa remained the beginning and end of music literacy and literature. The tale of progression from sol-fa to staff that the symposium narrated as a musical journey towards social respectability cast a shadow on sol-fa philanthropy as it attempted to deny the majority of singers the opportunity to take that journey. In the end, sol-fa proved as conservative as most other Victorian reform movements.

¹⁰ Amateur choirs contained sol-faists into the second decade of the twentieth century, but choirs had already begun to insist that singers be proficient in staff notation by the turn of the century (McGuire 2002: 8). Even in the classroom sol-fa’s dominance was not as secure as statistics suggest. Novello’s *School Music Review*, a supporter of sol-fa, is littered with calls for the introduction of staff notation throughout the 1890s.

In May of 1897 a quite extraordinary moment in the history of Victorian musical culture took place: a group of Britain's most eminent musicians marched on Whitehall to present a memorandum to the Education Department. Organised under the banner of the Incorporated Society of Musicians, a quasi-union of professional musicians, the deputation included Parry from the Royal College, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, principal of the Royal Academy, with apologies given for Stanford. Their ostensible aim was to highlight the decline in use of staff notation – what sol-faists ridiculed as “the vanishing staff” – but to this end it became, in the words of *The Herald* editorial, “a whole-hearted and bitter attack upon Tonic Sol-fa” (June 1897: 188). What was novel about the event – but one of the more spectacular often very public skirmishes between supporters of different notations in over half a century – was not the extent to which its discourse drew on the reified relationship into which sol-fa and staff had been dichotomised, nor the institutional polarisation which it displayed – professionals and conservatories versus the amateurs of the Tonic Sol-fa College – but the political cause for which it acted: the internal politics of class that informed so much of the discourse on notation in Victorian Britain was replaced by concerns of national politics.

Mackenzie's high-pitched statement that staff notation was in “imminent danger” of disappearing from the musical landscape appealed to that old bugbear, the English musical inferiority complex: “the European language of music” stood in “danger of being superceded and effaced” by the “long trial” of sol-fa choralism (*MH* June 1897: 169). Continental art music, we saw in the introduction, was the envy of and exemplar for the Victorian musical elite, and, by the end of the century, its language had been incorporated into the compositional syllabi of the conservatories and the compositions of the first renaissance composers. Sol-faists, by contrast, “persistently aimed low”, sol-faing was associated with “musicianship of the very poorest kind”, its choral “compositions of the most wretched and conventional kind” (Davey 1895: 417; Walker 1907: 288; Fuller Maitland 1902: 163). For the deputation, sol-fa symbolised, in WH Cummings' words, “the great stumbling-block to the advance of the student and of national music” (*MH* June 1897: 167).

It had long been assumed that the standing of the nation's music resided in the calibre of its music students; this had spurred the establishment of the Royal College in 1882. But the attack on sol-fa indexed a double turn-about. First, it was a commonplace that sol-fa had contributed to musicalising Britain. Sir John Gorst, speaking for the Education Department, reminded the deputation that sol-fa had “made the English nation a much more musical nation than it was twenty-five years ago” (*MH* June 1897: 169). For the deputation sol-fa had had the reverse effect, impeding national musical progress. Second, professional musicians

had previously remained largely uninvolved in school music education. In his response to the deputation, Curwen remarked wryly that it was “a gratifying sign of the times that the leading musicians of the country [took] an interest in the musical work of the elementary schools”, whereas a quarter of century before none such had existed (188).

The aim of the deputation was to argue for the use of staff notation in elementary schools; Cummings even proposed that a special grant be awarded to schools that taught staff. All of which suggests a very different scenario from the one I elaborated above, in which notations were marked by class to the extent that they were compatible only with school types of a corresponding class. The weakening of the link between social class and notation in late-Victorian Britain points to a more general change in the philosophy of music education. By the turn of the century the view of music as a socialising, or civilising, force had been replaced by one that stressed the value of music as an educational subject in and for itself (Cox 1993: 62). In this dispensation, sol-fa’s long self-fashioned claim to a privileged relationship with social reform was beside the point. Conversely, if staff notation offered a special window onto the type of music that was thought to bring about national musical progress, then its, and no longer sol-fa’s, non-pedagogic claims for a place in the elementary school classroom were now more attractive.

The deputation drove home its slogan of “staff for national progress” by shrewdly tying the development of the nation to the human life-cycle. Conceding a modicum of use-value to sol-fa, it argued that the notation “only carried the child a very small way”:

There was a point beyond which Tonic Sol-fa did not and could not go, and unless a vast amount of vocal and instrumental music was to be a sealed book, it was essential that a child should be taught the staff notation in universal use” (*MH* June 1897: 167).

Feeding from and into a discourse that sol-fa existed for children and staff for adults (see *MH* Aug. 1898: 229), the implication for Britain, if it persisted to favour sol-fa in its schools, was a state of arrested development: the country’s musical progress would stagnate in infancy, it would be incapable of maturing to the Continent’s music. The deputation’s appeal to literacy was telling. For sol-fa’s fundamental claim was that it offered an easier path to music literacy. By suggesting that “a vast amount” of music remained a closed book to sol-faists, the notation’s *raison d’être* was called into question. Mackenzie extended the literacy metaphor, comparing sol-faists to “a company of blind men turned into a free library”. And the musical texts he took for going unread were quite specific. Sol-fa’s threat to “the European language of music” was attributed to the “indisputable fact that for *instrumental* purposes [it was] absolutely useless” (*MH* June 1897: 169; my emphasis). This played on the

old half-myth that I mentioned earlier in which sol-fa was twinned with vocal, and especially choral, music. Parry drew on the association in his submission to the Education Department, stating that “a great many inhabitants of the British Isles [were] likely to take it that choral music [was] sufficient for all purposes”, whereas “that idea ha[d] hindered music as much as anything else” (169). The message of the deputation was that sol-fa choralism was regressive, unfit for England’s musical survival and its instrumental renaissance (see the introduction).

education arrested, or sol-fa’s children

In the autumn of 1892, the eastern Cape city of Grahamstown celebrated a moment of Empire: the jubilee of sol-fa’s metropolitan invention. The local festivities made explicit the connection between mission, sol-fa and Empire:

into every British Colony and Settlement the system has found its way, and been received with more or less acceptance ... Missionaries all over the world find it a great help in their labours, and in that connection our local celebration is held; for it seems to us very proper that a system so universal amongst the natives of South Africa should produce its native exponents here (*Programme of the Tonic Sol-fa Jubilee*).

The Colony’s black singers may have seemed to embrace sol-fa, but this was not the case for all its singers: “Amongst the European population, for reasons which can easily be explained, if not defended, the system has not been as popular as it might be, or patronised to the extent it deserves” (*Programme of the Tonic Sol-fa Jubilee*). No explanation for white indifference was forthcoming; the publicity material for the jubilee, from which these observations are culled, perhaps deemed the reasons self-evident, settler knowledge. Less circumspect, no doubt because new to settler life, was an “English lady” who had recently taken up “a musical appointment in South Africa”. She stated the matter plainly enough: “At present, Tonic So-fa is only pushed amongst the natives, and this has prejudiced the colonials against it” (*MH* April 1893: 105). A Miss Knaggs from near Port Elizabeth wrote similarly: “there is a good deal of prejudice still to be overcome before the Tonic Sol-fa system can become really popular among the white people. This is owing, partly, I believe to the fact that Tonic Sol-fa was introduced first amongst the natives” (*MH* Feb. 1896: 54-5). In a segregated society, the mere fact of sol-fa’s blackness seems in itself to have been a check on white participation. So when a Mr Clary related how he had “learnt Sol-fa from a Kaffir”, it was added, as a point of clarification for a British audience, that “that mean[t] a great deal” in the eastern Cape (*TS-fR* Dec. 1887: 280). Sol-fa’s colonial blackness was in fact to have

profound consequences for the direction that South African music education would take, for South African musicking period. Here, I sketch only its racialised structure in the making.

At the same time that Education Department inspectors were noting that mission school blacks were all singing, though questioning their commitment to pedagogy, they were reporting on the almost complete absence of singing in white schools in the east (see, for example, *RS-GE* 1894: xxxvii; 1895: 29; 1900: 98a; 1902: 64a). The disparity is brought into relief sharpest with statistics. Of the 498 sol-fa certificates awarded in the eastern Cape by the Tonic Sol-fa College of London in 1897, two of the larger mission schools accounted for 34% of all certificates, the four white schools examined in Grahamstown only 7% (*RS-GE* 1898: 112a-13a). If sol-fa had slotted into the racial economy of colonial South Africa, it did so under a double binary – also under the bind of class.

Like the middle-class public school pupil in Britain, white South Africans were not, so they deemed, in need of sol-fa's civilising and disciplining benefits. Nor, it appears, were they overly eager at first to accept it for its pedagogical good. This does not mean that the settlers from the land without music were an unmusical lot. Quite the contrary. The Grahamstown schools were, and had been since the early 1880s, busying themselves with other music exams, no less in the hope of collecting certificates; in this case, from the formerly local, now global, metropolitan examination bodies Trinity and the Royal Schools, the latter through its South African proxy, the Cape of Good Hope University. These fed off and into individual, largely instrumental, music instruction. The Diocesan School for Girls in Grahamstown presently acquired ten new practice rooms, each with a piano (see Sparrow 1978: chap. 9). Much later, Percival R Kirby reported that pianos were found in almost every white school, while there were none in black schools. Citing financial constraint as a factor, Kirby also cryptically suggested that it had been regarded as “undesirable” to supply sol-fa-ing black singers with pianos (1949: 621). What this suggests is the refraction of the class-based British system outlined above onto race in the eastern Cape.

Reality was however not quite so black and white. Black students did play instruments; the Lovedale Mission Institution had its band, and some pupils took up the piano with teachers in Alice, the satellite town. A few black students even learnt staff notation. But these were exceptions. John Knox Bokwe's knowledge of staff, for instance, was self-taught. Many more white children learnt sol-fa and singing in school, especially from the turn of the century on (see *RS-GE* 1897: 84a; 1899: 25a; 1902: 64a; 1903: 78a). This was under duress of the latest, and more powerful, of sol-fa's colonial proselytisers, the Cape Education Department. The new policy and its enforcers came, moreover, from the

west, where sol-fa's race credentials had been historically white (see Bouws n.d. [1972]: chap. 7; and Fick 1984 for sol-fa's history in the western Cape). And if at first, though slowly by comparison with the west, the nexus of sol-fa, class singing and choir competitions caught on in white schools in the east, its reign was short-lived, cut short by the time of the First World War (Henning 1976: 50). The causes for this are not germane here, but one of the consequences is telling.

It involved a shift in the career of Frederick Farrington, the first "instructor in vocal music" for the "eastern circuit" of the Colony, and an examiner for the London-based Tonic Sol-fa College. Later writers wrote of Farrington's work in the heroic vein to which the Victorians had narrated the lives of their own missionaries (see De Kock 1996: chap. 5; and for Stewart, Erlmann 1999: 38):

The trials and tribulations which Farrington experienced in the course of his duties as Inspector of Music would certainly curb the enthusiasm of the most ardent pedagogue in our present day. He travelled on horseback or in a horse cart throughout the Transkei. There were no roads, merely tracks: [sic] there were no bridges, often flooded rivers. At least three times he was washed down-stream and once his horse was drowned. Another time he was thrown out of his cart on a rough road and a wheel passed over him (Henning 1976: 51).¹¹

As an ardent supporter of the notation-method, Farrington must have taken the rise and fall of sol-fa choralism in white schools during his tenure as something of a bitter-sweet pill. As white disinterest grew, so Farrington redirected his energies, spending the final years of his career amongst the black sol-fa-ing choristers of the eastern Cape (50). He was not the first to do so, nor would he be the last.¹² Curwen's idea, then, that Cape sol-faists did not have "to battle with a class cleavage which [in Britain] often led to higher schools rejecting a method because it was successful in lower schools", was the wish-fantasy of a British sol-faist (*SMR* 1 Jan. 1906: 146). Other, racial distinctions were at work in the Colony.

Race, we have seen, often substituted for class in the Cape. The racialised structure of music education that I outlined above is part of that story. As classified notations and the

¹¹ The romance of sol-fa choralism as mission had lived on, with Education Department officials now its secular evangelists. An obituary for the Cape sol-faist Henry Nixon, for example, described him as "an enthusiastic missionary of the tonic sol-fa method" (*EdGaz* 13 April 1906: 643). It was Nixon who had taught Birkett sol-fa clandestinely at teacher training college in England. His apology for the notation, *The Tonic Sol-fa System. What Is It?*, was published in Cape Town in 1898.

¹² Farrington may have been retracing the steps of South Africa's first sol-fa missionary, Christopher Birkett. As I said in chapter one, we do not know why Birkett left Grahamstown, but we do know that he found green sol-fa pastures in the eastern Cape mission fields. It would be convenient here to speculate that he quit the settler city in failure, or at least in frustration. In a town where sol-fa never became popular with the white residents, Birkett was "Grahamstown's first and last real teacher of the Sol-fa method" (*Programme of the Tonic Sol-fa Jubilee* 1892). Like Farrington, he was perhaps in part lured by more receptive, black sol-fa territory elsewhere. Farrington's successor, Samuel News, is particularly remembered for his work in black music education (Henning 1976: 51).

class structures of music education accompanied the missionaries and settlers from Britain, they maintained similar lines of differentiation in the different social parameters of the Colony in which they were now situated. Those structural boundaries were always permeable, at times so frayed as to seem to disintegrate – as when the Education Department advocated sol-fa for all pupils in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – but they appear to have been remarkably durable on the whole. Black choirs still, in the post-apartheid, liberated Republic, only sing from sol-fa; white choirs cannot sing from sol-fa. And were we to move from broad considerations of music educational systems to the micro-workings of specific syllabi, no less will we find that sol-fa was part of the discourse of race in colonial South Africa. First, I want cast my net wider, to briefly consider racial segregation and colonial education more generally.¹³

On the eve of the consummation of the Union of South Africa, the Superintendent-General of Education of the Cape Colony, Thomas Muir, took stock of the “successes” he had effected during his tenure:

The separation of White and Coloured children was early taken up and has engaged much quiet attention ever since. Few of the general public, and indeed few educationists, of the present day are aware of the extent to which eighteen years ago white children were dependent upon Mission Schools for their education ... This change, amounting almost to a small revolution, was called for in the interests of both classes of children (*RS-GE* 1910: 3-4).

If Muir overstated his case – Lovedale, for instance, had only ever had a handful of white pupils, and non-mission schools were wholly white – the “rescue” of white pupils from black mission schools completed the push towards educational segregation in the Colony as it upgraded the white pupil’s class status; the government grant per pupil in 1894 was £3 5s 0d for first-class public schools and 15s for mission schools, a scale that Muir metaphorised as a social “stairway”: “Starting in the squalid basement with certain schools paid 15s. per pupil per annum, we gradually find our way to higher mansions where the grant is four times as great. And the moral of the ascent is ‘To him that hath shall be given’” (*RS-GE* 1895: xxvi-vii).¹⁴ The state’s segregationist intent was clear.

¹³ I do this here, leaving for a moment matters related to music, because there is little critical work on pre-twentieth-century black education, and specifically on the mission’s early involvement in generating discourses and structures that would become part of apartheid’s Bantu Education.

¹⁴ Such was the force of the colonial conflation of race and class that schools for the “poorer white population” were called Mission Schools. Lovedale objected, and henceforth they became Fourth Class Public Schools (see *CE* Oct. 1890: 147; also Feb. 1893: 17). The mission schools did receive some financial support from the home churches, but by 1894 this accounted for only thirty percent of Lovedale’s income (Stewart 1894a: 12). The Aborigines’ Schools in the Native Territories, which were not affiliated to the mission, received an even lower grant than the mission schools.

The mission's was only slightly less unambiguous.¹⁵ It is somewhat well known that the tenor of Lovedale's educational policies changed with appointment of the Scot James Stewart to the principalship. The reasons for the shift were distilled in a question *The Christian Express* posed at the end of Stewart's reign: "Can the methods of Edinburgh be taken over literally in Pondoland?" (July 1908: 108). Ironically, it was asked of the Education Department, which had lately reported that it aimed "to give the natives the same education as the Europeans where [sic] getting – the same kind of instruction, on the same lines and on the same standards" (108). While the Department, on the one hand, was occupied with separating black and white bodies in the classroom, amidst Lovedale's protestations, Lovedale, on the other, had been arguing for a difference in the *content* of education since the 1870s. In the interim, it had begun implementing this policy. Oft-cited examples were the mission's turn to "industrial education" and the turn from Latin and Greek.¹⁶ Whenever the settler press chose to vilify the mission's educational work it chose to misrepresent Lovedale as a school of classical languages. Mission musicking was another of the settler press's favourite targets. Hence Lovedale's response to the *Eastern Star* of Grahamstown that Latin and piano were not taught at the institution (*CE* July 1878: 2; also Jan. 1884: 1). Lovedale of course did not deny its sol-fa, singing education. For while sol-fa choralism and woodwork were not, for the black converts, class and race transgressive, instruction in piano and Latin were reserved for the middle- and upper-class or white public school. The crux was that the mission had begun to bar its students from higher education broadly conceived. Stewart stated Lovedale's objective frankly: "We do not try educationally to produce a few exotic specimens of a more advanced type, but rather to distribute the benefits of a useful elementary education among as large a number as possible" (quoted in Shepherd n.d. [1941]: 172).¹⁷ It was a policy ground in both political paternalism and the science of infantilism.

¹⁵ This is no place to review the mission's sometime collusion with, refutation of, and indifference to the Cape government's increasingly segregationist-directed legislation during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Lovedale, for one, had no overall policy on the matter, reacting to specific issues as they agreed or conflicted with the mission's agenda. It was in the area of black education, long become the Institution's *raison d'être*, that Lovedale did develop a segregationist-type policy, one moreover that antedated the government's. This is not surprising given the somewhat laissez-faire attitude towards black education before the Muir era began in 1892. For a good, though "straight", overview of Lovedale's educational policies during Stewart's principalship, see Brock (1974: chap. 3); also Ashley (1982).

¹⁶ Black elite opinion viewed these developments as an assault on their educational rights (see *Imvo* 4 May–8 July 1885; and *CE* Jan. 1880: 15; Nov. 1884: 163; Nov. 1903: 171), and Lovedale, with a nod to the colonists, that they was more suited to, and productive of, a working class than was a "literary education" (*CE* Aug. 1881: 3; June 1884: 88-90; April 1887: 61-2; Sep. 1893: 129).

¹⁷ The Lovedale graduate and editor of the King Williamstown-based *Imvo*, John Tengo Jabavu, astutely observed that without Latin it was not possible to matriculate into university (*Imvo* 8 July 1885: 4). The upshot

The savage as child is a well-known colonial trope, and a recurring figure in the Cape mission archive. In the wake of social Darwinism and colonial “discoveries” and conquests, it was a necessary fiction to complete what Anne McClintock has called the global Family of Man. For this evolutionary family, the “natural” Victorian domestic relations of father to child sanctioned hierarchies and legitimated power in other social spaces (1995: 44-5; also 51). In the colonies the family appeared aberrant, and its children therefore became the object of scientific speculation. One theory, called “arrested development”, proposed that blacks reached mental maturity sometime about puberty. Lovedale not only followed the debate from at least the 1870s, it entered the fray with its own counter evidence: black students who had theological and medical degrees from Scotland disproved the theory (see *CE* Feb. 1876: 12; also Dec. 1908: 198-9; and April 1909: 58). From the first, then, Lovedale took an anti-essentialist stance on race, at least in this matter. Indeed, it could not have been otherwise for the educating mission. But if it rejected the influence of “[r]ace, *per se*” on its “methods of educating the Native”, it nevertheless argued for an alternative education on the basis of a difference attributed to that late-nineteenth-century catch-all concept of “environment” (*CE* May 1906: 122).

The mission was to read environment variously at various times. Before the turn of the century it was generally taken to indicate educational influence over hereditary determinism (see, for example, *CE* Aug. 1873: 6; July 1879: 2-3). In short, the mission station civilised, the kraal heathenised.¹⁸ It was in the new environment of the mission station that the mission fathered its own version of the family. Familiar to Victorian churchmen, it was one in which black South Africans were orphans – “the children of our

of “the [black] outcry for higher education”, suggested the East London-based *Izwi Labantu*, was “that every year will see a larger number proceeding to England and America for the education that is denied them in this country” (see *CE* Oct. 1901: 145-6; also Sep. 1901; and *Izwi Labantu* 27 Aug. 1901). An estimated one hundred black South Africans studied in the US during the 1890s (Brock 1974: 157). A favourite Lovedale counter-move threw African-American opinion back at the Cape black elite, particularly Booker T Washington’s commitment to manual labour; Latin and Greek were not taught at Washington’s college at Tuskegee. Needless to say, Lovedale disagreed with WEB Du Bois that “Negro education” should be modelled on the “European classical ideal” (see *CE* May 1902: 65; June 1907: 89; July 1908).

¹⁸ By the first years of the twentieth century environment was associated in particular with missionary calls for a return to education in the vernacular; previously instruction had been in the language of Empire. The calls were uttered in the rhetoric of segregation that was to become South Africa’s own master narrative of the twentieth century; Derrida reminds us that “apartheid” has never been, never needed, translation (1986: 331). For example, if the “white race” was to “stimulate and encourage Negro education and progress”, this had to be done “in such a way as to allow the Negro mind to develop naturally and not become a mere imitation of the European mind” (*CE* June 1907: 89; also June 1906: 140; July 1908: 108). As historians of race in South Africa have long noted, it was during the first years of the century that a more explicitly elaborated policy on segregation took off (see Dubow 1987: 74). Missionary thinking, as I mentioned, predated the more well-known work on educational segregation, typically said to have been initiated in Charles T Loram’s *The Education of the South African Native* (1917).

adoption” – and the paterfamilias the father-teacher (*CE* July 1879: 2).¹⁹ The orphanage was, of course, a primary site of Victorian reform, of middle-class philanthropy. In the mission’s formulation of paternalism, the child-black was also inscribed in the relations of class. Thus William Charles Scully, the native administrator and novelist, wrote of the “European Task”: “In South Africa, the European race stands in more or less the same relation to the Native as the king to the poor ... the Natives, are poor with the poverty of disinherited and ignorant children. Their destiny lies, under providence, in the hollow of our hand” (*CE* March 1894: 46; also Aug. 1892: 117). Hand-outs, though, whether educational or other, at home or in the colonies, for blacks or the indigent, were never full-blown hand ups. They were given with the knowledge, and intention, that their power lay in the moment of withdrawal. As with many of the reformers at home, the churchman’s education did not aim at socio-political equality (see, for example, *CE* June 1884: 91; Stewart 1906: 370). The same was true of matters educational. If the mission resisted the theory of arrested development, it was to arrest black educational development. Either way, blacks were to be kept “undeveloped”. How tonic sol-fa worked in the Colony is a case in point.

If the colonial archive is anything to go by, the eastern Cape was a more overtly racialised society than the western Cape. In Farrington’s reports, for example, black and white exist always in their comparison:

Native pupils do not find the same difficulty in the case of Ear Exercises [as white pupils], nor indeed with any of the five tests except Time ... The natural abilities of the native is such that if only this subject were systematically taught to them, European children would find it impossible to keep pace (*RS-GE* 1902: 164a).

As we saw, late in his career Farrington would take on this task himself. There was, however, a caveat to black musical aptitude: it applied only to the Junior and Elementary Standards (164a).²⁰ The same scenario pertained in the normal colleges. In the first two years of their course, black teachers outperformed or were equal to their white counterparts in all

¹⁹ Even for children with parents the missionary-teacher became a surrogate parent. As the well-known missionary Henri A Junod put it: “The white boy as a rule is educated from the moral point of view by his parents; among the natives there are few fathers and mothers who have the slightest idea about that duty, even, and sad to say, among Christian natives. The teacher, therefore, is the true moral instructor of the black children” (*CE* Aug. 1903: 125).

²⁰ Farrington’s reference to junior and elementary standards points to the close institutional affiliation between the Cape Education Department and the London Tonic Sol-fa College. His usage, in fact, is a compound of institutional jargon: junior and elementary from the latter, standards from the former. The Education Department’s music syllabus was modelled almost precisely on the sol-fa certificates (see *EdGaz* 25 Oct. 1901: 41-3 for the syllabus), and Farrington examined for the latter while inspecting for the Department. In the latter’s syllabi, the work up to standard three approximated the requirements for the junior sol-fa certificate, standard five the elementary certificate, and standard seven the intermediate.

Farrington's tests. In the final year they did worse. What black teachers did not know, then, their black pupils would not know. For Farrington, the "interesting point [was] whether Natives [could] be trained to master these difficulties" (168a). More pertinent, the matter was not whether they could but why they should have bothered, of what use would a more "advanced" knowledge of sol-fa have been to black teachers? The Elementary Certificate, for example, equated with the musical requirements for the Cape's standard five. Black teachers had no need for further sol-fa qualifications as it was unlikely they would ever teach pupils beyond standard five; Aborigines' Schools were "not permitted to go beyond" that standard, and in Mission Schools, where no such restriction obtained, there was overall little "demand for instruction beyond, or even up to, [that] stage" (*RS-GE* 1907: 9).²¹ Caught in a circular system, where black pupils' formal music educational knowledge remained "elementary" because their teachers' musical training was elementary because their pupils would not require anything more than elementary music instruction, the Elementary Certificate was a metonym for late-nineteenth-century segregated education as arrested education.

At the time that the Cape Education Department adopted sol-fa in the early 1890s, sol-fa, as always, was embroiled in metropolitan debate. At issue was its relationship to staff notation, specifically at what stage in the child's life s/he should, to borrow a contemporary metaphor, be weaned off sol-fa and bred further on staff. As I mentioned earlier, the idea that notations were age specific was a commonplace in Victorian Britain. It was thought, for instance, "that as Sol-fa [was] used by children, adults ought to use the staff" (*MH* Aug. 1898: 229). Even England's own musical adulthood, its renaissance, seemed to have arrived with the move from sol-fa to staff. As *The School Music Review's* italicised conclusion to its "Short History of Music in Primary Schools" suggests: "*The nota bene that since 1883 [in the code for elementary singing] has read as follows: 'It is hoped that at some future time the relation between the Tonic Sol-fa and the Staff Notations will be taught to scholars in Standard V. and upwards, ' now makes its appearance with the words 'at some future time' omitted*" (June 1892: 4; also Evans and McNaught c.1900: iv). In music education circles this was the burning issue in 1890s Britain. It was not, however, an especially new concern, being an old feature of the structure of the sol-fa course. Initially staff notation was a compulsory part of the Intermediate Certificate, then optional (*Curwen* 1875: 221). Later, the

²¹ The larger missions, such as Lovedale, continued with higher school education, but they were exceptional, functioning largely as feeder schools for their teacher training colleges.

Tonic Sol-fa College began awarding certificates in staff notation, though only *after* the sol-fa Elementary Certificate had been gained (*MH* Feb. 1895: 57).

In touch with these metropolitan goings-on, the Cape Education Department's syllabus noted that it was "desirable that pupils in Standard V. and upwards should be taught to apply their knowledge to the Staff Notation" (*EdGaz* 25 Oct. 1901: 43). Farrington accordingly turned his attention to the problem of educational, notational progress, to how singers, having mastered sol-fa, were to proceed to staff (see *RS-GE* 1904-1905). The Colony's black students, though, were exempted from this directive to musical development. Their sol-fa achievements, we saw, typically ended in the Elementary Certificate, before the Intermediate's staff requirements. And standard five, where the teaching of staff only began, was more often than not the very end of their school journey.²² It is hardly remarkable, then, that education in staff notation took place faster in the whiter western Cape (Fick 1984: 286).

Educational segregation was inscribed also in music educational literature, where, again, it was less a matter of difference in content than in degree. An example is James Rodger's *South African Songster* series. One of the earliest South African contributions to the flourishing turn-of-century trade in elementary music education literature, the booklets were also a belated recognition of a gap in the colonial market, and a parallel *Native Songster* series followed shortly.²³ The latter's otherness, however, is by no means apparent. With roots in the Education Department, Rodger did not heed missionary calls for the vernacular, nor did he think to include music by black composers. And this was long before the debate, black or white, as to the use of "African" music as black school music. But hidden in the all English-language, all white-composed, mostly metropolitan songs, is a logic of differentiation. Take, for example, *The Elementary Native Songster*.²⁴ We are told that the

²² Much later, bemoaning the prevalence of sol-fa in black schools, AM Jones' advised "African teachers" that sol-fa "prevent[ed] a really musical pupil from going far in music ... The proper tool for reading music [was] Staff Notation" (1948: 23).

²³ There were supposedly three books in the graded series, following the requirements of the sol-fa certificates and the Education Department syllabus (see *EdGaz* 11 July 1907: 10). The full titles for the two elementary level booklets are: *The Elementary Native Songster: A Collection of Songs and Exercises for the Native Schools of the Cape Colony* (1907a), and *The Elementary South African Songster: A Collection of Songs and Exercises for the Schools of the Cape Colony* (1907b). Note how the titles suggest that white singers were foremost South African and then of the Cape, while black singers were only of the Colony. Likewise, the government after Union would step up state endeavour to exclude blacks from a white South Africa.

It is well known that the black elite, and especially the Cape black elite, strongly opposed Union, and that their ultimate allegiance had long been to Britain above the Colony. The "patriot" songs in Rodger's books reflect this: "God Save the King" appears in both white and black books, but while the *Native Songster* includes "Now pray we for our county, / That England long may be / The holy, and the happy, / And the gloriously free" (1907a: 32), the white *South African Songster* has "The Cape of Good Hope: A Patriot Song" (1907b: 24).

²⁴ The third book in the *Native Songster* series may not have appeared. I have been unable to locate a copy of *The Intermediate Native Songster*, as it would have been called, and *The Christian Express*, always a thorough chronicler of any literature with a black theme, only noted and reviewed the *Junior* and *Elementary* books (see

exercises and songs for the white and black series were taken from the same source, but that for the black series the songs had been arranged in four-part harmony (1907a: n.p.). This reflects, one, white colonial awareness of black South Africans' facility at part-singing, and two, that, with arrangements in SATB, the singers were not especially young; black pupils tended to begin their schooling later than whites. While the graded exercises were the same in both series, though, the songs in the two *Elementary* books were all different, except "God Save". The difference was in the "level" of the songs. *The Elementary Native Songster*, for instance, took songs from the most junior sections of the source book. "The Bumble Bee's Buzz" is a case in point.²⁵ Appearing in the black elementary book, but not the white one, in the source it is part of the repertoire for the sub-standards and standard one; a song, that is, for infants (see Rodger 1905). Rearranged in four-parts and covering a vocal range of over three octaves, its reappearance at the "wrong", elementary level was right if, and only if, the singers were black. On the most banal level the educational project of musical infantilisation continued, perpetuating the colonial fantasy of the eternal black child.

Aug. 1906: 184; and Aug. 1970: 127). Perhaps Rodger, realising that the final book would have had no, or little, market, stopped the black series short. Or Lovedale, knowing that the *Intermediate* book would have been of little use to black music teachers, simply didn't review it. Either way, the outcome again forestalled black music education.

²⁵ For the record, "The Bumble Bee's Buzz" was composed by Adela Medley to a text by H Didsbury.

Chapter 4
**“To Sooth the Savage Breast”:
Choralism and Discipline**

In the winter of 1863 a choir of “Fingoes and Hottentots” caused quite a stir in the small Cape colonial city of Grahamstown. One of the first performances by a black choir in the Cape’s second city, it was no everyday concert, and “the *elite* of the musical inhabitants” accordingly turned out in their curious droves. Equally extraordinary was the lengthy review that appeared in *The Grahamstown Journal*, the Cape’s largest circulating paper. Less music criticism than social commentary, it discoursed on what slightly later would be called the “Native Question”. The performance thus illustrated “several facts of social importance ... each of which would constitute a fertile theme for the metaphysician, or the student in moral philosophy”. In the event, the report concerned itself with the more immediate, practical lessons to be drawn:

First is demonstrated a truth of no ordinary importance, at a moment when the *taming* of our savage neighbours is looked upon by many as an utter impossibility, namely, the capacity of these savages for *civilization*. Next, we are struck by the fact that music has been able in a few short weeks to *subdue* and *discipline* natures so wild and intractable that moral teaching, law, and even our holy religion itself have laboured for years to conquer them with but very inadequate success (4 Sep. 1863; my emphasis).

The review, then, was not so much concerned with the choir’s performance, as with the performance of the practices of choir singing on its black members. In short, the utility of choralism was its civilising potential, where civilising, as my italics above indicate, was synonymous with disciplining.

The white rhetoric of civilising-disciplining had a particular urgency to it in 1860s Grahamstown. Political stability in the eastern Cape “frontier” remained elusive, with periodic warfare continuing into the late 1870s. In the most real, and for the white colonist important, sense, civilising the black population was a large-scale exercise in governmentality, paving the way, went the argument, for Pax Britannica (see Mostert 1993 for a “popular” history of the colonisation of the eastern Cape). The *Journal* summed up the concert as bearing witness to that Victorian commonplace, the “power of music to ‘calm the savage breast’”. But the concert’s “unprecedented success” was attributed to more than just “music”. Specifically, “credit belong[ed] to Mr. Curwen’s tonic sol-fa system of [sic] having thus far brought the savage within the pale of civilization”.

One point that I want to draw from this piece of settler social commentary is that the practices of colonialism had their testing grounds in the metropolis. If choralism, and especially the Victorian brand found on the sol-fa method and notation, offered a bulwark against the “irruption of the Kafir hordes”, it was only because of its reputed success in disciplining the masses “at home”.¹

the classes of 1848

Revolutionary events in France resonated loudly across the Channel. Noisily, in fact, as the music educator, John Hullah, disapprovingly observed of the Chartist riots of 1848: “popular outbreaks result in a considerable increase in the noise and dirt of the world” (quoted in Hullah 1886: 54). Hullah had enlisted as a “special Constable” during the London riots of that year; a tamer British version of the French scenario during which workers agitated for various rights. His biographer wife relates how his politics and professional activities converged at the time: “the birth of his aversion to Radicalism was always referred back to that period of his life when the beat of his *bâton* would have produced quite other sounds than those which usually followed its timely flourishes” (54). Whether Hullah’s “Conservative tendencies” surfaced in the wake of a choir’s vocal “disobediences” is a question that must hang enticingly in the air. Whatever the case, the conflation of what Althusser would distinguish as the “repressive” and “ideological” “state apparatuses” (1971) in the life-story of the most celebrated music educator at mid-century is typical of how the “governing classes” constructed choralism, often quite explicitly, as a “discipline”.

Indeed, much has been written about the institutional genealogy of choralism as a discipline in Victorian Britain (see, for example, Russell 1997; Rainbow 1986 and 1967; Mackerness 1964: chaps. 4 and 5). Briefly, I’ll offer one further instance of this mode of history telling, before trying to move beyond it.

Hullah is remembered for a number of initiatives, one of which was the mass sight-singing classes that began in early 1841 at Exeter Hall, the British headquarters of diverse philanthropic endeavours.² His singing subjects were always clearly, if generically, identified – “the lower orders”, “the poorer classes”³ – and the singing classes were no less

¹ The editor of the *Journal*, Robert Godlonton, is best remembered for his narrative of the Sixth Frontier War, *The Irruption of the Kafir Hordes* (1835).

² For an account of Hullah’s educational work, see Cox (1993: chaps. 2-3).

³ As I discussed in chapter three, it is somewhat misleading to gloss Victorian choralism as a working-class activity, the little research on the social base of Victorian choralism suggesting that its membership was drawn from the “respectable lower classes”, that is, the lower middle and skilled working classes (see Russell 1997:

certainly part of the discourse of their government. Generally intended for the “improvement” of the working classes, they aimed specifically to foster, for instance, “industry” and “national feeling” (Kay-Shuttleworth, quoted in Hullah 1841: 4). By the end of that year it was estimated that at least 50 000 working-class children alone were singing from notes (Rainbow 1867: 125), a spectacular success that quickly brought choralism to the attention of a number of eminent Victorian “liberals”.

The Christian Socialist leader and education reformer, Frederick Denison Maurice, was one of these. And his influential “philosophy” of working-class education, *Learning and Working* (1855), I suggest, was indebted to Hullah’s example.⁴ The political context of Maurice’s work was the French revolution of 1848; perhaps too close to home, the less spectacular Chartist agitations went unmentioned. The moral, though, was for England:

the whole country must look for its blessings through the elevation of its Working Class, that we must all sink if that is not raised. We have never dreamed that that class could be benefited, by losing its working character, by acquiring habits of ease or self-indulgence. We have rather thought that *all* must learn the dignity of labour and the blessings of self-restraint (vii).

The stakes for a “union of Learning with manual Work” were high, the “freedom, order, civilization of England” (x) was in the balance. In working out this union, Maurice took inspiration from Hullah’s classes, which he praised as “beyond comparison the most successful” of “all experiments in English education” (102). And if the “higher classes had made [music] a mere amusement or gratification”, for “the working people it [had to] be more than that”. In their “appetite for musical cravings”, Maurice detected “the cravings for *freedom and order*” which he took to be “the end of all education” (109).

“Freedom”, and choral singing as freedom, was conceived as ideology in the classical Marxist sense.⁵ “Order”, by contrast, did not work as a strategy of obfuscation. Rather, in bringing universal “Law” into a relationship of correspondence with the “rules” of various educational subjects, “the detection of [the pupil’s] false concords, and the punishment of them”, for example, was “part of his initiation into the principals of order”, “ordinances

chap. 10). In Victorian dominant representations, however, popular choralism was typically a working-class activity, clearly pointing to who its disciplinary practices were intended to subject.

⁴ Hullah gave classes at Maurice’s Working Men’s College around mid-century, and was involved with another of the leading Christian Socialists, the preacher-writer Charles Kingsley (Cox 1993: 12-14).

⁵ “I have spoken of men as spiritual beings. I have only justified the musical education on the ground that it arouses men, shut up in the dreariest mechanical employments, even sunk in moral debasement, to a feeling of their spiritual existence, to the consciousness of belonging to another economy than that which is conversant with the making or selling of commodities. I have supposed freedom and order to be impossible for men except as they come to understand that there is this higher economy for them; that they are not enclosed within the boundaries of the lower” (Maurice 1855: 123). Marx and his thoughts on these matters were, of course, circulating in London at the time.

which [were] fixed for a whole society and [could not] be transgressed by any one” (114-15). The disciplinary value of choralism in particular, it seemed, was crucial in this regard. For his work, Hullah was eulogised as “a pioneer in a great moral revolution; upon the success of which it may depend in no slight degree whether a revolution of another kind shall be averted from our land” (Maurice 1849: 14).

Donald E Hall has shown that Christian Socialist involvement in working-class education, such as Maurice’s, was born of the fear of workers’ discontent, of the Chartist “monster” (1994: 52-4). Their programme of “Politics for the People”, accordingly, was not envisaged as radical social or political reform, but as a programme of containment, of what has frequently been called “internal colonialism” (see, for example, Young 2001: 9-10). Clearly, early Victorian popular choralism, as the example of Hullah shows, slotted into that programme, and this has long been realised.

But social histories of the disciplinary nature of choralism have, paradoxically, worked to erase the musical object of their analysis. Surely the power of choralism as a discipline depended on more than institutional affiliations and vague Victorian rhetoric, and rather on how it worked in practice?⁶ In chapter two I began to explore how the practices of sol-fa choralism approximated the discipline of work. Here, I extend my reading of choralism as a disciplinary technique to its other practices. All were crucial aspects of Victorian choral culture, of musicking that would be employed in the colonisation of South Africa.

practices of the choir, practised bodies

At the end of the Victorian century, *The School Music Review* prefaced an article on “Music an Aid in School Discipline” with an old maxim, newly updated: “Music hath charms not only ‘to sooth the savage breast,’ but as well to quiet the unruly members of many a boisterous school” (April 1898: 220). It was typical of the Victorians’ utilitarian idea of music, sold under the “music and morals” rubric, where music’s use-value was displaced onto something more seemingly productive than the study of music itself. Half a century earlier, Hullah had been at the forefront of propagating this “philosophy”. In his defence of the “*propriety* of making music as an element in education”, he argued against the standard

⁶ This is true even of (former chorister) John Potter’s *Vocal Authority* (1998), a work that throughout strains to read a diverse range of singing styles as social process. In the chapter on Victorian choralism, though, Potter repeats the cliché that “singing as discipline [was] at the very root of Victorian church music and, by extension at the heart of the nascent national education system” (81), but fails to ground the insight in an analysis of the micro-practices of choralism.

claim that music was one of the “things which are the ornamental fringe of our life, but can never be made, without loss of all manliness of character, its main texture and woof”. Instead, the “qualities” that inhered in the Victorian idea of performance – “temperance, power of attention, presence of mind, self-denial, obedience, and punctuality” (1854: 8, 15) – recommended the practice of music as an exemplary discipline of the self. I want to explore one of these disciplinary attributes of music – “self-denial” – for its particular relevance to first the politics, and then practices, of choralism.⁷

In an example of what Richard Sennett (1977) famously called “the fall of public man”, the Victorians seemed to fear the sound of their own voices.⁸ Such a claim at least became common in differentiating between different vocal modes, between communal singing and individual speechifying:

in the one case, they feel instinctively the impossibility of pitching their voices, or timing their syllables, *so as not to be heard individually*; while, in the other, the determined note, its tune and its time preconcerted, *absorbs all individual effort*. A speaker, be the crowd what it may, never loses the sound of his own voice; a singer in a chorus, though conscious of producing a sound, is often unable to distinguish it himself (Hullah 1846: 9).

Much later, in an article on “The Discipline of Choral Singing,” Sir John Stainer spoke similarly of choristers “sink[ing] their individuality in the choral body”: “the man or woman or child who is perhaps rather self-willed and masterful in ordinary life, drops all this frame of mind at the choral practice ... Men and women who are petty tyrants elsewhere have to become mild as sheep” (*TS-fR* July 1897: 204). Victorian choralism was felicitously premised on a denial of (vocal) self; the individual, as Stainer noted, became a subject.

Stainer went on to suggest that “this doctrine of the suppression of self-interest for the benefit of the many [was] one of the key-stones of Christian ethics” (*TS-fR* July 1897: 204). More generally, the fostering of national unity, “the utterance of one harmonious voice”, was a foundational premise of popular choral education (Kay-Shuttleworth, quoted in Hullah 1841: 4). Similarly, from the outset the new rational recreations, and choralism in particular, had been promoted for their class-bridging potential (Russell 1997: 287).⁹ These were also the objectives of the Christian Socialist programme. According to Hall, while “the

⁷ Hullah’s list of behavioural traits is culled from the ascetic regimen that characterised the ideal Victorian bourgeois subject. And, as he inscribed the traits within the terms of masculinity, so self-discipline came to be seen as a distinctive practice of middle-class men (see, for example, Adams 1995: 2, 7).

⁸ John Curwen observed that there were “many who dreaded to hear their own *speaking* voice, but [were] glad to join in a singing tone, and so hide themselves in the mass of unison around them” (1871: 7).

⁹ The church musician, John Troutbeck, suggested that in “the practice-room, no less than in the church itself, a most healthy and useful mingling of the various classes of society may take place, productive of much benefit” (n.d. [1878]: 3; also *MH* Aug. 1891: 233). If choralism served as a social balm, though, it also, argues Russell, served to depoliticise the working classes, as it exacerbated divisions within the working classes by drawing the labouring elite away from the bulk of the class and aligning them to those of a higher social rank (1997: 287).

English national ‘body’ appear[ed] hopelessly fragmented ... into warring bodies”, the Christian Socialists attempted to reunify the national social body in a project “whereby lower-class identity was effectively rewritten and subsumed” (1994: 49-51). Not to push the analogy too far, but the choral body, in which the chorister’s voice was first refashioned and then absorbed in a sonic unity, functioned as a metaphor *par excellence* for the idealised social body.

It was, I want to argue, in the act of singing itself that the disciplining work of choralism was performed. In the mission to remake the British voice, elite-led middle-class pedagogues and choirmasters were guided by the choral voice training manual, a genre that came into its own in the 1870s, proliferated either side of 1900, and which completed the Victorian reform of choral singing into a fully-fledged disciplinary regime. Thus the epigram to the choral trainer in Novello’s popular series of music primers – a quote from Ruskin – directed that “[e]very child should be taught from its youth to govern its voice” (Bates 1907: n.p.).¹⁰ It was not for nothing that the combined practices which the voice trainer detailed were commonly called “voice culture”. In contemporary usage “culture” was also a noun of process, synonymous with “cultivation”. The cultivation of the mind, or for that matter voice, became conflated with human development in general, and thus in nineteenth-century Britain culture was equated, and interchangeable, with “civilisation” (Young 1995: 31).

The cultivated voice was one of the many objects which made up the civilising mission broadly conceived, functioning as a marker of white bourgeois adulthood, of civilisation in general. Its antithesis was what one might call the “anachronistic voice”, located in the child, London slums and Africa, amongst others.¹¹ In short, the Victorian voice was very much involved in identity politics, and in chapter six I will explore more fully how the voice was classified and racialised. Here, I want to briefly give an account of the generic vocal identity that voice culture attempted to refashion, an identity that was written in the conjunction of social categories and aesthetic criteria.

At base, voice culture’s disciplinary intention was signalled in its desire to control by suppressing “natural” expression. The child thus became a favourite subject of the voice

¹⁰ Victorian choral performance practice has fared even worse than Victorian choralism in general in attracting the academy’s attention. A trawl through Jackson (1988), Brown and Sadie (1989), Brown (1999) and the *Performance Practice Review* for 1988 to 1997, yields only absences in the research space that nineteenth-century choral performance should occupy.

¹¹ The phrase is adapted from Anne McClintock’s “anachronistic space”, the discursive space employed by dominant Victorian ideology to signify what was “prehistoric, atavistic, and irrational, inherently out of place in the historical time of modernity”, and into which various “others” were projected in disavowal (1995: 40-1).

trainer, its uncultivated voice commonly written as a prelude to its cultivation. In a popular manual, advertised to the colonies, TM Hardy warned against the “abomination” of “lack-a-daisical singing” in children, and in particular “that vulgar shouting tone which so often is called ‘hearty’ and ‘natural’ singing”. The child’s “natural” voice had to be tamed and changed “to produce voices of a sweet and agreeable quality” (1910 [1899]: 2, vi). Often the anachronistic voice assumed a double identity, the child’s voice, for instance, given example through the working-class child. At the famous Glasgow Foundry Boys’ Society, a reform initiative originally intended for boys working in iron foundries, the singing had at first been in “the old ‘roaring’” style. But this was associated so much with “coarseness ... as to be somewhat distasteful”. Self-faing to the dictates of voice culture, by contrast, produced “refinement ... in expression” (*TS-fR* June 1877: 126). Likewise, for a class of coal-miners’ children, vocal training transformed their singing from “harsh, ugly, noisy” to refined, delicate and perfect (*SMR* Feb. 1895: 160-1). In these stories, the child’s voice, always already different, propped up the idea of a vocal difference that was also classed. Nineteenth-century notions of culture-civilisation as linear, hierarchical and progressivist (see Young 1995: 46), facilitated the approximation of the working-class and child’s voices. As the child, with the aid of an enculturating education, matured, so the lower classes, through the gift of middle-class culture, progressed into the ambit of civilisation. The cultivated voice accordingly assumed the status of a bourgeois object. As the teacher of the coal-miners’ choristers remarked, in the latter’s voice change “the seeds of gentility were sown” (*SMR* Feb. 1895: 161).

What I will call the “bourgeois tonal ideal”, and the Victorians more simply called “good” or “pure” tone amongst others, was the outcome of dominant attempts to refashion other identities. In addition, it was crucial to the “art of blending”, generally considered to be “the secret of successful choral singing”, and an ideal that suffused choral performance practice (Birch n.d. [1893]: 4). By contrast, “bad” tone, in its various guises, impeded blending, and subverted the choral ethic in which individuality was anathema. James Birch of the Church Missionary and Tonic Sol-fa colleges, attributed bad tone to, amongst other things, the chorister’s vain desire to hear himself, being “obliged to pervert his ... production to make the tone stand apart”. Birch suggested that he “would be more benefit to himself and the choir if his voice merged so well in the body of tone that he could not hear himself” (4). Voice culture accordingly developed micro-disciplinary techniques to ensure that singers did not “stand out”.

One of these was soft-singing, which became a ubiquitous feature of choral voice training. All practicing was to be done *piano* and the voice-in-training forbidden to exceed the dynamic until late in its cultivation (for example, Evans and McNaught c.1900: 25; Hardy 1910 [1899]: 2; and Richardson c.1900: 29). The specific utilities of soft-singing were many: it preserved the young voice from damage, the trained adult voice from regression, and prevented intonation problems.¹² It was also the antithesis of the uncultivated, anachronistic voice, correcting the “coarse, harsh, and shouting production of tone”, as it produced “good tone” for choral blending (Hardy 1910: 4). Such was the significance of soft-singing to the voice culture project that its benefits were scientifically demonstrable. The “great musician-philosopher” of the day, Hermann von Helmholtz, had found that quality of a tone was dependent on both the number and intensity of its partials. From this he observed that “the *softer* tones of the human voice” were rich, full, and smooth because the higher partials were imperceptible, while with distinct upper partials the sound was cutting or rough (quoted in Curwen 1898: 16). Curwen employed this insight to argue against loud singing:

This prevalence of upper partials in the human voice is very much increased by loud strained singing with great force of breath from the chest. The voice is then like a violently overblown trumpet – unendurable. These higher partials, lying all close together, result, when strongly produced, in a harsh dissonance. I have often heard this metallic clatter from ill-trained classes, when they try (in vain) to sing a real *fortissimo* (17).

But how, more precisely, was soft-singing an exercise in control? First, from the individual chorister it demanded a total control of the body, almost unparalleled in the world of Victorian leisure. Hence, a sub-genre concerned entirely with “vocal physiology”, and often co-authored by medical science, followed in the wake of the popular voice trainer.¹³ As I detail below, for the singer-trainee diverse anatomical parts, visible and invisible, from buttocks to tongue, were given very precise instructions of where they should be and what they should be doing. This practiced body was required in the name, amongst others, of “breath control”, or “breath management”, a prerequisite of tonal beauty, which in turn was best practiced by singing softly, and vice versa (see Hardy 1910 [1899]: 39). Second, it was in soft-singing that the choral body’s sonic self was most easily surveillanced. If soft-singing maximised the possibilities for “correct” tone and blending, it also functioned as an aural

¹² In an article on “Singing out of Tune”, for example, WGW Goodworth attributed intonation problems to the “misuse of voice”, an “evil” less prevalent, he claimed, “the higher we ascend in the social scale”. His remedy was soft-singing, suggesting that the gentle voice was indeed more genteel (*TS-JR* Jan. 1883: 5).

¹³ One of the most popular was Emil Behnke’s *Mechanism of the Human Voice* (c.1880). Behnke became something of a celebrity vocal physiologist in late Victorian Britain, co-writing another popular text with the “vocal surgeon”, Lennox Browne (1883).

panopticism in which any “wrong” tone – shouting, nasal, penetrating – was immediately audible (Bates 1907: 13). Soft-singing operated not only to produce a docile body, both of the individual chorister and of the choir, but also, and this is an aspect of Foucault’s analysis of the disciplines that is often overlooked, to improve the economy of those bodies. For the disciplines produced a relation of “docility-utility”, increasing the forces of the body in terms of efficiency while diminishing those same forces in terms of obedience (1979: 137-38). Soft-singing (con)formed voices so that they would work within choralism’s uniform sound ideal.

It was with the same objective in mind that voice culture focused with particular zeal on “register”. Specifically, it was the “break” that gave anxiety. Birch explained the phenomenon: “In some voices there is a marked difference between the lower range of sounds and the upper range, and there must of necessity be a point at which they meet. Here, in the untrained voice, a sudden change takes place, forming the so-called ‘break of the voice’” (n.d. [1893]: 7). The absence of homogeneity within the individual voice gave as much offense as the individual who disturbed the uniformity of the choral voice, and for this reason “[o]ne of the great aims of voice-training [was] to blend the upper and lower registers together, that no ‘break’ whatever [could] possibly be detected” (Hardy 1910 [1899]: 16). Overcoming this schizo-vocality involved yet more work, a series of exercises:

First of all, sustained notes are practiced; then the scales, both being sung *downwards*, until the registers of the voice are apparently blended into one. Then we take five notes below the break, five notes above the break, and five notes with the break in the middle. These are sung in turn *up and down* as softly as possible (*SMR* Feb. 1896: 172).

The work performed by these exercises was to impose homogeneity on the individual voice. For ultimately, one singer with “two separate voices” was incapable of blending. The voice had to be “graded symmetrically like a string of pearls; at no point having, as it were, an uneven pearl or one off colour” (Birch 1893: 8).¹⁴

A report on the progress in singing at a Glaswegian Boys’ House of Refuge tells that the reworking of the voice entailed a disciplinary regime. If the “first singing” of 430 “willing hearty voices ... at full pitch” and “uproarious with delight” was unforgettable, it fell, unfortunately, outside the norms of Victorian choralism. The boys’ anachronistic voices

¹⁴ The uniformities and conformities of Victorian society have been long noted. Paul Langford reminds us that foreign visitors to London in the nineteenth century were startled by the city’s mass-cloned houses and monochrome clothing of its inhabitants. The English were also generally considered less individualistic than their continental counterparts, the perception that England was a nation of eccentrics being possible only against a backdrop of overwhelming conformity (2000: 309, 283).

presented a “difficulty”: “how to control them”? *The Reporter* euphemistically wrote the problem as merely “a work of time”, and time having done its work their “sing[ing] in a whisper ... would touch the heart of any one” (Sep. 1862: 337). The “whisper” stems, of course, from the soft-singing directive of the choir trainer. But as *The Reporter* noted, the discipline of voice training took time and work.

Foucault has argued that the disciplines depended on a “seriation of time”, making possible “a whole investment of duration by power: the possibility of a detailed control and a regular intervention ... in each moment of time”. At the centre of this programme of seriation was the procedure of the exercise, a technique that imposed on the body tasks that were both repetitive and different, but always graduated and which bent behaviour towards a terminal state (1979: 160-61). The vocal exercise was, of course, obligatory to voice training, revealing of the work effort required in transforming the uncultivated voice. *The School Music Review* thus reminded its readers:

Any man who can obtain a really pure tone from school children living in the slums of London, deserves the highest praise you can give him. Purity of tone is not obtained every day of the week – it comes of very hard work – work which some would call tedious and monotonous (Feb. 1896: 171).

Another voice manual moralised vocal training as “earnest work”, warning that “the student would do well to remember the axiom, ‘Blessed be drudgery’” (Birch n.d. [1893]: 34).

Drudgery was most emphatically exhibited in the late Victorian phenomenon of “drill”.¹⁵ Like exercises in the military and in physical education, from which the term was borrowed, vocal drill stressed the training of the body-voice; exercises of the mind, such as in Latin grammar or harmony, were not called drill. The idea of the voice as a physical object to be trained and displayed *en masse* was, I suggest, the musical equivalent of the late Victorian cult of athleticism (see Mangan 1981). This training of the voice entailed disciplining the entire body.

First, the “correct posture” had to be cultivated, for which the regimental position of “attention” was taken as the model. The child-singer was instructed to stand

with toes out so that the feet are nearly at right-angles. The shoulders should be slightly drawn back to allow full expansion of the chest. The book, or copy, of music from which the child is singing should be held about eighteen inches from the chin and six inches from the chest, the arm being almost at right-angles to the body (Bates 1907: 10).

¹⁵ Around 1880, music became an adjunct to the physical exercises, spawning a genre of educational publication known as Musical Drill – aerobics is a latter-day approximation – which consisted not of exercises in musical training, but in physical drill with music. The difficulty of producing “correct” singing during physical training mitigated against the use of vocal music in musical drill, though choral marches were not uncommon.

The anatomical disciplining then zoomed in on the head: the mouth was to be opened “about wide enough for the thumb to be inserted sideways”; the upper teeth were to be shown, and “if possible the edge of the lower teeth”; and “to cultivate a pleasing facial expression” the corners of the mouth were to be “very slightly drawn in as in the act of smiling” (10). Even the body’s interior did not escape: the tongue was ordered to “lie perfectly flat in the mouth, the tip just touching the lower teeth” (11). Breathing, of course, also had to be “managed”, and to this end there was another set of directions involving yet more body parts in the name of “breath control” (34). I want to emphasise that this litany of rules, all prior to the actual musical utterance, was directed at the child and not the professional singer in training.

While the author of these directives was quick to add that “children [were] not machines” (Bates 1907: 41), the qualification highlighted the common perception that the mechanical regulation of the child’s body had as its end the aesthetics of drill itself. As a critic of the “craze for drill exercises” lamented: “Physical drill is good in itself, but is an evil in so far as it usurps the place of the truly musical training of the child”. The craze, he suggested, had its origins in the predilection for public display (*MH* Oct. 1893: 300). The parallel with musical drill is instructive. One of the first manuals on musical drill advised that the exercises were “eminently suitable” as “public entertainments” (McCartney 1881: iv). As such, “undue contortions of the body” were to be guarded against, not because of potential injury to the child’s developing body but because the “charm and beauty” of the exercises would be lost (1889: n.p.). Exercises, then, trained the voice-body as a docile singer for the utility of putting her in the choir on display.

Indeed, being on exhibit is a central aspect of disciplinary power, for it is the subjects who have to be seen and heard (Foucault 1979: 187). The chorister was on display doubly. First, to the teacher-conductor. Foucault has suggested that a relation of surveillance is “inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency” (176). It was, of course, in the elementary classroom that most of the instruction in sol-fa and voice training took place. But the conductor was a specialised apparatus of surveillance, “a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned” (173). Enabled through the distribution of singers in the choral space, the conductor watched the arced and raked choristers as they gazed at the centrally daised conductor (Venables n.d. [1887]: 83). The injunction to fix the eyes on the conductor became law only for the chorister, not for the orchestral musician. And if singing from a score, the book was to be positioned so as to facilitate visual contact (*TS-fR* April 1878: 85). Nor was the conductor the only observer of

the choir. It was watched secondly of course by the audience.¹⁶ And it was the disciplined choral subjects that the audience saw and heard. Not only was the conductor a tacit leader, but his very visibility in the choral space was downplayed. The pedagogics of Victorian choral conducting held up the bandmaster, with his “neat beating” and “control over the hand, wrist and arm”, as model, rather than the waves and flourishes of the orchestral conductor (*TS-fR* April 1877: 71-2). With a prosaic conducting style, the ideal choral conductor was not meant to be on display. His task was rather to discipline those who were, “to be an autocrat, and a strict disciplinarian” (Dec. 1877: 267).¹⁷ Ultimately, the disciplinary nature of Victorian choralism was inscribed in its favourite metaphorisation: the choir was a “crack regiment” (Feb. 1876: 35).

the discipline of hymning

At the start of the nineteenth century congregational singing was still a peculiarly dissenting practice, particularly Methodist. Stemming from John Wesley’s famous directive to his congregations to sing “*lustily*”, the singing of the original Methodists had attained the status of myth for the Victorians: “Their worship and the songs they sang were the outcry of simple hearts, rude and ungarnished as the singers themselves; but warm from the heart, ardent as youth, and throbbing with the energy of conviction and faith”. Even the volume of Methodist singing, which often “drowned the noise of men hired to interrupt them”, was remembered nostalgically. A century on, it had become “doubtful if the voices of an ordinary congregation of the present day [c]ould do that, though their organ might” (Curwen 1888: 72-3, 51, 71).¹⁸ To the ear of the Victorian choir trainer, however, Methodist voices were anachronistic; they just happened to be the most solidly working-class of the British denominations too (Hopkins 1979: 80).

¹⁶ Resituated from the gallery at the back of the church to the chancel in front, even the church choir performed before the congregation-audience in the nineteenth century.

¹⁷ Choir “management”, which spawned a sub-genre in which rules for membership, attendance, conduct, and many others, all with attendant punishments, were drawn up in minute detail, put an extra-musical face on the disciplinary nature of Victorian choralism (see, for example, Venables n.d. [1887]).

¹⁸ Methodist singing style underwent a change in the age of disciplines: “The Wesleyans of 50 years ago were specially distinguished for the fire and force of their singing. There might be a lack of art, but you were always sure of heartiness. In this respect, as in others, the Wesleyans are somewhat changed. They have increased their musical education, but the energy and earnestness of their singing are diminished ... Their falling off in congregational singing may be partly attributed to another cause. Education is spreading among the people, and the social level of the Wesleyans is higher than it was. Their children learn vocal music and the piano, and some of them know too much of music to like bad singing, and avoid imperfect psalmody by remaining silent in the chapel” (*Cornhill Magazine* 1878, quoted in Curwen 1888: 77).

In the pre-Victorian Established Church, psalmody was also left to non-bourgeois singers: the charity choir in town and choir-band in the country parish, the former consisting of children of the poor and the latter mostly of artisan tradesmen (Temperley 1979: 223; Gammon 1981: 65). Both served initially as agents for the improvement of congregational singing from the late seventeenth century on, but by the early nineteenth century had reneged on that purpose (Temperley 1979: chap. 6). Made up at first of a small group of vocalists, and from the mid-eighteenth century joined by a miscellany of instrumentalists, the choir-band was installed in the gallery at the west end of the nave; hence the “west gallery tradition” by which it is known. By the late eighteenth century, however, the bands had become, depending on one’s view, either an example of plebian church culture or small-time anarchists and tyrants (see, respectively, Gammon 1981; and contemporary British opinion).¹⁹ They were represented as the latter by John Antes La Trobe. In his lengthy treatise on the state of music in the pre-Victorian Church of England, he characterised the choir-band’s practices as “singing out of tune, frequently too flat, with a nasal twang, straining the voice to an unnatural pitch”, amongst others, and singled out for particular condemnation “the scream, the pert snap, the buzzing bass, the rude and violent pronunciation”. In general, choirs had no idea of music “beyond vociferation” (1831: 92, 342, 2). Similarly, by the early nineteenth century the charity children sang either badly or for display. John Turner ascribed the “degenerate” condition of psalmody in part to the singing of the charity choirs, which disgusted, offended and repelled (1833: 15, 18; also Temperley 1979: 134). Cathedral exempted, then, the collective musical voice in the early-nineteenth-century British church was represented as un-disciplined – in need of reform. The history of early-nineteenth-century church music reforms is well known,²⁰ but the centrality of the voice and its practices to the reforms has been less noted. Indeed, the disciplining work of late Victorian choral voice culture that I explored above had one of its antecedents

¹⁹ Behavioural ill-discipline, including drunkenness, was frequently reported, and critics complained that the choir-bands excluded congregational participation (Bradley 1997: 42-43; Temperley 1979: 156; and Gammon 1981: 76). John Antes La Trobe was of the opinion that if “the taming and bringing into order of a country choir [had] been appointed for one of the labours of Hercules, he would have lost his reward” (1831: 72).

²⁰ By the time of Victoria’s accession the reform putsch was fronted by a range of church voices, all concerned to “improve” musical performance in church, though often with widely different agendas. The most thorough account of the musical aesthetics of the various parties within the Church of England for the first half of the nineteenth century remains Nicholas Temperley’s *The Music of the English Parish Church* (1979: esp. chaps. 6-8; also Bradley 1997: chaps. 1-2).

Vic Gammon gives a more “political” reading of the reforms, regarding the suppression of the choir-bands as an instance of class politics. In short, the choir-bands, most common between 1780-1830, were all but extinct by the mid-Victorian period, replaced by the organ and now surpliced choir. Gammon also sees “a homology between pre-industrial attitudes to work and church bands and capitalist work discipline and choral discipline” (1981: 82).

in the reforms of church singing. Thus Turner's *Manual of Instruction in Vocal Music, Chiefly with a View to Psalmody* commenced with a section on voice training (1833: part 1).

The desire to discipline the voice within the church was part of a broader network of disciplinary discourses and institutions within which hymning functioned in Victorian Britain.²¹ One of these contexts is familiar. Hymns were not only sung at church services and religious meetings, but took hold in that other great institutional space of reform, the elementary school. Here they formed a core part of the school song and music education repertory until late in the century.²² It was a relationship that had been established long before the founding of the state elementary school, when churches, through the charity schools, were the sole providers of education for the lower classes. Soon after the first charity schools were founded in the late seventeenth century choral music education appeared on the curriculum, and the "textbooks" were the schools' own hymn-books (Temperley 1979: 104).

The Asylum of Refuge for Female Orphans was one such school. Here "the singing of the inmates became a marked feature" under their master of music William Riley (Frere 1909: xc). Riley had written a polemical tract called *Parochial Music Corrected*, in which he discussed, among other things, "the Utility of Teaching Charity-Children Psalmody and Hymns". This was foremost to "implant in their tender Minds the strictest Notions of Virtue and Religion", to counter the influence of street songs whose "[s]ubjects [were] generally profane and vicious, and naturally tend[ed] to the nourishing of Vice, and corrupting of Youth" (1762: 27-8). Riley's book, then, was an early statement of the intentions of the Victorian school music repertory: to teach morality.

²¹ Hymning, to put it crudely, was a Victorian phenomenon. True, congregational psalmody had existed on and off since the reformation, and Nonconformists had been singing hymns since the mid-eighteenth century. But it was not until the hymn and its attendant practices were sanctioned by the Established Church in the 1820s, where it gradually became the norm in the following two decades, that it became a product of mass culture – popular and mass produced by an industry. Statistical evidence of the popularity and pervasiveness of the hymn/-tune in Victorian culture remains impressive even in our late-capitalist mass producer-consumer society. For such information, see the introductions to Tamke (1978), Bradley (1997), and Watson (1997).

²² The relationship between music education and church music in Victorian Britain existed on numerous levels: in the lives of individual musicians, the texts they authored, and the publishing houses that produced them. The Curwens, and Curwen & Sons, are a case in point. The title of Curwen's first book of sol-fa instruction was *Singing for Schools and Congregations* (1843), and his many subsequent sol-fa publications, whether singing courses or harmony manuals, often used hymns as examples and/or exercises. Curwen also edited a hymn-book for children, *The Child's Own* (c.1846). His son, John Spencer Curwen, who produced an equally vast output of educational material, wrote, for example, a definitive history of hymnody, *Studies in Music Worship* (1888 and 1885).

As a ready-made pool of exemplary texts the hymn-book was the ideal vehicle through which to prescribe and proscribe behaviour, and didactic hymns were dominant during the period. This was especially true of children's hymns, the largest of the Victorian hymn sub-genres (Tamke 1978: 57, 76). Their disciplining purpose in the Victorian classroom was clearly stated:

Should it be said that [the "vulgarity" of many hymns for poor children] is of no consequence, as it respects the lower classes, it is replied, that although any system of instruction which raises them above the lot assigned them by Providence, is wholly undesirable, yet refinement of taste, grafted upon religion, is a most likely method to produce that subordination so necessary to cultivate in the present state of society (*Simple Hymns for Infants' Schools* [1835], quoted in Tamke 1978: 57).²³

By the end of the nineteenth century, and on the back of the "decline of sacred music in elementary schools", "S.M." was still arguing for hymn-singing as "a restraining, moral influence", "conducive to good discipline" (*SMR* June 1893: 3).²⁴ The place of the hymn-tune, like choral music, in education schemes for the working classes, from the charity schools on, then, reinforced the disciplinary ethos of those institutions. Yet it was not only the verbal texts that disciplined, but, I suggest, the hymn-tune itself.

By its first Edwardian edition, the most popular Victorian hymnal, *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, had become aware of its place in "history"; it presently gained a weighty historical companion that charted the past of British hymnody up to *Hymns A&M* itself. The charity schools were part of that story, part of *Hymns A&M*, which included for example a selection of Riley's tunes. In addition, the Magdalen Hospital offered an illustration to that narrative: the uniformed orphan in figure 4 who graced the frontispiece of its chapel hymn-books. *Hymns A&M* provided the following commentary: "Those were the days when an institution rejoiced to have a uniform of its own. The charity children had theirs, the Orphans had theirs, and a pretty cut by Stothard of an orphan in her costume adorns their hymn-books" (xci). For *Hymns A&M* the girl was a metonym for charity hymning, which the hymnal misrepresented as impeccably reformist (Frere 1909: lxxxix-xci; cf. Temperley 1979: 133-34). The reformist nature of the charitable institutions was signalled in their status as work-houses, the imperative to work itself signified in the children's uniform work-clothes (see

²³ Stephen Wilson (1975) claims that the most common themes of hymns in *Hymns Ancient and Modern* legitimised the existing social order.

²⁴ Bernarr Rainbow has shown that for the pioneers of school music in the 1830s, a song's morality was deemed to reside in its text (1967: 32). This reasoning drove, for example, John Turner's *Manual* (1833), William Edward Hickson's *Singing Master* (1836), and Kay-Shuttleworth's advocacy of vocal music to the Committee of Council on Education in the early 1840s (quoted in Hullah 1841).

Hopkins 1979: 79). In the illustration, the relationship to discipline is engraved threefold: in work, dress and tune-book. The girl, in plain uniform, stands on cultivated ground, with a tune-book in hand which brings the other terms together. It tells both of the work she has done to cultivate, or discipline, her voice, and of the unadorned, or disciplined, tunes she sings.



Figure 4. Magdalen Hospital orphan. Reprinted in *Hymns Ancient and Modern. Historical Edition* (1909).

Thus when Riley sought to “correct” parochial music in the mid-eighteenth century, his subjects included both performance practices and the hymn-tune. Reform of one was in fact inseparable from that of the other, the “ridiculous and profane Manner in singing practised by the Methodists” being a protest at the “secular” tunes to which they sung their hymns. In the same year, then, that Riley issued his treatise, he compiled a hymnal of new tunes, “written in the old solid style” of the Reformation psalm-tunes, and, in the words of *Hymns A&M*, as a “revolt” against the Methodist airs. But if the Methodists’ “chief crime was the old one of adopting secular airs for sacred words”, the secularity was to be found “in the music”, not in its original verbal associations (Frere 1909: lxxxix-xci). Typically what marked a tune as secular was its degree of melodic “floridity”. La Trobe took the relationship as given when cautioning against the use of “secular ornaments” (1831: 136), and by mid-century Edward Young could write that the “word ‘*florid*’ ha[d] come to denote ... a style of music un-churchlike, un-sacred” (1861: 163). Methodist collections thus contained “florid and operatic airs”, and the old psalm-tunes that they did use were “mangled”.²⁵ By contrast, the charity choirs, for *Hymns A&M*, “counteract[ed] this tendency” by “improv[ing] the performance of the solid church tunes”, just as Riley composed new tunes for the charity choristers in the style of the old psalms (Frere 1909: lxxxix-xci).

This story of the disciplining work of charity hymning was also the story of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*’s own textual practice. It was a process that Thomas Hardy, a keen observer of church music, captured in verse:

But you had been stripped of some of your old vesture
By Monk, or another. Now you wore no frill,
And at first you startled me. But I knew you still,
 Though I missed the minim’s waver,
 And the dotted quaver (1984: 163).

The poem, “Apostrophe to an Old Psalm Tune”, is a lament: of the early to mid-Victorian reform of church choralism, for the tunes it had re-formed. And, it is hardly surprising that Hardy wrote the reforms as the history of nineteenth-century British costume. For in the same way that pre-Victorian tunes, if they survived, were corrected in their Victorian

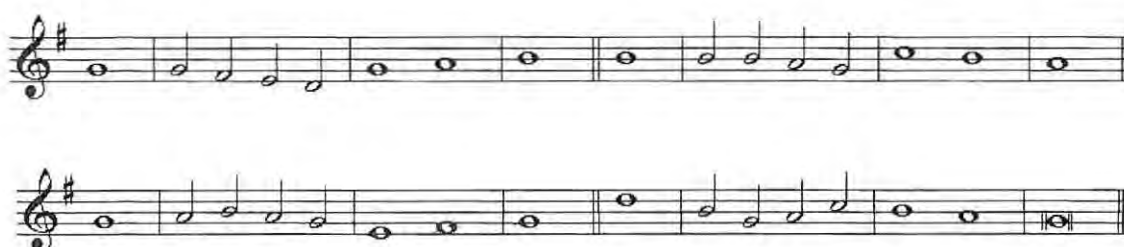
²⁵ A well-known florid, secular Methodist tune was “Helmsley”. One of “the few tunes of the florid type” that survived in general Victorian use, according to *Hymns A&M*, it was also one of the few that made it into the 1904 edition of that hymnal – though not in its original form, which had been simplified, disciplined (Frere 1909: lxxxix). In the entry for “Hymn” in Grove’s *Dictionary*, “Helmsley” was cited as the example of early-nineteenth-century “popular taste” which had “reached a pitch of degradation beneath which it would seem impossible that it could ever sink”. A detailed genealogy established the tune’s secularity, revealing its unmistakable “Terpsichorean animus” (Rockstro 1902 [1877]: 763). I explore in detail the writing of ornament as secular in the work of specifically early Victorian hymn-tune reformers in “Hym(n)ing” (forthcoming 2003).

reception, a practice exemplified for Hardy in William Henry Monk's *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, so, in domesticating the pre-Victorian gentleman as a middle-class persona, the Victorians had stripped him of ornament and colour to refashion him in black frock-coat and suit (Davidoff and Hall 1987, 410-12). As the vocal bodies of the Victorian choral community were being trained, so the body of music they were most likely to sing was a disciplined repertoire. Tunes, and larger works, often underwent wholesale compositional reform. Taking Hardy's lead, I will explore just one instance of rhythmic disciplining.

One of the projects of the early Victorian church music reforms was the rediscovery of "ancient" tunes, beginning with those of the Reformation. OLD HUNDREDTH, popularly sung to the words "All people that on earth do dwell", was one of these. It was singular for not needing any of the reformers' special pleading for its revival, having an uninterrupted performance history since first appearing in Britain in the early 1560s, and becoming for the Victorians a "national tune" that topped barrel organ play-lists (Curwen 1888: 270; Temperley 1979: 236). As a mark of its popularity it became the subject of a History. Part a chronicle of OLD HUNDREDTH'S various incarnations in Britain, William Henry Havergal's history of the tune was also an argument for the restoration of the tune's "authentic" self, for "the past" would give evidence of "true" and "corrupt" versions (1854). Both Victorian hymnal editors and congregations, however, subscribed only partially to Havergal's prescriptions, and in several respects the forms OLD HUNDREDTH assumed in nineteenth-century Britain ran counter to the well-known findings of Victorian textual criticism.

How Havergal arrived at the "standard form" of OLD HUNDREDTH, the "true English version of the tune" (1854: 16 and 14) – see example 1a – is an exemplary case of how presentness intrudes in quests for the past (see Taruskin 1995). Briefly, his model was not, as one might expect, the earliest known published version, but rather the version that appeared in its first printings in Britain (12-16). John Day, editor of the first English musical psalters, however, had not shared Havergal's bent for authenticity, and varied, or "corrupted", OLD

Example 1a. William Henry Havergal's "standard" OLD HUNDREDTH.
Old Church Psalmody (1847).



HUNDREDTH in subsequent editions (17-19). Indeed, “the early editors”, bemoaned Havergal, “were not at all choice in selecting authentic copies of the Old Hundredth Psalm Tune. They seem to have printed, almost at random, first one version and then another” (20). Havergal’s insistence on only one “correct” tune was itself a disciplinary act, an early, small-scale precursor of the critical edition project. That his standard, in addition, was a rhythmically corrected tune is clear if we compare it to its earliest appearance. The first extant OLD HUNDREDTH, which appeared in a Genevan psalter, is identical to example 1a, “with the exception”, noted Havergal, “of the second and third notes of the last strain being minims instead of semibreves”. In standardising the tune, the original was “slightly modified, so as to equalize the time of all its strains”, with the happy result that the “symmetry of the tune thus modelled [was] remarkably beautiful”:

Each of its four strains comprises four long and four short notes, uniformly but peculiarly disposed. The first note of each strain, to suit a line of eight syllables, is long, the next four short, and the remaining three long. But, the three concluding long notes of each strain seem to bear a certain melodic relation to each other. In the first strain, they *rise* in close succession; in the second they *fall*. In the third and fourth strain, precisely the same alteration is kept up (1854: 16-17).

In short, Havergal’s textual criticism was guided by contemporary aesthetic ideals which favoured uniformity.²⁶

By contrast, if many of the pre-1600 psalter versions were rhythmically more “complex” (see Havergal n.d. [1847]: 6), another tendency had been to reduce the notes to the same value as in example 1b. Here, the ideal of rhythmic sameness reached its limit. The uniformity is oppressively striking: 32 successive minims without let-up. Rhythm had become homogenised in the most spectacularly banal manner.²⁷ It was this form of OLD

Example 1b. The “equal-note” OLD HUNDREDTH.



²⁶ Elsewhere (forthcoming 2003), I argue that the currency of a poetics of uniformity in Victorian church music composition owed much to the rise of an aesthetics of the “masculine sublime” in Britain.

²⁷ Performance is, of course, not always faithful to the written source. Barlines, pauses, or simply the organ may have indicated the lengthening of a phrase end or even beginning. But the equal-note version altered more than the first and final notes of OLD HUNDREDTH’s phrases. Its popularity in print, moreover, suggests a performance tradition.

HUNDREDTH, perhaps even more than Havergal's standard, that became the norm in Victorian Britain; while both often found their way into the various editions of *Hymns A&M*, its closest competitor in late Victorian Britain, Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos*, preferred the equal-note version. More generally, equal-note tunes were standard features of many Victorian hymnals. "Squaring" the rhythm constituted just one of the practices by which time was disciplined in Victorian hymnody.²⁸

The ordering of congregational singing time was another. For sol-faists, the increasing predominance of the organ in worship was regarded with suspicion. As it corrupted vocal music – "the music of humanity" – they generally favoured the subordination of the organ to the voice. In one instance, however, the instrument was encouraged to take the lead, exhorted to "exert itself to secure steadiness of time" amongst the singing congregation. For while the choir might have "move[d] with the precision of a regiment", the congregation was likened to "the straggling waywardness of a crowd". To ensure that the organists themselves kept "strict time", they were instructed to "take a clockwork metronome to the instrument, and let it tick beside them as they play[ed]" (Curwen 1888: 191-95).²⁹ The policing of the congregation's performance time was admittedly not peculiarly Victorian. The regulation of compositional time, and especially the self-awareness of this, was. Nowhere is this more plain than in Victorian historiography on meter.

One of the rediscoveries of Victorian scholarship was the chant melody. The impetus for the revival lay in the assumption that chanting was the original congregational music (Zon 1999: 252). Despite its proselytisers, though, neither Anglican nor Gregorian chants, the latter less than the former, became congregationally popular (Curwen 1888: 233-36; Temperley 1979: 260-61). This failure was above all attributed to a metrical lack, one of several signs of chant's difference from modern hymnody. Its detractors focussed on this

²⁸ Compare Vaughan Williams' policy in *The English Hymnal*, a book that in many ways was a reaction against Victorian practice: "The original rhythms of many of the old psalter tunes have also been restored ... Attempts to adapt them to the procrustean bed of the nineteenth century hymn tune have merely taken away their character and made them appear dull. For the same reason no attempt has been made to square the irregular times of some tunes" (1906: xvi).

The idea of rhythm disciplined has lived on in the reception of Victorian choral composition in South African music history. Described as "stolid" and "square", the rhythm and meter of Victorian hymnody have, so the story goes, functioned as a "corset" or "strait-jacket" to the black choral composer's musical imagination (see Scherzinger 2001a: 131 for a critique of this analytical metaphoric).

²⁹ *The English Hymnal*, by contrast, directed that some of its hymns, especially unmeasured tunes, were "to be sung 'in free rhythm'", and that "all hymn tunes should be sung more or less freely; at all events a stiff clockwork rendering should be avoided" (1906: xiv).

otherness to construct the chant as atavistic, misplaced in progressive nineteenth-century Britain. Its supporters used it to argue for a licence in its performance.

Hymns Ancient and Modern was firmly in the latter camp. Its approach to the notation and therefore performance of Gregorian chant, for example, changed through its various editions, but by the end of the Victorian century the details of plainsong's difference were common knowledge. The 1904 edition, for example, endeavoured to lend a degree of authenticity to chant by notating it in neumes and harmonising it modally. But it was, as I mentioned, on the grounds of chant's alternative conception of musical time that a distinct practice of performance was argued. The "liberty of plainsong" resided in several related aspects. First, while chant notated in staff seemed to ascribe fixed duration, the notated chant sound had "no time-value in the modern sense", and the hymnal cautioned that "(it cannot be too clearly stated) that these values are only approximate, and vary verse by verse". Second, the freedom in time-values had implications for meter. Unlike "modern measured music", which was "restricted" in time, the chant was "not tied down to strict time or metrical uniformity" (Frere 1909: xxxiv-xxxv). Having established the otherness of chant's freedom in time to the disciplined time of the modern hymn, *Hymns A&M* urged "a large allowance of *tempo rubato*" in its singing (xxxv). Consider, by contrast, Curwen's clockwork hymning.

The notation of chant's metrical flexibility had indeed mystified the Victorians. Early attempts tended to provide a regular accent through, for example, barring the chant. No doubt in part the consequence of the text's translation into English, a language with stronger accents than Latin, it was also, I suggest, due to the expectations of the nineteenth-century's body-ear of a regulated beat. For example, when Sir George Macfarren attempted to justify "the revival, for standard use, of a system which [was] obsolete and ha[d] been superceded", he emphasised that the reason lay not in chant's "irregularity of rhythm, which deprive[d] music of its chief stronghold upon the attraction of the schooled and the unschooled" (*MT* 1867, quoted in Curwen 1888: 235). From his own researches, Curwen found that Gregorian chant proper was rarely practiced, as "[m]odern music, and the instinctive observance of rhythm which [was] an essential part of it, ha[d] modified the old chant, and given it accent and time" (231).³⁰ The major argument against chant, then, was that it was incompatible with

³⁰ Temperley has shown that those few publications which did manage to preserve plainsong's non-metricity in translation were never widely adopted (1979: 260-62, 264-65). The first music edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1861) did not bar chant melodies, though it did point some accents. This was in keeping with common mid-century practice, which used non-metrical approaches to the rhythm of Gregorian hymns (Zon 1999: 293). The 1875 edition, however, reverted to barring the melodies, as if the experiment with unmetrical chants had failed. The scholarly 1904 edition again flirted with authenticity, though, as with all the editions, a modern measured hymn was given as an alternative for those unable, or unwilling, to tackle the chant.

the modern Victorian world of metered rhythm.³¹ Even Curwen's historiographic practice in his monumental *Studies in Worship Music* suggests this: the structure of the chapters that deal with chant, which in effect constitute a history of meter, imply a teleological narrative in which the unmetrical Gregorian plainsong and the later hybrid Anglican chant were represented as primitive forerunners of the modern metrical hymn.³² Here, as elsewhere, the ordering and order of times musical and historical seemed to be inseparable in the discourse on chant.

EP Thompson (1967) speculated whether the transition to a mature industrial society with its new work-disciplines was related to a change in the inward notion of time. Did the demand for greater synchronisation of labour, and the clock-driven factory with its time-sheet and time-keeper, and later regulated machine-time, change the industrialised subject's apprehension of time? Victorian chant apologetics throws so clearly into relief nineteenth-century dependence on disciplined time, which the Victorian hymn-tune ideally performed. Certainly, hymn-time in nineteenth-century Britain appears to have coincided with clockwork work-time.

The body was disciplined in the reform of other aspects of musical time too. This is clear from the reformers' attitude towards meter type. The early reformer and Oxford professor, William Crotch, for example, had listed tunes composed in triple time as among those in a "bad style" (1836: 3). Likewise, the influential mid-century *Parish Choir*, journal of the reformist Society for Promoting Church Music, gave as one of its four key principles of hymnody that tunes should be confined to common time (see Bradley 1997: 36). Nicholas Temperley's analysis of the metrical identity of early Victorian hymnody confirms that these directives were followed (1979: 265). The reason for "anti-trinitarianism", I suggest, was the meter's "secularity", specifically its association with the waltz. In its modern form, the dance

³¹ Those seeking to rescue the Anglican chant from chantness appealed precisely to its "rhythmicality". The Rev. JR Lunn, for one, suggested that "Anglican chants [were] not, properly speaking, chants at all, but [were] really rhythmical tunes" (quoted in Curwen 1888: 242).

³² The sequence of the chapters has no basis in historical chronology, as Curwen traced the Anglican chant to the Restoration (1888: 239), while the metrical psalm was of course a product of the Reformation.

Other detractors politicised the revival. The well-known church musician and hymn-tune composer, Henry Smart, rejected chant because it was regressive – he spoke of "the mediaeval barbarism of the four-line staff and diamond note" – and because it was Roman – "so wholly opposed to the feeling of the people that it [could] never come into general use, except on the incredible supposition of a second universal ascendancy of the church which invented it" (n.d. [1855]: n.p.). Non-progressiveness and Catholicism became mutually inclusive derogatives uttered against the perceived Catholic orientation of certain branches within Victorian Anglicanism (see Sussman 1995: 131).

Recent debates on the revival of chant within Anglicanism have centred on the origins of the revival and the extent to which the revival can be equated with Catholic leanings (see, for example, Zon 1999; and Mager 2000). Less has been written on the popular and critical representation of chant as "popish" and the manner in which these representations fed from and into anti-Catholic discourse within Victorian church politics.

had been introduced to Britain at the start of the century and quickly achieved, according to *Grove's Dictionary*, an “immense popularity which ... had the effect of almost banishing every other dance” (Barclay Squire 1889: 385). The waltz, moreover, was not just any dance, but a repertoire of sexualised movements that had been “greeted with a storm of abuse as ‘a fiend of German birth,’ ‘destitute of grace, delicacy, and propriety,’ a ‘disgusting practice’” (386).³³ Just as the secular meter of the popular dance was proscribed, so were the choir-bands, which had moonlighted as village dance bands, disbanded (Gammon 1981: 64). Written into the reformed tunes, then, was the desire to control the body’s movements, and with it the mind’s thoughts (see La Trobe 1831: 206).

Even the tempo at which hymns were sung had this result. Early psalm-tunes, for example, had originally been called “Geneva jiggs” because of the lively pace of their performance. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, they were “no longer sung in a spirited and sprightly style, but doled forth”, in “a solemn, and even a funeral strain” (Havergal 1854: 42-3). One Victorian mused that it was “[s]trange ... that the very tunes that send us to sleep caused our forefathers to dance” (quoted in Lightwood 1906: 277).³⁴ By slowing the tempo all hints of the dance itch were downplayed, keeping the congregational body in its place as much as the “attention” position of voice culture did for the chorister.

I want to conclude my reading of reformed hymnody as disciplined music by briefly exploring how harmony slots into that story. Again, I start with Havergal’s observations on OLD HUNDREDTH, and its early Victorian harmonisation:

The harmony which used to be set to the tune, was far more varied and elaborate than any which is now used. Hardly a company of singers can now be found who sing the tune, as to its harmony, in more than one way; whereas, our forefathers were accustomed to harmonize and sing it in many ways (1854: 37-8).

An effect perhaps of the proliferation of hymn-books from the early Victorian period on, the saming of harmony in composition or arrangement was indicative also of its policing, a delimiting of the harmonic imagination. Reformed harmonic practice accordingly drew from a limited palette, as the Victorian OLD HUNDREDTH suggests:

³³ In its Anglicised version, the waltz’s physicality was tempered by developing the arm’s length rule (Langford 2000: 162). The Victorian propensity for strict time that I explored above is evident from the Victorian performance of waltz-time: “The Viennese tradition of introducing rallentandos and accelerandos into waltzes, charming though it is to a musician, has never been caught by any English conductor of dance music” (Barclay Squire 1889: 386).

³⁴ There is a wealth of anecdotal evidence to suggest that for much of the nineteenth century hymning tempi were inordinately slow. By the latter decades of the century performance speeds seemed to have picked up. Curwen commented on the “quick singing of modern times”, and the composer and organist of the Temple Church in London, Edward Hopkins, observed that whereas in previous years people had complained that he played too fast, and latterly that he played too slowly, he had actually kept the same speed (Curwen 1888: 287, 350).

The ordinary mode in which the tune is now harmonized in England, has been justly censured for its monotonous effect. According to that mode the initial and terminal note of each strain, excepting in only one instance, is set to the tonal harmony. The old masters studiously avoided such sameness (39).

Example 2 is an arrangement of OLD HUNDREDTH in this style. The “tonal harmony” clearly means tonic chord, and other markers of its “monotonous effect” are the preference for primary triad chords and root positions.

Example 2. OLD HUNDREDTH harmonised in the “strict” style.
John Spencer Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music* (1888).

The compositional discourse of this early Victorian version of the hymn-tune came tellingly to be called the “strict style” (Curwen 1888: 257). But while the disciplining of the old tunes’ harmony, like their melodies, was partly motivated by the contention that they had become “wretchedly corrupted” by the beginning of the nineteenth century and in need of a clean-up (Hullah 1843: vii), the strictness by no means indicated editorial fidelity to the rediscovered products of the Reformation.³⁵ A musical example of hymnody’s degenerate harmonic state was printed in *The Musical World*. It was a burlesque on OLD HUNDREDTH,

harmonized on the principles of the “*Dandy-Sublime*,” and dedicated, with every appropriate feeling, to those “profound musicians” who consider bold progressions, and daring harmonies – in plain English, unnatural modulations and extravagant discords, as the only tests of fine composition (20 June 1836).

The first thing to mention about the arrangement in example 3 is that it is a caricature; Havergal labelled it as such when he reproduced it in his *History* (1854: 49–50). Caricatures,

³⁵ Havergal admitted that the Victorians could not use the original harmonies of the old tunes. In *Old Church Psalmody* he arranged the harmony for all but two of the melodies, his OLD HUNDREDTH being an amalgam of two early harmonisations of the tune (n.d. [1847]: 6-7, 10).

of course, are grotesque exaggerations, by definition unnatural, and in the language of functional harmony in which the nineteenth-century hymn-tune was written, its harmony is “unnatural”. In its chromatic excess harmony had run riot much like the sartorial extravagance of the dandy according to whose “principles” the tune was arranged. The unremitting diatonicism of the strict style, by contrast, would serve to restrict such harmonic licence.

Example 3. The “Dandy-Sublime” OLD HUNDREDTH.
The Musical World (20 June 1836). Exact Reproduction.



Later generations of Victorian hymnologists appealed to the reformed style for their own disciplining projects. Curwen, for one, created a similarly monstrous OLD HUNDREDTH to demonstrate a compositional “future” that would materialise if the progress of the only slightly less diatonic mid-Victorian tune went unchecked – see example 4. Intended as a

“caricature”, OLD HUNDREDTH future’s “*reductio ad absurdum* of the extreme chromatic style” was an example of “musical profanity” (1888: 266). As a corrective, Curwen offered “Mr. Havergal’s views in favour of diatonic harmonies”, for the ear “never tire[d] of plain chords, such as those in the ‘Old Hundredth.’ The grandest progression in music [was] from tonic to dominant, or *vice versâ*” (260-1, 286).

Example 4. OLD HUNDREDTH “future”.
John Spencer Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music* (1888).

To extrapolate, on the basis of one type of hymn-tune, that Victorian choral music in general was a large-scale compositional project in the disciplining of music, is a claim that space won’t allow me to substantiate here. As a compensatory gesture, the reception of Victorian choral music in twentieth-century histories of the nineteenth century will, I think, illustrate the point.

Since the nineteenth century Western art has apparently cultivated an aversion to disciplined, or “conventional”, music such as the hymn-tune and popular choral composition (McClary 2000: 3).³⁶ Things seem less amiss when we remind ourselves that a conventionalised choralism occurred in the century of Victoria. Indeed, musical “Romanticism”, which Stainer thought a “comparatively recent” ideology when expounding its tenets only at the death of the century, appears to have taken a long time to cross the

³⁶ The conventionality of hymnody is perhaps best demonstrated in its continued pedagogical use. When the Victorian harmony manual sought illustrations of the cadence and “standard” progression, it found them in the hymn-tune (see, for example, Curwen 1889 [1861]; and Prout 1903 [1889]). At school in the late 1980s, I harmonised hymn-melodies.

channel. For Stainer, Romanticism was the very antithesis of the ethico-aesthetics of Victorian choral composition: that “frame of mind”

which desires to assert itself, to announce its freedom from restraint, or even to set itself up in opposition to the rules and regulations accepted by the many. In other words, we find in it a rebellion of the natural against the artificial; of the spontaneous against the conventional; and a definite desire to uphold personal opinion against dogmas held collectively. It thus becomes a protest against all previously held as authoritative, formal, classic, scholastic, or academic (1892: 38, 41-2).

In the interim, the musical nineteenth century has, of course, popularly become the “Age of Romanticism”, and its histories have protested loudly against Victorian choralism by silencing it. When Carl Dahlhaus wrote that “[n]o-one had a burden to bear because Beethoven wielded authority in music”, he obviously did not have the historiographic misfortunes of Victorian choralism uppermost in his mind (1983: 9). As I explored in the introduction, already by the end of the nineteenth century, when England’s own historians started narrating their country’s musical rebirth as the “English Musical Renaissance”, the spectre was raised of the “inferior composer of the quasi-clerical order”, “a peculiarly Anglo-Saxon product”, whose “bad religious music” had “deluged” the country (Walker 1907: 349). Similarly did Rosa Newmarch, reflecting on the Victorian past, speak of the “the monotonous manufacture of choral works”, “the ‘oratorio industry’” (1904: 14-16); the language of industrialisation registered the standardising of Victorian Britain’s compositional output. In canonising the music of the Renaissance as non-conventional, as “Romantic”, another disciplinary project was under way.

I chose hymning as an example of how one might read Victorian choralism as a discipline for the place it occupied not only in the genesis of several of the features of Victorian choralism but also for its continued significance to nineteenth-century British choral culture. Charity hymning was a model for elementary school choral education; choral voice culture had an antecedent in the improvement of the worshipping voice; the reformed church music became a metonym for the conventionality of Victorian choral music at large. None of which means that choralism succeeded as a disciplining discipline. Hymns were sung outside of the school; the congregation, if it sang at all, rarely would have done so with a trained voice; a whole genre of hymn-tunes, which fell under the label “sacred part-song”, escaped the strictures of the strict style. Yet, as Susan McClary has recently written, “a great deal of wisdom resides in conventions: nothing less than the premises of an age” (2000: 6). In the century of reform discipline *was* conventional wisdom. No less was this so in the discourses

and practices of popular choralism. According to the logic of that wisdom, OLD HUNDREDTH and voice culture would find a place in the mission to South Africa. And there, too, Victorian hymning would occupy a powerful place in the story of black South African choralism, as it assumed a place of power in the colonising – and decolonising – of South Africa.

PART 2

Introduction

Scriptions Of The Choral 2: The Historiography of Black South African Choralism

Jean and John Comaroff's multi-volume "anthropology of the colonial encounter", a dialectic of Nonconformist missionary attempts at domination and Tswana reaction, indeed *Of Revelation and Revolution* (1991: xiii), is not much concerned with music. In two brief paragraphs, however, music, specifically choral song, claims a space in their narrative on "the Word". Recounting early, frequently ineffective attempts at evangelising, they ask: at what stage did the "heathen" begin to listen to the gospel (236)? The answer, in part, is when the missionaries began to sing: "Being constantly sung", noted one of southern Africa's most celebrated missionaries, Robert Moffat, "the great truths of salvation would become imperceptibly written on the minds of the people" (1842: 478). As I explored in chapter one, "singing the gospel" was a not uncommon practice of the mission; here I consider the potted history of musical (post)colonialism that the Comaroffs set out in its wake:

To sing and to dance, in *setswana*, was *go bina*, which also meant "to venerate." The "sacredness" of song was nothing new here. But in the evangelists' view, such performances were [in the words of churchman John Edwards in 1886] a "monotonous thumping" to "barbarous airs" ... The choreography of rustic Christian life in Africa would be set to a different tune, the very sounds of which – it was hoped – would signify conformity with church orthodoxy. But there is also evidence that some resisted the seductive power of the songs of praise ... In fact, mission music was to be widely domesticated in southern Africa, most notably in the secessionist churches. Its cadences would be made to take on the pulse of indigenous self-assertion, to harmonize the aspirations of an independent, black salvation (1991: 241).

That a vocabulary of *music* is appropriated to narrate black resistance is not especially surprising. After all, stories of black musicking as resistance, in South Africa as elsewhere, have assumed the stuff of a master narrative.¹ As the revolutionary practices of South Africa's black secessionist churches are figured in their musical resistance to the mission's musical revelations, so the story of black musicking becomes a metonym for the Comaroffs' history as they follow the Tswana along "their passage down the road from revelation to revolution" (314).²

¹ The idea of black South African musicking *tout court* as resistance has, of course, been complicated (see, for example, Erlmann 1996). As will become clear, however, some black musicking has had less resistance value than other.

² Black domestication of mission ritual practice is even said to prefigure the anti-apartheid struggle and beyond: "Measuring out the distance from early mission orthodoxy to an indigenized Christianity, *go bina* also pointed toward mass action yet to come; specifically toward forms like *toyi-toyi*, the dance that was to galvanize practical resolve, to cry freedom, to sing of a 'new' South Africa in the making" (Comaroffs 1997: 114).

A narrative of musical revelation-revolution has also, I suggest, come to structure histories of South Africa's musical past. A recent instance is Angela Impey's contribution, ostensibly on the role of women in *isicathamiya*, to a project on "new" South African culture.³ Locating the roots of the genre in American minstrelsy and ragtime, Impey notes that prior to the rise of *isicathamiya*

choral music had for some time been performed by the educated, landed black elite, whose missionary education instilled in them the desire to imitate all things British. One of the main symbols of identification with Victorian values was religious 4-part choral singing referred to as *imusic* [in isiZulu]. The Natives' Land Act of 1913 was the first law passed in the then Union of South Africa which proscribed [sic] territorial partitioning to the country. It was an extreme piece of legislation that prohibited black property ownership, regardless of education, religious and class status, and forced thousands of indigenous peoples from their ancestral land. Consequently, religious hymns or *imusic* were no longer considered capable of accommodating emerging discourses of black social and political dissent and began to be blended with, or replaced by minstrelsy and other African American performance styles (2001: 231).

Narratives of resistance are always stories of erasure. In Impey's tale: as the coloniser displaced black South Africans, so potently symbolised in the 1913 land act, so the dissenting colonised replaced colonial culture; Victorian choral music was "no longer considered capable of accommodating emerging discourses of black social and political dissent". Admitted (reluctantly?) to the annals of South African music, Victorian choral music's status as black South African music is tenuous, occupying an originary colonial moment in the genesis of "modern" black music that has long since been displaced by the more explicitly hybrid musics of resistance.

Observations of the everyday in the twenty-first century suggest otherwise: a Sullivan part-song as a prescribed piece at a choral competition in Durban; young Grahamstown township choristers' favourite listening material Handel and Haydn oratorios.⁴ Few, moreover, would deny that popular choralism is the largest participatory form of music-making in contemporary South Africa.⁵ The simple question is: why the hands-off

³ *Isicathamiya* is the male-voice *a cappella* genre known to the public largely through super-group Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and to the academy primarily via the work of Veit Erlmann (see esp. 1996).

⁴ As a library assistant at Rhodes University I had chance to observe users' borrowing preferences. Township choristers, who were not music students, favoured recordings of Handel, Haydn and Mozart vocal music, and, to a lesser extent, Verdi and Puccini opera. The Sullivan song was "The Lost Chord", prescribed for the finals of the Telkom National Schools' Choir Festival of 2000.

⁵ The case of *isicathamiya* provides an instructive comparison. While the genre, along with black South African jazz, has been the favoured object of 1990s ethnomusicology, and Impey's work suggests that it is still in vogue, there are indications of a decline in its popularity (Erlmann 1996: 275). Two institutional moves reflect this situation: the withdrawal of state radio and television sponsorship – *isicathamiya* held a prime spot on apartheid's airwaves – and the establishment in the late 1980s of the reformist organisation, the South African Traditional Music Association, which aims to improve and promote the performance of the genre – a sure sign that all was not right. With this in mind, Impey's essay is subtitled, "A Case for Isicathamiya Choral Music".

approach to black South African choralism by ethno/musicologists? I want to begin to explore a complex answer by turning first to a time when choralism *was* inscribed as a thoroughly black South African practice.

rereading the tribe-and-traditionalists

The received story of South African ethnomusicology goes something like this: a first generation of professional ethnomusicologists, active from the late 1920s and devotees of “the traditional”; and a second generation – call them, following South African revisionist history, revisionist ethnomusicologists – who have been preoccupied since the late 1970s with the diverse effects of “modernisation” and cultural “syncretism”.⁶

A critique of the “tribe and tradition” paradigm that structured pre-War ethnomusicology is well known from the revisionists’ work. For Veit Erlmann, for example, pioneer South African ethno/musicologist Percival R Kirby and his contemporaries were concerned with the “continuity” of African musicking, and only marginally interested in situations of “culture contact”. More than this, they were biased against music, such as urban syncretic genres, that did not conform to their ideas of the traditional. Insidiously, this “indirectly provided the scholarly underpinnings of apartheid cultural policies” (1991: 2). There are several things to note about this critique.

It is widely known that the fascination with and construction of non-Western musics, and also “pre-modern” musics within the West, as “traditional” was not confined to South Africa. Anthropological practice in general pursued a like course. In his overview history of South African anthropology, WD Hammond-Tooke notes that the standard critique of early English-speaking social anthropology, then under the sway of British structural-functionalism, was its production of “static and nostalgic images of indigenous societies and cultures” (1997: 7, 48; also Spiegel and Boonzaier 1988: 46). South African ethnomusicology, we should remember, had a wider *disciplinary* context. It also has a local *political* context. But if anthropology’s, and ethnomusicology’s, complicity with colonialism and/or apartheid has begun to be explored only relatively recently, what has already become

⁶ Major characters in the first part include Percival R Kirby and Hugh Tracey, and in the second David Coplan, Veit Erlmann and Christopher Ballantine. For Christine Lucia the two-part story is a simplification, and does not take into account the bridging work of John Blacking and David Rycroft (personal communication). While the plan of this chapter may reinscribe the received story, I am also rethinking that story by rereading the content of those two parts. I have not engaged with Blacking or Rycroft here because their work *on choralism* does not, it seems to me, challenge the two-part story; Blacking, for instance, inscribed black choralism within the revisionist narrative I set out below.

clear is that the relation between scholarly knowledge and state policy is seldom straightforward.⁷ A one-to-one correspondence between apartheid politics and ethnomusicological practice, as such, is not tenable. It falters in a partial reading of the early ethnomusicological record, and in assuming that knowledge occupies an unified terrain.

A litmus case is the work of Yvonne Huskisson, Kirby's protégé at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and the "Organiser of Bantu Music" at the South African Broadcasting Corporation; she has been described as "a kind of Hendrik Verwoerd of music" (Erlmann 1996: 253).⁸ The discourse of apartheid in Huskisson's published work is undeniable:

In the towns, the Bantu assimilate a Western way of life and wear Western clothes in their daily round. With the vast majority, however, this is a surface adoption. In their hearts they remain unalterably traditional in outlook and, in their "town" homes, they uphold their traditional customs as far as environment will allow them to do so (1968: 16).

Such knowledge was typically uttered in state-sponsored publications; here, the Department of Information's magazine *Bantu*. But Huskisson's writings are filled with ambiguities that problematise thinking of her work as apartheid propaganda conventionally conceived.

Tensions certainly appear in her version of "The Story of Bantu Music". Not an ethnography of precolonial African musics, let alone a study of the music of a single "tribe" – apartheid's preoccupation with ethnicity is almost wholly absent⁹ – "The Story" is dominated as much by the presence of the West as by the "traditional"; it is worth pointing out that the quotes are hers. As the "town", more than the "homeland", is her field, so her musical objects are all models of an Africa-West hybridity: choral music, "township jazz" and *mbube*, an early sub-genre of *isicathamiya*; the revisionists would later mine these same musics. With images overwhelmingly non-traditional, the accompanying visual message does not contradict: a black man seated at a grand piano, a child playing the violin, school

⁷ The situation in South Africa is more complex, as two dominant, and often antagonistic, strands of anthropology emerged: a largely Afrikaans-language *volkekunde*, which did not produce any notable ethnomusicological or folk music work, and an English-language social anthropology, to which the first generation of South African ethnomusicologists may be said to belong.

As might be expected, the institutional context in which *volkekunde* was elaborated has rendered it vulnerable to charges of collusion with apartheid (see, for example, Gordon 1988; and Sharp 1981). Conversely, South African social anthropology seems largely to have been indemnified against this charge, though its relationship to pre-apartheid segregationist discourse is more ambivalent (see, for example, Rich 1984: chap. 3).

⁸ There is no critical work on Huskisson or on any of the other early South African ethnomusicologists, and this introduction is in part a preliminary gesture in that direction. Charles Hamm (1991) gives a brief reading of Huskisson's involvement in Radio Bantu and hence, for Hamm, apartheid politics.

⁹ If the older "race paradigm" structures "The Story", it is probably because it was a work of popular history. Besides, as Emile Boonzaier notes, the move in the 1960s to ethnicity perpetuated many of the ideas of the race paradigm (1988: 65). More generally, Peter Skalník observes that a "shift in terminology whereby 'tribe' (or 'race' or 'tradition') has been superseded by 'culture' or 'ethnic group', is endemic to the South Africa situation" (1988: 77). Huskisson's doctoral research was on Pedi music (1959).

children their recorders, a jazz band, a massed choir performing Handel; only a bow player and a dance scene hint that precolonial music-making was still alive in 1960s South Africa. To be sure, Huskisson made constant appeal to the traditional, but she did so in an unconvincing dialectic. "The Story", for example, concludes thus:

Urbanisation, modern progress, involvement with Western civilisation, have thus made a deep impact on the Bantu and his musical development. To date, however, this has been chiefly in the manner and style of presentation rather than in actual substance. The "traditional" in Bantu music has received an urban metamorphosis. It has, however, not been left behind, and will remain a font from which Bantu musical "development" flows. At a vital and interesting stage, the future of Bantu music in South Africa is fraught with promise (21).¹⁰

If the institutionalised rhetoric and ideology of apartheid opposed the idea of a Western black South African, who always had to wear the rider of "the traditional", the language of apartheid was typographically marked, a sign, I suggest, of Huskisson's varied, contradictory use of the concept of tradition.

In the first instance, as we would expect, the traditional signified a precolonial moment lived on in rural black South Africa, but also, if only unconsciously, in the "hearts" of black city-dwellers. Basically, an African musicking uninfluenced by anything Western as suggested by the picture of the bow player. Elsewhere, it labelled what has been called neo-traditional or, currently, hybrid music: *isicathamiya* was traditional music for Huskisson.¹¹ But as commonly, the traditional functioned as a sign of the undefinable, speaking of a discursive paralysis: "Township Jazz" emulated Western jazz styles but was "basically 'traditional' sounding"; the "progressive Jazz School", which imitated the foremost overseas jazzists, had a "distinctly 'traditional' sound" that had been hailed as "African" (18-19). The moment at which Huskisson's linguistic competence deserted her, it seems, was precisely when the traditional came into play most powerfully. The traditional did not index precolonial musicking *per se*, nor did it necessarily reference hybridity, though the musics are hybrid. Rather, it was a white aural-idea of Africanness, a registering of sonic difference even when a black choir sang Western music, as the massed choir in one of the pictures sang *Messiah*. And while the content of this sonic Africanity may mark a "continuity" with the precolonial, so producing a hybrid complex, it created the traditional as an all encompassing

¹⁰ Karin Barber's critique of tradition as a "pool of resources" which either passively "pushes up from underneath" or is actively "drawn on" (1995: 8) can certainly be recognised in Huskisson's use of the traditional, and is present in some guise in most work on black South African musicking.

¹¹ Rycroft struggled with the Janus-faced nature of the traditional in his early work on *isicathamiya*: "One of the oddest and loudest forms of African noises to be heard ... is described by its makers as 'Zulu Male Traditional Singing'. This is their polite (and inaccurate) description of it when speaking to non-Zulus. Such singing ... is, however, a new tradition, if the term 'traditional' is to be allowed". Elsewhere, only "truly indigenous music" was "real traditional music" (1957: 33).

category; the construction of black *sound*, not simply black music, as traditional worked to subsume *all* black musicking under the rubric of the traditional.¹²

That Huskisson's "traditional" indexed variable musical content does not, of course, indemnify her work from the charge that it contributed to apartheid cultural policy formation. Quite the contrary. Her wholesale traditionalising of black musicking smacks precisely of the workings of apartheid. All I have wanted to point out is that the early ethnomusicologists' conceptualisations of tradition were not as rigid as has been claimed. This allowed, for example, for the inclusion of black choralism in her work, and on her Radio Bantu programming. Her magnum opus, *The Bantu Composers of Southern Africa* (1969), was a painstaking endeavour that, for all its faults, remains the most comprehensive bibliographic resource on black choral composers. If here, the traditional was flogged even more unremittingly, fitting yet more seamlessly into the logic of "separate development", the discursive urgency betrayed, perhaps, what it gave lie to: the book, as later editors of the work summarised its content, is concerned with "the rise of *Westernized* music among the black peoples of South Africa" (Malan 1983: n.p.; Hauptfleisch 1992: vii; my emphasis).

Huskisson's career was primarily as a broadcaster; her relatively small output of published written work is popular history. In contrast stands the work of her mentor, the polymath Percival R Kirby. Scottish-born, Royal College of Music-educated and founding chair of the Wits Music Department, Kirby owes his inclusion in the "tribe and tradition" hall of fame largely to the longevity of his most widely known work, *The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa* (1934b). But he was also a prolific essayist, with remarkably catholic research interests. Closer attention to this work, I suggest, unsettles the ideas we hold on the father of South African ethnomusicology.

¹² The traditional as a catch-all concept-category was clearly indicated in the name change of the *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* to the *Yearbook for Traditional Music* in 1981, a move made to index the "more comprehensive" content of the journal: the "traditional music, including folk, popular, classical, and urban music and dance of all countries" (Christensen 1982: n.p.).

The history of the traditional as an historiographic idea within music studies has not been written. The word slipped into the discipline on the back of, and then as replacement for, "folk", its protean potential energised by the "continuity and change" paradigm of the 1950s, where theorising tradition as change opened it up to indiscriminate appropriation. This, at least, was the context within which tradition/al entered the pages of *African Music* (see esp. Bascom 1958). As I discuss below, and in the final section of the next chapter, the revisionists' own use of tradition, and often an invented tradition at that, has been no less political, and no less nationalist than Huskisson's.

Tradition's latest rival seems to be "world music". According to its most recent theoriser Philip Bohlman, world music is, on the one hand, "traditional music repackaged and marketed as popular music", and, on the other, "that music which we encounter, well, everywhere in the world" (2002: xiv, xi). Another empty signifier in the making?

On retirement from Wits in 1952, Kirby settled in Grahamstown in the eastern part of the then Cape Province. Tourism road-signs erected in 2001 remind us that Grahamstown was in frontier country, the capital of the eastern reaches of the nineteenth-century Cape Colony, where Xhosa-speaking and various European peoples clashed intermittently in what has been called a Hundred Years War – and where another, Christian army waged its own, sometimes related, battles. Amongst other methods of governance the mission to southern Africa brought with it was, as we saw in part 1, Victorian choralism. It was surrounded by this rich legacy of black choralism that Kirby spent his latter years.

Indeed, it appears that the move to Grahamstown quickened Kirby's interest in black choralism. He began a correspondence with RHW Shepherd, formerly principal of Africa's largest mission and black education institution, Lovedale, because he was "anxious to make a preliminary investigation into the use of Western techniques by African musicians" (4/3/1958). Though Shepherd's response was hardly encouraging – "how Africans learned to compose in the European manner is lost in the mists of the past" (10/3/1958) – he nevertheless led Kirby to that past, specifically to the late-nineteenth-century composer John Knox Bokwe, and to Bokwe's *Amaculo ase Lovedale (Lovedale Music)*, a collection of hymn-tunes and part-songs (1st publ. 1885, 5th and last ed. 1920). Kirby's mission accomplished – *Amaculo* "contains precisely the information I have been seeking, and I want to make a good many notes about it" (11/4/1958) – the exchange ended abruptly.

Kirby's interest in black choral music, however, had begun long before the 1950s. It was a thread that spanned his research life, weaving its way into his work from at least 1930 and outliving him in posthumous publication.¹³ This interest might be traced to what, at the outset of his "unconventional autobiography", Kirby called the influence of "heredity and environment" (1967: 15). Born into the late Victorian culture of choralism, he had a singing master and choral conductor for a father, and spent much of his youth first listening to choirs, then accompanying them, and occasionally singing in them (17-18, 25-26, 38). When he departed the Royal College of Music for employment in the Union of South Africa, it was to take up the position of "music organiser" of the Natal Education Department, where he made his acquaintance with black choralism on rounds of the province's mission stations. It is in the context of disciplinary imperatives, though, that I want to discuss Kirby's work on

¹³ The essays at the limits of this chronological span are "A Study of Negro Harmony" (1930), and the "Introduction" to the entry "The Bantu Composers of South Africa" in Jacques P Malan's *South African Music Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (1979). Others include: "The Effect of Western Civilization on Bantu Music" (1934), "African Music" (1949), "The Uses of European Techniques by Non-European Peoples of South Africa" (1959), and "The Changing Face of African Music South of the Zambezi" (1971).

choralism. I'll begin with the caveat that any attempt to align Kirby's ethnomusicology with a single politics is thwarted by the range of often dissenting ideas that constitute his practice.

"The Effect of Western Civilization on Bantu Music" (1934a) is an early essay, and, like Huskisson's "Story" of thirty years later, styled itself as a short history of black South African musicking. Its terminus, importantly, is the early 1930s; before, that is, the recording boom, popularisation, and indeed emergence, in their more recognisable forms, of township jazz and *isicathamiya*.¹⁴ For Kirby, then, the typical music of pre-1930s "culture contact" was choral music, and this is the subject of his story. Unlike Huskisson, though, Kirby had a good deal to say on precolonial South African music(s).¹⁵

The essay is a theoretical marriage of two paradigmatic, and not incompatible, narratives. On the one hand, Kirby's work is structured by evolutionary thinking: Bantu polyphony is similar to that of medieval Europe, "the Bantu system [is] a thousand years behind in its development", and so on (132, also 137).¹⁶ On the other hand, the evolutionary narrative accommodated the second, more explicit paradigm that was the essay's brief: the relatively recent anthropological idea of "culture contact", such that "the Bantu natives were at just that stage of musical evolution when they could, with some show of success, assimilate, and to a certain extent imitate, the simpler music of the white man" (133). Kirby thus brought his story of black South African music, and especially its contact with and influence by Western music, into an evolutionary history. But it was not the standard Victorian version of evolution as "progress".¹⁷ Under the impact of the then anthropological

¹⁴ A recurring revisionist gripe was the early ethnomusicologists' alleged lack of interest in, even disdain of, urban musics. I want to note several things about this critique: first, it assumes the early work was monolithic, when, as we saw with Huskisson, it was not always disinterested in urban music; second, it often and mistakenly casts choralism as a non-urban practice; and third, perhaps most importantly, it forgets the power of chronological perspective on the historical imagination. One might turn the tables and ask why the revisionists' own work has been preoccupied with musics with at least half a century of "history", while eschewing new popular musics such as *kwaito*. Is the revisionist preoccupation with genres on the decline the same preservationist concern that characterised earlier ethnomusicology?

¹⁵ He acknowledges the plural theoretically – "this music, or rather musics (since the art of one race [ethnic group] was not the same as that of another)" – though tends to dissolve the insight into a unified "Bantu music" (1934a: 131). The early Africanists' awareness of this dilemma has not always been sufficiently appreciated. Besides, we still tend *in practice* to trade in generalisations (see, for example, Scherzinger 2001a on Erlmann).

¹⁶ As we know, evolutionism was a structuring narrative for a long time in both music-historical writing and comparative musicology. Bennett Zon has recently discussed the application of evolutionary thought to mainstream Victorian and Edwardian musicology (see 2000: chap. 4), and it is likely that Kirby's training at the RCM, headed at the time by Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, author of *The Evolution of the Art of Music* (1897), provided the intellectual context for his long-held evolutionary ideas as much as the early work of the comparative musicologists; Kirby could thus cite both Parry and Wallaschek in an essay on "primitive" harmony and polyphony (see 1926: 952, 961).

¹⁷ Even this was not as monolithic as is often made out; evolutionary progress had a dark flip-side: "degeneration" (see, for example, Daniel Pick 1989: 2; and Chamberlin and Gilman 1985).

novelty of cultural relativism, “Western civilization” was no longer necessarily Culture *sui generis*, and certainly not for black South Africans (Hammond-Tooke 1997: 9). In fact, throughout the essay Western musical influence is, on the whole, cast as detrimental to African musicking.¹⁸

Culture contact theory, it has been claimed, came increasingly to emphasise differences between the West and Africa (Rich 1984: 55). Certainly, Kirby elaborated a strong form of racial difference: “the rhythm and the melody of the African are diametrically opposed to those of the European”; “the mind of the Bantu ... is practically incapable of understanding modulation”; and, from a performance of a Bach chorale, “the intonation of the very notes of the diatonic scale showed with the utmost clearness how the foreign idiom had failed to graft itself on to the native stock”. In short, black musicking was “radically different” (1934a: 133, 131). It is a position that easily places Kirby’s ideas within the segregationist discourse of the early 1930s, conventionally said to be a hallmark of the nascent South African social anthropology, and more generally of early-twentieth-century liberalism (see esp. Rich 1984: chap. 3).¹⁹ But this is not the entire story of Kirby’s essay.

For a start, given the amount of ink that he spilled on black choralism in writings spanning almost half a century, Kirby’s persistent negativity towards the music and its performance is somewhat odd. His valuation of “indigenous” music makes ethnocentrism an inadequate explanation, and the revisionists’ fantasy of attributing causality to a segregationist-apartheid mentality is, as I show below, too simple. But what if Kirby’s will to “distinction” has its basis not in race, but in class: what if it is, to borrow a phrase from Pierre Bourdieu, a “judgment of taste” (1984), and not the scholarly correlative of an invidious plot aimed at social control? Here is a taste of Kirby’s judgment, from a section of the essay in which he discusses tonic sol-fa:

This adoption of a simple system of musical notation by the Bantu has led to the rapid dissemination of reams of European music of little or no value among the native peoples, and, what is worse, has brought in its train a host of would-be Bantu “composers”, who, modelling their style upon these worthless European models, without even mastering the rudimentary principles of musical composition or even grammar, have turned out parodies of Western music which have swept over large areas of the country. Unthinking European

¹⁸ The early ethnomusicologists’ arguments for a racially-ethnically-culturally “pure” music are well known; Hugh Tracey’s writings in particular propound a sort of musical eugenics (see esp. 1932). It is precisely in this alleged antipathy to cultural hybridity that the revisionists have spotted the signs of their predecessors’ indirect collusion with (proto-)apartheid thought (see, for example, James 1990: 309-11; and Erlmann 1991: 150).

Saul Dubow suggests that anthropology’s “pluralist and relativist notion of ‘culture’” provided both an escape from the implications of evolutionary theory and buttressed segregationism, which came to be regarded as an “acceptable and humane means by which to encourage the development of different ‘cultures’ along the lines of their ‘natural advance’” (1989: 8).

¹⁹ Though typically, and somewhat contradictorily, this was articulated alongside an updated discourse of the paternalist “civilising mission” (see Rich 1981: 79).

patrons have occasionally arranged for the publication of many of these effusions, thus giving their authors a false idea of their value (1934a: 135).

Here, in the Union, Kirby repeated the discourses of late Victorian England that I discussed in chapter three, where sol-fa and its repertory – the enormous proliferation of choral music from hymn-tunes to oratorios often written by amateur “composers” – were constructed as “popular”, and where towards the end of the century the new breeding grounds of the professional musician, the conservatories, embarked on an offensive, arguing against the use of sol-fa at the same time as co-authoring the exscription of the choral repertory from “official” historiography. Party to the mob of anti-sol-fa petitioners that had marched on Whitehall in 1897 was Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, Kirby’s composition teacher at the RCM (*MH* June 1897: 167). It is not black European music *per se*, then, that fired Kirby’s distaste, but a particular class of Western music, what he called elsewhere “the cheapest (and poorest) types of European music” (1949: 622, also 621).²⁰ Kirby’s judgments are certainly modernist, but if they are racist it is only because the rhetoric of class and race became at times indistinguishable in the musical imagination of colonialism.

The black mimicry of “European models, largely of the popular and undeveloped type”, had resulted, for Kirby, in a “state of affairs ... delay[ing] the real development of Bantu music” (1959: 40; 1934b: 135). The anti-sol-fa delegation had employed the very same tactic: sol-fa and its music were cast as obstacles to the advancement of a national British music. The upshot of the essay was that while there were “many who think that the native would do better to retain his own song ... in South Africa it is impossible; European culture has affected the Bantu in every conceivable way, and he cannot escape it. In music as in everything else he must follow the European” (139). Paternalistic yes; segregationist no. In the end, what the revisionists failed to see in Kirby’s work was his late Victorian educational ideals: the professional composer and performer, the conservatory professor, now involved in elementary music education. Kirby’s damning statements on black choralism are typically articulated as an educational “problem”, with thoughts on reform regularly proffered.²¹ His programme, in which “the Bantu [was to] follow the European”, entailed a school of music for the black musician where s/he was to have “the guidance of teachers of *taste*, themselves *composers*”, and where they were to “hear *good models* ...

²⁰ Kirby tells how, at a job interview, he was asked what he would do if he found school children singing “I sing because I love to sing” by Ciro Pinsuti, whose part-songs were a staple of the Victorian choral society repertory. His answer: “I should take the copy of the song from the teacher, and fling it into the school fire, if there was one” (1967: 78-9).

²¹ Those involved with black choralism and music education in post-apartheid South Africa will experience a moment of self-recognition if they care to hold up Kirby’s mirror from the past.

European performances of *the very best music* adequately rendered” (140; my emphases). The model, in fact, was Kirby himself – at Wits he mentored the first black music students to attend a South African university.²²

“The Effect of Western Civilization on Bantu Music” was published in a collection edited by the noted anthropologist Isaac Schapera, titled *Western Civilization and the Natives of South Africa*. Polemically elaborated within the old colonial climate of psycho-sexual paranoia – “that fear of race-mixture which plays so large a part in shaping the prevalent European attitude towards the Natives” – Schapera argued for an oppositional vision for South Africa, for “some social and political system in which both [black and white “races”] may live in *close* contact” (1934: ix, xiii; my emphasis). More specifically, his preface was a riposte to the findings and proposals of the 1932 Native Economic Commission, itself an indication of the government’s increasing interest in the practical implications of the liberal discourse on segregation. The Commission favoured a strategy of “adaptation” of black institutions towards European ones, as opposed to either full-scale “assimilation” or total “separation”. For Schapera this smacked of indirect government and failed to realise the extent of the influence of the West on black South African lives. Accordingly, he favoured assimilation as “the final solution to the native question” (x-xii). As an early study in culture contact theory, then, the book belies the conventional wisdom which insists that culture contact was segregationist ideology *finis*.²³

This is the context for Kirby’s contribution on black choralism. *Pace* the revisionists, his essay may be read as a radical critique of both state and liberal policy.²⁴ Nor was the Schapera essay a one-off exercise. Black choralism, as the Westernisation of black musicking, was a recurring theme in Kirby’s work. Another example is the article on “African Music” that appeared in the South African Institute of Race Relations’ *Handbook* of 1949. The *Handbook*’s editor, and SAIRR committee member, Ellen Hellmann, was one of South Africa’s foremost students of culture contact, which she used to argue against segregation (see Hammond-Tooke 1997: 55-7). Again Kirby’s article, focussing on the “radical change in outlook and in practice” of black musicking, on the “fruits of this change”

²² The well-known composer Joshua Mohapeloa was one (Huskisson 1969: 161).

²³ Hammond-Tooke has suggested that we need to “re-visit the liberal contribution and to engage in the complex disentangling of the threads of paternalism, liberalism, humanitarianism, and their contribution to segregation (and later apartheid), on the one hand, and opposition to it on the other” (8). It is in the spirit of the latter endeavour that he offers a “defense” of liberal anthropology, and especially of the work of Schapera (1997: 8, and esp. chap. 2 for Schapera).

²⁴ In Rich’s account a “monolithic white liberalism” that sought to make segregationist legislation workable was firmly in place by the early 1930s (1984: 50-1; cf. Dubow 1989: 47, 49).

and its consequences for education (1949: 620), slotted into Hellmann's theoretical framework as it chimed with her politics (see esp. her essay, "Culture Contact and Social Change" of 1948).²⁵ A decade later, Kirby's knowledge of black choral composition was sufficient for him to announce to the International Folk Music Council that he "hope[d] at some future date to prepare a detailed monograph" on the subject (1959: 39). In the event, the work never materialised. But the *idea* of a book on black choral composition, dimly realised in Huskisson's *Bantu Composers*, begins to answer the revisionist critique; its lengthy gestation provides an opportunity, as well, to consider revisionist politics.

reading the revisionists narrating the nation

Since David Coplan's founding revisionist text, *In Township Tonight! South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre* (1985), almost all late-twentieth-century work on black South African music has incorporated choralism into their stories. *How* black choralism has been inscribed within these histories is what interests me here.²⁶

It was in the *Township* monograph that the revisionist narrative of what I'll call "cultural nationalism" first received paradigmatic form. Like most subsequent work on black South African musicking, the *Township* musics demanded engagement with black choralism, if only to account for the later musics' stylistic make-up; even early black jazz appropriated hymn-tunes (see Ballantine 1993: 26). Coplan, accordingly, begins his study with a potted history of music in nineteenth-century South Africa, briefly taking in the country site of mission choralism on the way to his urban, Johannesburg-based thesis. Crucial to the

²⁵ Quoting Kirby out of context, Erlmann alleges that he argued for "the deliberate recognition of indigenous music by all educationists" (1986: 117). In his approval of Hugh Tracey's ethnographic work for educational purposes, Kirby fully endorsed the use of non-Western African music for black music education. But this was only a small part of his plan. He also bemoaned the "virtually negligible" "opportunities afforded Africans of hearing really good performances of the best in civilized music", proposing that a "*fusion* of the various constructive forces [including symphony concerts and African music pumped through the "loudspeaker equipment of locations and mine compounds"] might help to put our African musical house into some sort of order". But recognising the racist state of things, he concluded that "prejudice, lack of funds, and general apathy [would] delay substantial progress for many years" (1949: 621, 626-7; my emphasis).

In an essay of the previous year, Hellmann had insightfully analysed South Africa's problem as the racialising of culture. What was routinely said to be a benign "culture conflict", she suggested, was actually "racial conflict", and the belief that "a particular culture [was] the prerogative of a particular race" was really a means to "ensuring the dominance of the white-skinned group" (1948: 35-6). This was the "prejudice" that Kirby identified, and from which, he warned, stemmed the asymmetrical distribution of power and resources that would choke black music education. In short, his was a prescient analysis of apartheid's Bantu Education in the making. If Hellmann's hard-line counter was to argue for "the total assimilation of the knowledge, techniques, standards and values of Western culture by the Bantu" (see her response to the 1951 Commission on Native Education, quoted in Hammond-Tooke 1997: 55), Kirby's pluralist proposal was not, in content, that different to the "multi-culturalism" arguments that energised music education debates in the 1990s.

²⁶ In what follows I owe a debt to Hayden White's work on historical narrative (see esp. 1973 and 1987).

narrative of cultural nationalism, then, is the emplotment of choralism as originary, a gambit that allows choralism no space of its own beyond its colonial time. For example, in the chapter on inter-war music-making, black choralism is displaced as the narrative progresses by early jazz and vaudeville, which “served far better as musical expressions of an urban African self-image than Anglo-African classical *makwaya*” (1985: 127).²⁷ Henceforth, choralism does not exist in (the) *Township*, its place outside of modern South Africa (though cf. Coplan 1982).

Cultural nationalism is a narrative whose content is an invented national culture. In his celebrated essay, “On National Culture” (1967), Frantz Fanon analysed the historical phases of this invention for an Africa in the throes of decolonisation. He began with the problem of culture’s relationship to political economy, a difficulty which he resolved, in the end, by donning his psychiatrist’s hat:

I am ready to concede that on the plane of factual being the past existence of an Aztec civilization does not change anything much in the diet of the Mexican peasant today ... But it has been remarked several times that this passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era finds its legitimate reason in the anxiety shared by native intellectuals to shrink away from that Western culture in which they all risk being swamped (168).

Fanon was no proselyte of the precolonial, which in itself he cast as an inadequate, and ultimately irrelevant, basis for a culture of decolonisation. Yet his critique of the return to tradition throws up the double imperative under which narratives of cultural nationalism assume their form.

The first is well known. It is the extent to which the historical “native intellectual”, and their historians no less, constructed national culture on the back of a (re)invented tradition. Coplan’s idea of national culture is emblematic, and he narrates it not only in the exscription of black choralism, but also by reinscribing choralism. Near the end of the nineteenth century, for example, he summons as witnesses “a small but influential group of [black] mission cultural leaders [who] began to question the wisdom of abandoning the heritage they shared with all Africans in favour of a poorly integrated Westernism whose benefits were doubtful in the context of South African racialism” (1985: 29). These proto-black nationalists, as they have been called, “looked instead for a distinctively African concept of civilisation” (30), the Africanness of which Coplan locates in the survival of the precolonial. For example, the music of Bokwe, which “gave powerful musical support to the cultural nationalism of mission intellectuals”, “contained African as well as Christian

²⁷ *Makwaya* is a Zuluisation of the English “choirs”, and refers to black choral musicking that has an all too clear relationship with Victorian choralism in both its repertory and performance practices.

musical features” (30-1); Christian stands unproblematically for “the West”, as if ontologically non-African. In a recent dissertation on black popular music, Lara Allen is more explicit as to the content of Africanisation:

Over the ensuing decades *imusic* [the isiZulu term for Western music] was gradually Africanised, evolving into several distinctly South African genres, notably *isicathamiya* and the choral style of such composers as Reuben T. Caluza and John Knox Bokwe. Africanisation tended to include such elements as call-and-response and cyclical structures, parallel part movement and restrained dance steps (2000: 42).²⁸

These, of course, are some of the long identified signifiers of musical Africanness. But though they may approximate an *isicathamiya* reality, they falsify, under the impress of the narrative of cultural nationalism, the structural facts of most early black choral music.²⁹ In other words, when choralism features in the story of South African music it does so under the guise of Africanisation, evoking an essential Africa in the name of historiography alone.³⁰

A second, more dogmatic aspect of cultural nationalism is the rejection of the West. Fanon closed *The Wretched of the Earth* with the repetition of a refrain that sounds throughout his manifesto for decolonisation: “do not imitate Europe”. In more militant mode – “decolonization is always a violent phenomenon” – the expulsion of the West and its “values” from Africa is willed in an act of physical (ex)purgation: “vomit them up” (1967: 252, 27, 36).³¹ The revisionists too have echoed this cry, albeit in muted form. Coplan, for one, moralises the inter-war black elite’s “feelings of cultural inferiority”, that is their obdurate will to assimilation, as an obstacle to national culture: “In measuring African musical performance by Western aesthetic criteria, African music educators were short-sighted. They failed to recognise that cultural nationalism would only be subverted by measuring Africans by the cultural standards of the colonisers” (1985: 118). Black African national culture, he says, is incompatible with a colonising Western culture; its narratives must elide, as they Africanise, the West. And so black choralism, labouring under this

²⁸ Allen’s work exemplifies the cultural nationalist narrative in several respects, including the emplotment of choralism as originary. Black choralism is thus summoned in an introductory chapter on music prior to the chronological starting point of the thesis, signalled by the Nationalist victory of 1948, literally inscribing it as a remnant of the British colonial era (2000: chap. 2).

²⁹ I will have more to say on the proper content of Bokwe’s music in the following chapter. For now, I point out that the thoroughly “Victorian” style that governs early black choral composition does not preclude an “African” reading of that music.

³⁰ Recently, a critique of South African music history’s Africanist politics, centered around Veit Erlmann’s latest book, *Music, Modernity, and the Global Imagination* (1999), has begun to emerge (see Scherzinger 2001a; and Muller 2000: chap. 5, section 3).

³¹ Robert Young points out some of the paradoxes in Fanon’s life and work. While, on the one hand, a rigid Manichaean schema structures Fanon’s analysis of colonialism as conflict between a white West and black Africa, Fanon was, on the other, the most assimilated of Francophone anticolonialists whose interest in and experience of “local” cultures was limited (2001: 279, 276).

double bind, has gained only a precarious footing, a half-place, in the revisionist story of South African's musical past. In Allen's version:

The musical expression of hybridity amongst urban South Africans over the past century has taken the form of an ongoing dialogue with western, particularly African-American popular styles: South African variants of hymn-style choral music, minstrel songs, vaudeville, and big band swing evolved; which were, in turn, further Africanised to produce such styles as *marabi*, *kwela* and *mbaqanga* (2000: 4).

This West-Africa dialogue, however, becomes increasingly one-sided as "the West" is progressively eclipsed by "Africa". From the outset the metropolitan Victorian standards of the black choral repertory do not feature – there are only "South African variants of hymn-style choral music" – then even this choral music, as black musicking is "further Africanised", does a historiographic disappearing trick; *marabi*, *kwela* and *mbaqanga* are not choral musics.

Two "mini-narratives" recur alongside the narrative of cultural nationalism in revisionist histories. The first was, in its heyday, as grand as they come: marxist historiography. It filtered into South African ethnomusicology by way of the revisionist history of the 1970s, and, as might be expected, led to a focus on music's entanglement with the processes of class formation.³² Beginning with Coplan, black choralism was analysed less for its musical content than for its insights into social processes; its involvement in the construction of what has been called, variously, black elite, petite bourgeoisie or, simply, middle-class cultural identity.³³ Classic Marxism, of course, was not so much concerned with the bourgeoisie but with the working classes' struggle against them. Where revisionist ethnomusicology has interested itself in black middle-class musicking such as choralism, therefore, it has oftentimes seemed half-hearted, necessitated only by the requirements of a foil for working-class culture.³⁴ Class imperatives, here, coincide with those of cultural nationalism.

³² Erlmann's and Ballantine's intellectual debts, though not Coplan's, include the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, but the specific nature of the concerns of their early South African texts, such as class, seems to me to derive from revisionist historical studies, the insights of which they drew on freely, rather than from Benjamin and Adorno.

³³ A concern with "the social" in much revisionist work, due in part to the anthropological turn of the 1960s – Coplan was a student of Alan Merriam (see 1964) – has, claims Deborah James, de-emphasised analysis of the musical text (1990: 314), what Martin Scherzinger calls "ethnomusicological anti-formalism" (2001b). In the study of black choralism the absence of music analysis is conspicuous in the first part of Erlmann's *Music, Modernity, and the Global Imagination*.

³⁴ A large section of Coplan's early essay, "The Emergence of an African Working-Class Culture" (1982), is concerned with elite mission-influenced musicking, and is not written to the classic narrative of culture nationalism that I have been elaborating; choralism is discussed at the end of the essay and its political performance throughout the twentieth century conceded (370; also Erlmann 1985: 191-2). This somewhat anomalous piece of revisionist writing, however, is no less "moralising" in its narrativity (see White 1987: 14, 24), pointing clearly to Coplan's central claim: while genre and class coincided in the township, there existed

Nowhere is this clearer than in work on black jazz. Though South African music history has tended not to be deterministic in its reading of the relationship of genre to class (see Ballantine 1993: 11-12), the revisionists' marxist colours have at times unclouded the hermeneutic waters and class-ified genres. This conflict occasionally surfaces in Christopher Ballantine's study of early South African jazz, *Marabi Nights*, in which the black working class is invested with a cultural agency that is "dynamic, mercurial" (74). If this culture is specifically *marabi*, it is also, in Ballantine's less vigilant moments, a generic "jazz": "the vibrant and virile subculture of jazz and vaudeville fostered by the most urbanised sectors of the black working class" (39). By contrast, bourgeois culture, whether white colonial or black elite, is never vibrant or virile, never oppositional according to the logic of the subcultural theory to which Ballantine appeals. In fact, middle-class choralism, because of its refusal to Africanise, is figured as socio-political emasculation (58).³⁵ In contrast stands a working-class jazz that is always already African, while the elite's later acceptance of jazz reflects, and performs, its own progressive Africanisation. Ultimately, the marxist narrative confines choralism, which like the non-revolutionary bourgeoisie is White, to historiographic exile.

This erasure, we have seen, works by writing the story of black music as a history of generic displacement: jazz for choralism, the spiritual for Victorian part-song. It is a strategy that points to the favoured status that African-American culture has gained in South African music history (see, for example, Allen 2000: 4; and Impey 2001: 231). Whatever the historical connections between South African and African-American music, the narrativising of black America into black South African history – the second of my mini-narratives – has much to do with a political historiography of the present.³⁶

also a broad-based black urban music that transcended class divisions. James suggests that later revisionist writing was critical of this position, arguing for a closer genre-class correspondence (1990: 313-14).

³⁵ Ballantine concedes a dual "social role" for jazz: a "liberal" or conservative use, namely "as an aid to improvement within the given order"; and a "radical" use, "playing a more challenging role, lending assistance to efforts that *tended* in the direction of more fundamental social change". Examples of the latter occur within workers' unions (50), while the middle-class bands were largely apolitical in their institutional affiliations (53). Jazz, then, was politically protean, its sometime eliteness tempered by its proletarian radicalness. Choralism, for Ballantine though, was always middle-class and conservative (74-5). Allen repeats the class-genre orthodoxy by writing working-class *marabi* as "deviant" to the "respectability" of elite choralism (see 2000: chap. 2). It is worth pointing out that choralism was practised within the unions (see Erlmann 1991: chap. 5; and 1985: 197-9), though this context remains largely unresearched.

³⁶ In his overview of the reception of black American music in South Africa, by both South African musicians and their historians, Charles Hamm reminds us of the highly mediated nature of the "African-American music" present in South Africa before the middle of the twentieth century, a fact which is largely glossed in revisionist writing (1988: 13-15).

A case in point is the writing of the “slave spiritual” into revisionist stories. The context in which the spiritual as African-American culture arrived in South Africa is said to be one of historical parallels: “the experiences of the two countries overlap, at a place where music gives expression to somewhat commonly held value systems” (Cockrell 1987: 429; also Erlmann 1999: 144-5). In other words, music that was good for plantation slaves was good for the colonised in the other South (though cf. Erlmann 1991: 49). It follows that the spiritual in South Africa has come to index black South African resistance, and in explicitly nationalised form: *imusic*, that is “Western classical music, hymns, English ballads, and part songs”, and “the least politically overt musical category”, “lacked the qualities that were needed to satisfactorily express the growing resistance to declining black political autonomy” in early-twentieth-century South Africa. The resulting “embryonic African nationalism”, therefore, had its cultural correlative not in the “English values” of *imusic*, or *Anglo*-African choralism, but in, amongst others, African-American musics such as the spiritual; ragtime was another (59-60; also 1999: chap. 7; and Coplan 1985: 13).³⁷ Already African, the spiritual had returned home to the mother continent for the fight.

South African music history, to summarise, is a story told to an array of ineluctable narratives: from Western to African, British to African-American, middle- to working-class cultures, and so on. Stories of black musicking seem unable to resist them. For, as narratives, they speak of resistance: slaves protesting, struggles for decolonisation, proletarian revolts. In naming them, though, I want to stress that I am not suggesting that they invent histories that are less than true. Narrating the nation, after all, is an act shot through with ambivalence. The “Janus-faced discourse[s] of the nation”, to quote Homi K Bhabha, are “as much acts of

³⁷ Dale Cockrell spiritualised his own experience of black protest song, put on for Cockrell’s benefit after a lecture given by the music educationalist Khabi Mngoma: “After a moment of hesitation a student near the back began a strain, immediately responded to by the rest, filling the room with glorious, rich, extemporized call and response, sung passionately and intensely. Mngoma’s [or Cockrell’s?] point was made: the form and energy of much contemporary political music in South African today is clearly derived from the spiritual” (1987: 432). The anecdote, I suggest, tells us more about the spiritual’s resistance value for the narrative of cultural nationalism than it does about the spiritual’s history in South Africa.

Erlmann discusses the black South African reception of the spiritual largely within the context of the emergence, in the late nineteenth century, of black independent churches, but also against the backdrop of the rise of African nationalism, though he concedes that the evidence for their relationship is tenuous (1999: 161). Histories of the Independent African Churches (IACs) have typically been written within the resistance paradigm (recall the Comaroffs’ passage I quoted at the outset of the chapter), and as part of the IACs’ resistance armature the ethnographic literature has emphasised their Africanisation of Christianity and its practices (see Blacking 1981; Dargie 1987; and Muller 1999 for ethnomusicological studies of this process). The African-American spiritual, then, brings further African resistance kudos to the IACs.

I note in passing that while there is now a body of work on the music of the independent churches, there are no ethnographies of music in the “mainstream” black churches, which, we are told, have until recently remained more faithful to Western practice.

affiliation and establishment as they are moments of disavowal, displacements, exclusion, and cultural contestation” (1990: 3, 5). If I have read other histories as having attended to these acts, it is only for what they reveal about the history of black choralism. In short, in stories written to the narrative of cultural nationalism, choralism has often found itself at the margins; a casualty, one might say, of a legacy of historiographical othering. It is only by resisting these narratives, I suggest, that a screen can be cleared on which the more complex story of South African black choralism may begin to be written. More than this, to reveal stories from the historical margins of the nation-space is to be more than merely celebratory. It is, as Bhabha has said, to contest claims to cultural supremacy, to intervene into “those justifications of modernity – progress, homogeneity, cultural organicism, the deep nation, the long past – that rationalize the authoritarian, ‘normalizing’ tendencies within cultures in the name of the national interest or the ethnic prerogative” (4). The history of black South African choralism, too, may have an interruptive, revelatory potential.

Chapter 5

John Knox Bokwe and the Politics of Hymning

I guess that if anybody was studying European history, in Europe, there would be no way in which you could avoid studying something about Africa, because, as it were, we have here a diaspora of Europe throughout this continent and that has done a lot to our minds.
(Mphahlele 1984: 15)

The baroque [sic] hymn is ... the most influential music genre in South Africa today.¹
(Mthethwa 1988: 28)

At a gathering of South Africa's ethnomusicological community in 1987, Bongani Mthethwa issued a perhaps unsettling challenge:

the current trend in South African ethnomusicology tends to focus on the preservation of African music. There seems to me to be minimal attention given to the study of the baroque Christian hymn, its modifications, secularization and its transformation as an African song. It is important to collect indigenous music before it disappears, but I am not particularly obsessed with museum pieces (1988: 28).

It is one of the abiding ambiguities of the South African condition that two black thinkers – see also the Mphahlele epigraph – emphasised the European legacy to black South African music in the context of the largely white ethnomusicological ivory tower. Mthethwa's call, it seems, was heard by unreceptive ears; from the text-critical to the interpretive, very little work on black choral composition has appeared in print.² It is, then, the specific programme of his challenge, of how Victorian hymnody *became* black South African choral song, that I take up here.

¹ A number of black music scholars have subsumed Western hymnody and/or choralism under the "Baroque" label (see also Pewa 1995: 8). This is probably a mark of their academy training, in which a broadly conceived Handelian idiom, until recently Baroque, approaches stylistic aspects common to much black choral composition. More correctly, Victorian hymnody and choral composition were the models for early black choral music. By "Victorian" I mean both work composed during Victoria's reign and the hymn-tunes and choral repertory popularly received at the time, which of course included some Handel.

² Mthethwa's own foray into this territory, on the music of Alfred Assegai Kumalo, was brief (see 1988). Perhaps the best known work on a black choral composer is Veit Erlmann's chapter on Reuben T Caluza in *African Stars* (1991: chap. 5). A few dissertations, especially composer-based, have appeared. But the lack is glaringly exposed when Lara Allen suggests that we turn to David Rycroft (1957 and 1977) for a "detailed analysis of South African choral styles" (2000: 42; my emphasis). Rycroft's interest in black choralism was in passing.

Ntsikana-Bokwe; or, Africanness unveiled ³

John Knox Bokwe has long been trumpeted as the father of black South African choral composition. Promoted as such in his own lifetime, he has carried the sobriquet since, holding pride of place in the first volume of *South Africa Sings*, a sort of national edition of South African choral music (see Khumalo 1998). His recent scholarly reputation, though, owes nothing to his own work, and everything to his status as transcriber-arranger of someone else's: Ntsikana Gaba's hymns.⁴ So, less a father than surrogate. Ntsikana-Bokwe's music, however, is as revealing for what it may tell us about Bokwe's own compositional practice as for what it says about postcolonial academic agendas. Briefly, the uses of Bokwe have been thus.

Dave Dargie's ethno-detective work has been concerned with authenticating Ntsikana's music by locating its "Africanness". Proceeding from Bokwe's hybrid transcription-arrangement of "Ulo Thixo 'Mkulu" ("Thou Great God", or the "Great Hymn" [1st publ. *Isigidimi sama-Xosa* Nov. 1876]),⁵ Dargie identifies what is distinctly Xhosa and Western about it, attempting, with recourse to versions of the song sung by rural, "indigenous" Xhosa music performers from the latter half of the twentieth century, to reconstruct what the hymn's original musical structure might have been; "what J.K. Bokwe actually heard his grandparents [who were followers of Ntsikana] performing", as distinct from what Bokwe wrote down (1982: 9, 14). The gist of the exercise is to get beyond Bokwe's arrangement, beyond its Western "'contaminat[ion]'" of "aboriginal music" as Percival R Kirby more forthrightly put of it, to something truly, deeply Xhosa-African (1979: 86).⁶

Dargie's analysis has recently been appropriated by Veit Erlmann for his musings on global musics and the imaginings of modernity and colonialism (1999). Erlmann's use of Dargie is contradictory. On the one hand, he simply repeats Dargie: the same analysis of "'deep'-Xhosa" and Western elements, the same quest for an original (120-5).⁷ Yet, on the other, he acknowledges the futility of attempts to establish "an authoritative urtext" for

³ I borrow the phrase from Fanon's essay "Algeria Unveiled" (1980 [1959]), in which he showed that the practice of veiling/unveiling was instrumentally political, even revolutionary.

⁴ See, for example, Middleton (2000: 76); Erlmann (1999: chap. 5); and Dargie (1982). Kirby (1979: 85-7); and Coplan (1985: 30-3) make passing mention of Bokwe's other compositions.

⁵ Throughout, I reproduce Xhosa texts as they appear in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century sources, that is, before the standard orthography.

⁶ Kirby (1979) too used the Bokwe transcription-arrangement to classify the musically Western and African.

⁷ For a somewhat belaboured critique of Erlmann's, really Dargie's, analysis of the "Great Hymn", see Scherzinger (2001a: 129-32).

Ntsikana's "work"; as "a key element of the nineteenth-century global imagination in South Africa" it could hardly be otherwise for the hybrid hymn (125-6, 132).

Erlmann's Africanist politics begins to emerge in his reading of Bokwe's reception of Ntsikana: the Ntsikana-Bokwe hymn is an expression of anticolonial nationalist thought, ambivalently shot through, as such nationalisms are, with the tenets of Western modernity and "a nostalgic reinvention of the past", or "traditionalist revival". This "early politics of African nationalist resistance" commenced in the 1870s, and specifically in music; Erlmann suggests that idolising the precolonial cultural past in verbal discourse would have been tantamount to "heathenism", whereas music provided a more covert return (1999: 128). Two points need addressing. First, by all accounts, there was no *revival* of Ntsikana's music. Traces of the hymn's performance exist for every decade from the 1820s on (see Hodgson 1980; also Bigalke 1984: 43), and black *writing* on Ntsikana only took off in the 1870s because it was only then that black literacy, and an outlet for its publication, began to emerge on a more than piecemeal scale.⁸ Second, to suggest that precolonial music was part of a more general (re)turn to precolonial culture by the black elite from the 1880s on, and tolerated by the mission no less, is to jump the gun by half a century (Erlmann 1999: 128-9).⁹ Certainly for Lovedale there is no record of a revival of the precolonial music repertory,

⁸ The editorial preface to Bokwe's serialised "Story" of Ntsikana in *The Christian Express* suggests that the myth was very much alive as oral literature (Oct. 1878: 14).

⁹ The strain in Erlmann's reading is clear from his chronological jockeying between the late nineteenth century and the 1920s and 1930s; the lack of attention to the specificities of chronology, here and elsewhere, undermines much of the force of his work (see 1999: 128-9). Certainly, there is a case to be made for reading Ntsikana's reception by the black elite from the turn of the century on as anticolonialist nationalism; for the explosion of writings on the prophet circa 1900, see Hodgson (1986). But for now I am concerned with the quarter of a century prior to this.

Of course, we know from especially the anthropological literature that the mission was never successful in erasing and replacing all aspects of precolonial culture. But the intentional revival of previously banned cultural products for a nationalist politics is a different matter. Moreover, while an interest in some aspects of precolonial culture by the mission blacks was evident almost from the start of the civilising mission – for instance, in the occasional textualising of folklore that appeared in the mission press – the terms in which this operated, I suggest, were often more akin to colonial ethnography than an anticolonial traditionalism.

Bokwe provides an example. In the 1904 pamphlet version of Ntsikana's "Story", Bokwe interspersed ethnographic observations on "red" Xhosa *habitus* throughout the section that deals with the life before the conversion. Thus the moral: "Such was the state of this African tribe, typical also of other tribes, before the truths of the Gospel penetrated the land. The story of 'Ntsikana' forms a connecting link between the days of utter darkness ... and the now apparent marks of civilisation" (12-13). Bokwe's ethnography, it is true, was frequently less judgmental than much contemporary missionary knowledge. Still, he clearly objectified his subjects as "other". What's more, and in the tradition of popular Victorian ethnography, he put them on display; the 1904 "Story" was intended for a metropolitan audience (see 5-6), while the earlier *Christian Express* serialisation of the "Story", for a local readership well versed in Xhosa cultural praxis, omitted the ethnography wholesale. Pre-twentieth-century amateur black ethnography, as it appeared in the mission press and ephemeral literature, has received little scholarly attention, histories of South African anthropology having installed the early-twentieth-century monographs of Plaatjie, Molema and JH Soga as watersheds of black writing on black society.

neither by the mission authorities nor the “native intellectual”.¹⁰ With a continuous performance history, Ntsikana’s music, *qua* African music, stands as an exception in pre-twentieth-century mission musicking; a spectacular exception, to be sure, but as the music of the first Xhosa Christian, mythically tied to the conversion, it was always already exceptional (see chap. 1).

Almost twenty years after Dargie’s “Great Hymn” – Bokwe *Westernized* Ntsikana – Richard Middleton’s “Great Hymn” has undergone an interpretative volte-face: “a cornerstone of early middle-class nationalist culture, [it] is *already* couching its Europeanized triads and simple triple meter in overlapping call-and-response textures and an alternating two-chord structure derived from Xhosa sources” (2000a: 76; my emphasis). This is one of several examples of black South African music on which Middleton draws to exemplify black vernacular theory; Gilroy, Gates, Baker and Dubois are invoked. Specifically, Bokwe’s “Great Hymn” is “deformation of mastery” at work. As the more radical of Houston A Baker’s two strategies of Signifyin(g), it knowingly counterposes to the colonising norm an alien, here “traditional”, discourse; or, in an act of liberation it takes off the Western mask (74). By unveiling the “Great Hymn’s” Africanness, Middleton does two things: like Dargie did for Ntsikana, he authenticates Bokwe – how could a black African compose “purely” Western music? – and following Erlmann, he locates a cultural nationalist resistance in a hybrid Africanness. I will address the racialised epistemology of this postcolonial musicology later. For now I want to return to the historical Bokwe.

LOVEDALE: mastering form (1)

From the margins of Empire at the eastern reaches of the Cape Colony, a fledgling mission press embarked on a novel venture: the printing of a “very pretty hymn tune” (*CE* June 1875). Composed by John Knox Bokwe, the tune’s originary status is exemplary: the first known notated composition by a black South African, the first of Bokwe’s about forty original compositions, the first music published by what was to become Africa’s largest mission institution, Lovedale.¹¹ But aside from this catalogue of firsts, what might the story of this colonial tune, and others like it, have to say to us now?

¹⁰ Colonial and apartheid archives contain numerous accounts bearing witness to the longevity of the idea that mission and precolonial musics were mutually exclusive. For Frederick Farrington, music inspector for the eastern Cape, it was a “fact” “that real native tunes [were] rarely heard by those who [paid] casual visits to mission centres” (*RS-GE* 1903: 165a). The pages of the newsletter and journal of the African Music Society in the late 1940s and early 1950s suggest that black members of mission churches held firmly to the idea of the separation of church and traditional musics (see also Dargie 1981: 13).

¹¹ For a list of Bokwe’s known compositions, and a tentative chronology, see the Appendix.

Example 5a. John Knox Bokwe's "Msindisi Wa Boni" ("Saviour of Sinners").
The Christian Express (June 1875). Transcription from tonic sol-fa.

The hymn-tune, "Msindisi Wa Boni" ("Savior of Sinners"), is an outstanding example of a Victorian hymn melody – see example 5a. Possessing a similar arching symmetry to model metropolitan tunes such as OLD HUNDREDTH ("All people that on earth do dwell"), its form, like the majority of Victorian tunes, is binary, with equal-length eight-bar sentences, each in turn divided into four-bar phrases.¹² The first half is compellingly constructed: a short, five-note motif (a), itself arched as it turns upon a third, is repeated three times. Each repetition a tone higher is slightly different, endowed with something "extra": initially just an accented passing-note; then, in what seems to signal the motif's demise but is only a temporary departure, the signature third is enlarged to a fifth, the intensified leap after predominantly step-movement impelling the melodic line to climax in b. 6; finally, the denouement returns the melody to its starting point. Like all good hymn-tunes an exercise in musical economy. Moreover, and to cock a snook at all those from Kirby to Erlmann who have repeatedly harped on the "stolidity" and "four-squareness" of Victorian hymnody, metropolitan or colonial, Bokwe subverts the often formulaic four-bar logic and verse structure of Victorian hymnody by the thrice-repeated motif's directional

¹² For a melodic analysis of OLD HUNDREDTH, see Havergal (1854: 16-17).

thrust. The tune was such a fine melodic specimen that it was taken up by a metropolitan publication, *Hymns and Melodies*, specifically concerned with melody (Gall Inglis 1893: iii).

I might even offer what Roger Parker, in a very different context, has called a “semantic reading” (see 1997: esp. chap. 8). The original Xhosa text was penned by the well-known eastern Cape churchman, Rev. John A. Chalmers:

Msindisi wa boni, Ndisondela Kuwe;
Msindisi wa boni, Ndizibika Kuwe.

[Saviour of sinners, I come closer to you; / Saviour of sinners, I appeal/confess to you.]¹³

In the mid-1880s the hymn received an English text by Mrs. G.H. Knight of Glasgow after an English paraphrase by Bokwe:

Thou Saviour of Sinners, I come nigh to Thee,
To offer petitions, Lord, listen to me:

(*Free Church of Scotland Monthly* Nov. 1892: 268)

In both languages, the final phrase of the couplet announces a change in register as the sinner-author directly hails the Saviour. In addition to the phrasing of the top melody line, the drop in pitch at the fourth phrase quite literally registers this address. The break, though, is not clear-cut; there is continuity of verbal thought, which the bass line emphasises. From b. 5, outlining a I-V-I progression on its way, the bass moves step-wise, steadily but inexorably – the passing chromaticism the briefest of delays – to the cadential moment, so that the third and fourth phrases which the melody has detached are, on another level, linked. Although this line of interpretation, problematic enough for opera, is much more so for hymnody, from the 1870s on high Victorian hymnody did begin to dabble in semantic settings. This is not the place to discuss this little remarked on aspect of Victorian hymnody, except to mention that it became sufficiently common to become a point of criticism, even a crisis for late Victorian church music.¹⁴

“Msindisi Wa Boni” is no less “Victorian” in its harmonic practice, the largely tonic and dominant harmony enlivened by a smattering of dominant sevenths and secondary dominants and sevenths, which are strategically deployed. Whereas the first two phrases are grounded in just chords I and V, a musical comfort zone, with which the text is in harmony,

¹³ All English translations of Bokwe’s Xhosa texts, other than English titles which are Bokwe’s, are by Jackson Vena of the Cory Library for Historical Research, Rhodes University. Punctuation in a text’s various appearances is seldom consistent, and throughout I follow the first known text, whether published or in manuscript.

¹⁴ In his inaugural lecture at Oxford, John Stainer spoke of a “crisis” in “the present state of Church music”, including “a too plentiful use of that descriptive and sentimental colouring which we derive from the modern ‘romantic style’ [and] a striving after picturesque and dramatic effects not consistent with the dignity or repose of worship ... church composers watch[ing] narrowly every shade of meaning in the words in order to represent it in a tone-picture” (1889: 11-12).

in the third phrase, in the advance towards the climax, two chromatic harmonies follow in quick succession; the music, I would like to imagine, in tandem with the verbal urgency: in the isiXhosa, the repetition of naming; in English, explicit petition. But I am not especially interested in whether Bokwe's music exists in some kind of special relationship to Chalmers' or Knight's words; in the end, the verse form will probably trip me up.

Of more interest here are Bokwe's harmonic "blunders". A frequent observation, and judgment, made of colonial black choral composition is its harmonic simplicity, which the composer, moreover, never got quite right. Kirby noted of Bokwe that "while he had obtained a fair grasp of the basic principles of simple European harmony, his musical grammar was frequently at fault". Black choral music in general "betray[ed] a kinship of outlook and a similarity of technique, including the usual grammatical errors". Still, near the end of his life, ordering his knowledge according to an evolutionary scheme, Kirby detected in black choral composition European music in its "elementary stages". At other times, and more insightfully, he attributed Bokwe's faults to "models which were not always impeccable" (1959: 38-9).

Here, I suggest, is the crux. For Victorian hymn composition, especially mid-century tunes, existed in partial tension with the "rules" of harmonising. The reasons are several. First, following in the wake of the hymn's belated acceptance by the Established Church around the beginning of Victoria's reign, the explosion in hymn-tune composition was dominated by amateurs. Even once established as one of the most popular Victorian hymn-tune writers, John Bacchus Dykes had to defend his work against critics who argued that he had no business composing because he was a parson (see *MT* July 1874: 546; and Aug. 1874: 588). Second, the ground on, and industry by, which the rules were typically learned received its final form only in the last quarter of the century: the rise of the popular harmony manual coincided with the rise of the no less popular examinations in theory.¹⁵ This late Victorian disciplining of harmonic practice is inscribed in what has often been described as the quintessential Victorian hymnal, *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. By the 1904 edition, those tunes that remained from the first edition of 1861 had undergone a subtle make-over: "smoother" progressions and part-writing substituted, and all manner of minor "faults"

¹⁵ John Curwen's *How to Observe Harmony* was at the vanguard of these developments. First published towards the end of 1861, it was advertised as a novelty, and was structured according to the idea of a standard practice. If it had the unintended consequence of stimulating hundreds of pupils "to attempt Elementary Composition", Curwen was happy to have guarded them from "gross errors" and "many blunders" in "correcting [their] exercises" (see the "Notice" of 1872, reprinted in 1889). Trinity College, London, instituted external examinations in the theory of music in the mid-1870s.

corrected. Bokwe's models, then, were probably often not harmonically impeccable to the ears of a Royal College of Music-trained composer and Stanford protégé like Kirby.

"Msindisi's" first print appearance has two moments that appear awkward measured by the rules: the tenor B flat, f in sol-fa, in b. 6.4 and b. 12.4 to b. 13.¹⁶ In all the tune's later appearances, these are corrected, "tidied up" – see example 5b. The occasional doubling of the third in a major chord and parallel octave remain, but these were par for the Victorian hymn-tune course, if emphatically prohibited by the harmonic trainer (see, for example, Oakey 1889: 7, 10-11). I might of course be tempted to read Bokwe's errors as an instance of resistance: the colonial composer rewriting, or refusing, the rules of the metropolitan book. But such strategies would be misplaced here, at least if we pay attention to the composer's own intentions. Bokwe was an autodidact, which seemed to concern him especially in the matter of harmony. Of the first edition of *Amaculo ase Lovedale / Lovedale Music* (1885), for example, he wrote that "the harmonizing [was] from ear", so "not likely to be a scientifically ... got-up affair" (*Letters* 14/7/1885).¹⁷ When asked for assistance in

Example 5b. "Saviour of Sinners" "corrected".

Autograph manuscript (c. 1883). Cory Library, Rhodes University.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. Each system consists of a treble and bass staff joined by a brace. The first system (measures 1-5) shows a melody in the treble and a bass line with a B-flat in measure 4. The second system (measures 6-10) continues the melody and bass line. The third system (measures 11-15) concludes the passage with a double bar line. The notation includes various chords, single notes, and rests.

¹⁶ The B natural in the bass at b. 6.4, which makes the tenor B flat appear misplaced, is a passing-note, an effect of voice-leading; see also the clash of the passing G in the bass with the soprano-alto F in b. 5.3. In a similar passage in b. 14.4, Bokwe chose G in the bass, rather than the B natural again, probably because of the impending closure.

¹⁷ Bokwe's unpublished letters are referenced in the text as follows. Those in the letterbooks as *Letters* and date, or, if non-epistolary matter, as *Letters*, year and page. Those not from the books by correspondent and date.

harmonising another convert's tunes, he conceded that he was "not much of a judge of correct harmony" (*Letters* 10/5/1886). In the moral universe in which late Victorian harmonisation operated, right and wrong was as clear as black and white. As the corrected versions of "Msindisi" show, aimed to get it right.

It was precisely because "Msindisi" was a model Victorian tune that it ended up in Britain. Its first courier was the well-known evangelist AN Somerville, who had stopped off at Lovedale, as travellers were wont to do, on his South African tour of 1883. Typically, the tourists also took home an African trophy; "Msindisi Wa Boni" was Somerville's. The hymn had been sung at one of his meetings, where he "greatly admired the tune, wished it repeated, and afterwards asked for a copy of the music with a translation of the words". Later, Somerville introduced it to Scotland, where "a desire [was] expressed that it should be more generally known". The result was that the hymn – Bokwe's music and Mrs Knight's words – appeared in *The Free Church of Scotland Monthly*. Subtitled "A Kafir Hymn", its provenance and appearance in Scotland were explained in a prefatory blurb that ended with a brief homiletic by Bokwe himself:

Had this country not sent us the gospel, we should not be able, in South and Central Africa, where this hymn is sung, to know of the "Saviour of Sinners," who loves and cares for mankind, whatever be their colour, whatever be their tongue (Nov. 1892: 268).

For the Scottish mission, Bokwe and his hymn were less important as a reminder of the humanistic claims of Christianity than as a story of its colonising success. The blurb was penned by Robert Young, whose recently published *Trophies from African Heathenism*, advertised in the same issue, was a collection of brief narratives of spectacular conversions of "red heathen" amaXhosa. Though Bokwe's story was missing from Young's book – his parents were converts, so he was already saved – he was still offered as "testimony of an intelligent native" (1892: 215). Here, "Msindisi's" "race" mattered.

However, it had a second metropolitan outing where this was not the case. For sufficiently popular it appeared the following year in *Hymns and Melodies, For School and Family Use* (Gall Inglis 1893). Shorn of Chalmers' Xhosa text and Knight's translation, it acquired yet another set of verses: "We sing the praise of Jesus, / The holy Son of God; / Who came from heaven to save us, / And shed for us His blood". And the tune, as was the case for most Victorian tunes whose popularity had outlived the usefulness of their original texts, was christened: LOVEDALE. With no exotic tongue, nor discourse of trophyism to mark

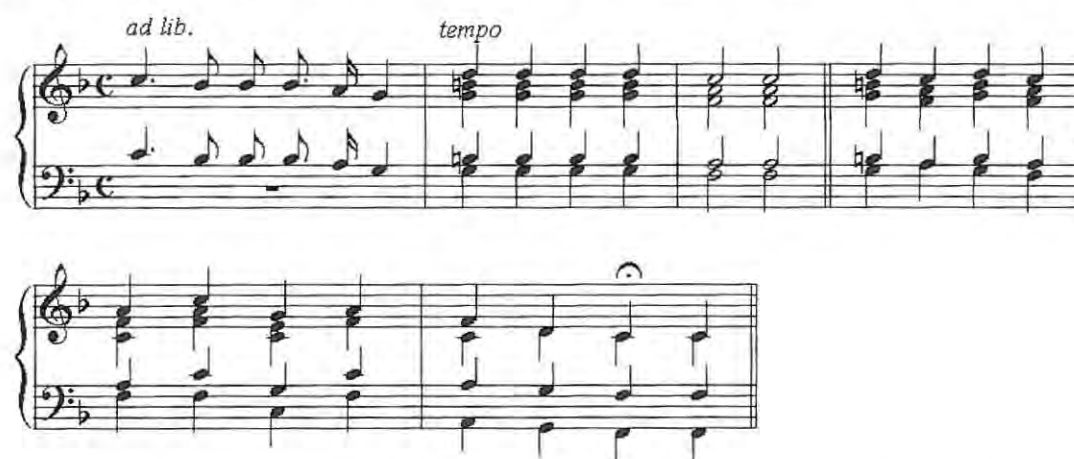
it as black, “its” race didn’t matter.¹⁸ Scottish children sang Bokwe’s LOVEDALE because its compositional discourse was Victorian, not because it was white or black Victorian.

Bokwe’s Ntsikana; or, Africanness remade

So far my take on Bokwe has been quite different to previous readings. Others have strained to inscribe his music within the narrative of cultural nationalism. David Coplan, for one, wrote that “[m]ost important, Bokwe’s works contained African as well as Christian [sic] musical features”, which “gave powerful musical support to the cultural nationalism of mission intellectuals” (1985: 30-1). As I showed in the introduction, ethno/musicologists have located “African nationalism” in compositional syncretism, with the active ingredient in the mix being “African”, and Bokwe has been made to fit to the template.¹⁹ But as LOVEDALE shows, Bokwe was not interested in the cultural nationalist imperative to Africanise. Hence the revisionists’ interpolation of Ntsikana, always-already African, into – often as – Bokwe’s story.²⁰

As a prelude to what Ntsikana meant to Bokwe in the 1870s, I want to mention a few things about the music of Ntsikana-Bokwe’s “Ulo Tixo ’Mkulu” – see example 6a. The first

Example 6a. Ntsikana-Bokwe’s “Ulo Tixo ’Mkulu” (Thou Great God”, or “Great Hymn”). Autograph manuscript (c. 1894). Cory Library, Rhodes University.



¹⁸ In the cheapest, and so probably most popular, editions of *Hymns and Melodies* authorship is not given, while in other editions Bokwe is identified as LOVEDALE’s composer only in an index.

¹⁹ Coplan suggests that by the 1880s black elite identity was no longer constructed on “adopted European models”: “They looked instead for a distinctly African concept of civilisation ... Syncretic African choral music became a vital resource in the African Christian search for cultural autonomy” (1985: 30; also Erlmann 1986: 115).

²⁰ So entwined have Ntsikana and Bokwe become in each other’s scholarly fortunes, that in a recent outing Ntsikana is elided, or consigned to an endnote, as the “Great Hymn” becomes Bokwe’s (see Middleton 2000a: 76, 84).

thing to notice about the transcription-arrangement is that it is a musical anomaly; Dargie understated the matter when he called it a “somewhat awkward arrangement” (1982: 13). Its extraordinary difference does not distinguish it from one musical world or another – it contains features of both Xhosa and Western musical grammars – but rather from both. Taken as a compositional whole as notated, rather than analysed for this Xhosa parallelism or that Western dominant, it recalls no precedent in either of its parental musical worlds, an anomaly born out by its reception: scholarly endeavor has always tried to get beyond it, to something more plausible than the unlikely hybrid, and its performance reception is characterized by its non-performance.²¹

The “problem” with Bokwe’s version of the “Great Hymn” lies, I suggest, in the different modes of its writing. Most of the tune’s appearances in print are headed by the authorial intervention, “arranged by John Knox Bokwe”, whereas the other Ntsikana music Bokwe notated is never marked as such. In terms of composerly control, Bokwe clearly distinguished between simply notating, or transcribing, music, and arranging it. The difficulties involved in the act of transcription itself are well known; in what was only Bokwe’s fourth or so exercise in writing music there were plenty of opportunities for misrepresenting what he heard. But the “original” was compromised by more than just the fallibility of the transcribing ear; the partial hearing, in addition, was imaginatively arranged.

Bokwe’s practice elsewhere suggests what arranging entailed. The third edition of *Amaculo ase Lovedale* (1910) contains a section of tunes that had been taught to converts by the early missionaries. In Victorian hymnology, “tune” referred to the composition as a whole and not just the melody. But here, as a manuscript copy for one of the tunes, “Moya Oyingcwele” (“Holy Ghost”), indicates, the tunes were melodies arranged by Bokwe. Arranging, then, was harmonising.²² The point about arranging doubling as harmonising is that it implicated a melodic line in a specific compositional discourse. By arranging the “Great Hymn” Bokwe attempted to bring it within the harmonic world of Victorian

²¹ The hundreds of transcriptions of Xhosa music in Hansen (1981) and Dargie (1988) throw up nothing like it, and a trawl through Victorian hymnals would yield the same conclusion. All known recordings of the text of “Ulo Tixo ’Mkulu”, including one made of a choir led by Bokwe’s son, are sung to one of the other Ntsikana tunes, known as the “Round Hymn” (see Dargie’s CD compilation of recordings of Ntsikana’s music). The performance of the “Ulo Tixo ’Mkulu” text to different tunes has resulted in some confusion. Throughout, I refer to Bokwe’s setting as in example 6a.

²² This is confirmed by the title information for another song. While the words and music for “Inyembezi ze-Afrika” (“Africa’s Tears”) were by R Kawa, the song was “re-arranged by J. K. Bokwe” (*Amaculo* 1894). It was Kawa who had written to Bokwe asking for assistance with the harmonies of his songs (*Letters* 10/5/1886). Kawa, then, had arranged his melody with his own harmonisation, whereas Bokwe, in correcting the harmony, had re-arranged the song.

Example 6b. The “melody” of the “Great Hymn”.
The Christian Express (May 1879). Transcription from tonic sol-fa.



hymnody such as LOVEDALE. That at the same time he was involved in an act of transcription, under the moral directive, as he wrote, to give a “full and trustworthy” record of Ntsikana’s life and works (*CE* Oct. 1878: 14), speaks of the dual, and conflicting, obligations under which the music was written down.

The arranging-harmonising imperative is at work even in the first print appearances where just the “melody” was notated; the only occasions Bokwe did not indicate that it was arranged. At the end of *The Christian Express* serialisation of Ntsikana’s “Story”, Bokwe gave the melody of the hymn as in example 6b. As written, this melodic line falls outside the norms of both precolonial Xhosa musical practice and Victorian hymnody. Dargie argues that it is probably an amalgam of sections of different lines of a “traditional” performance: the opening bar from the lead singer (“hlabela”), the next two bars from the line of a follower (“landela”), and so on, with the rhythm uniformly altered (1982). Why did Bokwe not notate the lead/call part as the main melody throughout, rather than construct an incongruous melodic mosaic? Because, I suggest, it was the convention in Victorian hymn-tune composition for the uppermost voice to take the melody; only in the last quarter of the century were other voices occasionally the *Hauptstimme* (Temperley 1979: 304-5). To conform to the soprano-melody requirement, Bokwe notated the highest notes of the precolonial performance as the new melody regardless of their original voice distribution.

Another feature of the harmonic style of mainstream Victorian hymnody was the regulated metric-rhythmic framework within which its homophonic texture operated. The “Great Hymn” is composed partly within such a framework, which renders the tension between the transcriptive and arrangement modes literally visible. For even though example 6b is only a single line, it is plain where, if not exactly what, harmony is implied: at the regulating *tempo* marking, the melody assumes the equal-note rhythm characteristic of Victorian hymnody (see chap. 4). By contrast, b. 1, its musical “freedom” marked by the “*ad lib.*” and more varied rhythm, was conceived as harmony-less, as the later example 6a confirms. Precedent for this exists in the Anglican chant, a common Victorian church form:

the first part consists of a melodic line unfettered by notated harmonic rhythm, the second, more “regular” section is in harmony in tempo. Bokwe was certainly familiar with the Anglican chant and drew on it as a compositional element (see, for example, “Yizani Makolwa” [*Amaculo* 1894]). Moreover, when introducing the melody of the “Great Hymn”, he distinguished between the “tune, *or rather the chant*, to which [the hymn] is sung” (*CE* May 1879: 15; my emphasis). Given the relative rhythmic freedom the chant enjoyed in relation to the hymn-tune, Bokwe perhaps thought the chant a more suitable form in which to write up “Ulo Tixo ’Mkulu”. He clearly had an idea of the general rhythm of b. 1 but the details vary with almost every print appearance, and in example 6a there is half a beat too many; hence the chant section of the Anglican chant was typically not rhythmically notated.

All of this suggests that in the 1870s Victorian hymnody was the regulative framework of Bokwe’s compositional style; the arrangement mode re-formed the Xhosa “original”. But the converse is also true, the transcriptive mode deforming the Victorian model: Xhosa bow-harmony subverts functionalism, parallelism flaunts the rules of part-writing, the pause on the penultimate for reasons of prosody resists the movement of the common meter. Perhaps even more disruptive is the deformation of form itself: the double barline and verse structure suggest an Anglican chant, but the lack of chant section in the second half more than masks the form, it undoes it. Which reading we chose to prefer depends of course on the contexts we provide. Crucial to this task seems to be the direction in which Bokwe was moving: “back” to a Xhosa past, as the postcolonial ethno/musicologist would have it, or “forward” in the logic of progressivist modernity to which the colonial black elite largely subscribed. It is clear, as we will see more fully later, in what direction Bokwe’s own music moved. Ntsikana provided a yardstick by which to measure that movement.

Bokwe later historicised Ntsikana’s music by including it in a section of *Amaculo ase Lovedale* (1910) devoted to “tunes introduced by early missionaries”. As the only African-composed of these tunes, it was part of, but also precursor to, the first initiatives in black choral composition that Bokwe considered *Amaculo* to represent (*Imvo* 23 Sep. 1885; *Amaculo* 1894: n.p.). Ntsikana’s music was thus cast to an-other, if not quite “primitive”, historical time: a “precious legacy to his native fellow Christians, and highly valued and loved by them”, the “Great Hymn” was “preserved because of [its] sacred associations with the past – the Church praises which helped to win the fathers to acceptance of the Gospel” (*CE* May 1879: 15; *Amaculo* 1910: iv). The hymn stood not only as testimony to where black composition had come from and so, in Bokwe’s works, progressed to, but was itself

“signified on”, “updated” in Bokwe’s arrangement to enfold it within the Christian-civilised world of Victorian hymnody. In a later compilation-composition, “Ntsikana’s Vision” (*Amaculo* 1910), the hymn was inscribed within the Victorian ideology of progress. Here, Bokwe juxtaposed Ntsikana’s tunes, reconstituted as “choral symphonies”, with his own setting of a poem by AK Soga. Described as a “savage melody”, the “Great Hymn” is preceded and followed by exemplary Victorian music.²³ It was, amongst other things, a musical myth of origins, which attracted Bokwe no less than it continues to lure us.

Together with three other Ntsikana fragments that Bokwe notated, the “Great Hymn” was exceptional for being his only attempt at transcribing precolonial music. Though Bokwe was clearly associated with Ntsikana and his music, neither the public nor Bokwe overly privileged the Ntsikana music as representative of his output. Time and again, it was “Msindisi”, “Iculo Lomtshato” (“Wedding Song”), “Plea for Africa”, and “Vuka, Vuka, Debora!” (“Awake, Awake, Deborah!”) that received mention in the press.²⁴ So, by situating the “Great Hymn” within Bokwe’s own compositional history, the cultural nationalist myth of a hybrid compositional style attendant on the revival of an essentialised Africa begins to unravel.

But the question remains: if Ntsikana’s music was exceptional to Bokwe’s compositional world, what were his reasons for propagating the Ntsikana legend? Certainly, no one did more than Bokwe to preach the myth: in addition to textualising the music and life several times over, Bokwe became known for his lecture-recitals on the prophet (see *CE* April 1886: 60 through Jan. 1914: 13), and he was a leading figure in what later became known as the Saint Ntsikana Memorial Association (f. 1909).²⁵

²³ In the spirit of early black colonial ethnography, Bokwe imagined the dance Ntsikana attended as irrational musicking: “The singing, or rather – what shall we call it, for, to an ear trained in civilized music, the discord is something unbearable, – the yelling, howling, and bellowing” (*CE* Nov. 1878: 14). Clearly exoticising precolonial Xhosa musicking, Bokwe did not therefore, unlike recent ethnomusicological speculation, suggest that Ntsikana’s hymns were taken from wedding dance-songs. Rather, the “Great Hymn” was “a grand and *original* production” (*CE* May 1879: 15; my emphasis).

²⁴ Erlmann claims that Bokwe’s Ntsikana hymns were his most important works, and became “the model” for black choral composition of the following decades (1985: 192; cf. 198).

²⁵ Not much has been written about the Association. Janet Hodgson states that its initial aim, as a fulfilment of Ntsikana’s deathbed injunction, was “to unite the Xhosa nation”, especially “to establish racial [sic] harmony among the blacks mainly towards bringing unity between the Xhosa and the Mfengu” (cf. Mills 1990). In addition, she claims that “great stress was laid on the Association’s role in preserving Xhosa tradition as a means of unification” (1980: 57). There are two things to note about this. If Ntsikana became a model for a turn to tradition during the teens of the new century this was during the last decade of Bokwe’s life. By that time, black choralism, and Bokwe’s music, was itself considered by black and white to be part of Xhosa tradition (see below).

One of the possibilities for the appropriation of Ntsikana, as I have mentioned, is the symbolic power of the ab-original. For the postcolonial ethno/musicologist that ab-original has been African. But for Bokwe, Ntsikana was part of another narrative: the first Xhosa conversion is unequivocally written to the master narrative of Christianity *as* the civilising mission, a narrative to which Bokwe lived and told his own life: the “story of ‘Ntsikana’ form[ed] a connecting link between the days of utter darkness ... and the now apparent marks of civilisation” of Bokwe’s own time (1904: 12-13; also De Kock 1996: 185-7). The point of Ntsikana’s twofold conversion was driven home with several pointed references to hot topics in contemporary missionary discourse: he rails against chieftaincy, renounces polygamy, and forbids his disciples to attend “heathen dances” (*CE* March 1879: 12; May 1879: 14-15; also Hodgson 1980: 12).²⁶ Ntsikana domesticated, then, was a model of the work of the civilising mission, an icon for the mission’s, and Bokwe’s, evangelical work.²⁷

There were two more specific lessons for a home audience which Bokwe drew from the “Story”. The first was the message of “peace”.

Bokwe’s first writing of the “Story” appeared immediately after the settlement of the ninth and final frontier war of 1877-78. This had ended in yet more colonial land grabbing and the resettlement of a large number of Xhosa-speakers further east of, and away from, the Colony (see Mostert 1993 for a “popular” history of the eastern Cape frontier). The timing of the “Story” was not coincidental. For the defeats and displacements of 1878 recalled, for Bokwe, a war that had happened in Ntsikana’s time. It was the narrating of this past war that became the single largest subplot of the “Story”. The *dramatis personae* of the war story included Ntsikana and his rival prophet Nxele, each respectively associated with the two Xhosa clan clusters, “the Gaikas” and “the Ndlambes”, and the recalcitrant Gaika chief,

²⁶ In reading the “Great Hymn” as part of a “traditionalist revival”, Erlmann suggests that “the colonial administration itself from the 1880s had begun to embark on a similar project of reorientation toward the past”. “Tribalism”, he concludes, “was thus no longer regarded as inimical to the civilizing mission” (1999: 128-9). For the mission at large, at this time, however, Xhosa social praxis remained anathema to the idea of civilizing. For example, in an early and rare instance of dissention, the Rev. Henry Kayser asked whether “*Christian principal warrant[s] our upsetting and summarily breaking down customs, not in themselves sinful, which native society has built up from time to time for its own protection and guidance?*” (*CE* Aug. 1880: 8). The statement’s extraordinariness is inscribed in the blanket italics, and the ensuing reaction confirmed the civilising mission as anti-Xhosa culture. Prevailing sentiment on the “Native Question” was summed up in the recommendations of the 1883 Commission on Native Laws and Customs that “all the countenance, protection, and support which may be possible should be extended to [the mission] by the Government”, in “remoulding [the Natives’] nature and character, by guiding them to superior knowledge and higher hopes, as well as training them in civilized arts and habits and the social order of a well-regulated community” (1883: 52).

²⁷ Evidence is scarce, but given Bokwe’s use of Old Testament prophets in evangelistic homiletics (see below), Ntsikana was probably a stock figure in his repertoire of evangelising sermons. Bokwe’s life-long evangelising would eventually, at the start of the twentieth century, result in his own home mission to the outpost of Ugie in the north-eastern Cape.

Ngqika (see Peires 1979; and Erlmann 1999: 112-14 for more on the Ntsikana-Nxele relationship). The plot was as follows: Nxele initiated the war through false prophecy, Ntsikana warned Ngqika of the deception, Ngqika ignored the counsel, Ntsikana prophesied defeat for the Gaika by the Ndlambe. After this sketch of facts, culled from the colonial historian GM Theal, Bokwe dwelled on the aftermath of the “dreadful slaughter” by interpolating himself as an eye-witness into time past. He imagined especially familial loss, reporting on the “poor, and almost helpless relatives” of the dead: “Such weeping and wailing of the bereaved Gaika mothers has never before so echoed here, and would to God it may never again be heard!”. Concluding with the moral that “it might have been avoided, for Ntsikana protested against the war”, Bokwe returns us to the present with a sense of history with the tersely factual: “This war of the Amalinde took place about 1818” (*CE* March 1879: 12-13). The movement between tenses, I suggest, emphasised the presence of the past for the amaXhosa. In brief, during the ninth frontier war internal calls for peace had again been disregarded by the Xhosa leadership, and the defeat, this time from colonial forces, had ended with over 3 500 dead and probably many more of Bokwe’s mourning mothers (Mostert 1993: 1249-54). Like (his) Ntsikana, Bokwe was against war. His first interest in the prophet in the late 1870s, then, is probably most fruitfully explored in the context of the details of Xhosa history. The 1904 “Story”, for example, told for a British audience, omitted the Nxele and war episode almost entirely.

The second message that Bokwe drew from the “Story”, and following from the first, was the idea of “unity”. The war stories, past and present, were represented as tales of rupture, within families, between Xhosa clan families, of the brotherhood of humanity at large; inserted between the prophet’s rebirth and death as a Christian, the war also disrupted the narrative of Ntsikana’s personal life in the “Story”. By contrast, and amidst the post-bellum “scene of carnage” and “unprecedented bereavement”, the prophet of peace offered the possibility of reconstruction. On one level, this was narrated as personal command: on his deathbed Ntsikana instructed his followers to continue on to the mission station that he would never reach, to “stick together, and be as close to one another as the particles of a ball of cement”. Here, unity was a localised defense strategy, to unite the converts against both hostile settlers and heathen amaXhosa (*CE* May 1879: 14-15). On another level, reconstruction was narrated as cosmic apocalypse: at the end of a lengthy prophesy, foretelling wars and the settlers’ arrival, all merely “the travail-pains of child-birth”, Ntsikana envisioned the coming of an eastern Cape utopia as the Second Coming:

Then the end [would] come, – the beginning of peace for which there had been no preconcerted counsel or arrangement of man. The reign of Broad-Breast [would] commence and continue in the lasting peace of the Son of Man” (March 1879: 13).²⁸

Here, unity was an everlasting peace embracing all the frontier’s players in the arms of Christianity.

It is widely known that the tension implicit in this dual sense of unity, between a broad humanist ideal and its blackened colonial reality, was to fuel late-nineteenth-century black elite politicking. Later I explore the shifts in Bokwe’s conceptualising of the idea of revival in unity, wrought in the realisation of those tensions. But as first presented in the “Story” of the late 1870s the tension remains tacit; sublated, as unity is represented in the elision of the biographical and biblical. For in inscribing Ntsikana’s story within the Christian narrative, Bokwe reinscribed the prophet in a reconstituted set of social relations. In the first sentence of the “Story” proper, “Ntsikana, the son of Gaba, was of the Gaika tribe”; in the last, “Ntsikana the son of Gaba was gone up higher”. Clan family had been substituted for the Christian family, and ultimately, in Ntsikana’s death utterance – “I am going home to my Father” – patrilocality was exchanged (*CE* Oct. 1878: 14; May 1879: 15). Ntsikana may have by-passed the mission for the heavenly Home, but his “disciples” had made it to the station; Bokwe’s grandparents had been amongst those first converts, and he had grown up within the environs of Lovedale; he called the mission home, and its principal and his wife, the Stewarts, his parents (*Letters* 5/1/1895; Bokwe-Mrs Stewart 11/6/1906). The mission’s involvement in the partial restructuring of precolonial social relations is well known.²⁹ It was as part of that endeavour that Bokwe, through telling the “Story”, offered the new unity of Christianity and the mission community to the defeated Xhosa of 1878. And to emphasise the point one last time, the reconstruction was also a project in Victorian bourgeoisification. When Ntsikana spoke of going Home, he spoke against his followers going back to “Kaffirland (*ema Xoseni*)”, which Bokwe glossed as both non-Christian and precolonial Xhosa ways of life (*CE* May 1879: 15).

²⁸ An editorial note clarified that the “name *Broad-Breast*, for the Saviour, may be compared with Bunyan’s *Great-Heart*”. John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* was a favourite evangelical, and hence mission, text, and was the first non-biblical narrative to be translated into isiXhosa. Literary historians claim that it was hugely influential on early Xhosa writing (see Chapman 1996: 109; and Couzens 1984: 76-7).

²⁹ See, for example, Etherington on the mission’s erasure of the “tribe” (1976: 602-5). It is not surprising, then, that Bokwe emphasised internecine, “chiefdom cluster” conflict in the “Story”.

music of revival: mastering form (2)

The domestication of heaven was a common enough image in Victorian hymnody, a familiarising move whereby one of the great unknowns was pictured as the home. Particularly resonant with the politics of late-nineteenth-century evangelical revivalism which aimed ideally at awakening the working-class religious conscience, the image of “heavenly home” promised an upward mobility deferred to the after-life; for the earthly present, so the historians of hymnody tell us, the message was: accept your lot (Tamke 1978: 42-3; Watson 1997: 495-6).³⁰ Revival hymnody, then, was the religious music of the home mission; it was also popular in the South African mission.

Around the time of the “Great Hymn” transcription-arrangement, Bokwe composed “The Heavenly Guide”, a “sacred song” the text for which has been taken from a Scottish-compiled revivalist hymnal, *Songs of Zion* (Wilson n.d. [c. 1877; 1st publ. c. 1860]):

I know not the way I am going,
But well do I know my Guide,
...
“Suffer me not to lose my way,
But bring me home at last.”

From his ambivalent flirtation with precolonial Xhosa music, Bokwe, in this song, returned home compositionally. Not simply to the compositional discourse of Victorian hymnody *tout court*, but to the music of revivalism, which became, I suggest, Bokwe’s single most important model. “Heavenly Guide”, for instance, is a duet with piano accompaniment. Not a form of mainstream Victorian hymnody as represented by LOVEDALE, it is more properly a “popular Christian Song”, a genre popularised in Britain by “the eminent American evangelists, Messrs. Moody and Sankey” (Wilson n.d. [c. 1877]: 3).

Ira D Sankey’s world-wide popularity followed quickly upon his first appearance in Britain in 1872; that this success was routed through Britain says something about the efficiency of the network of Empire. Sankey’s songs were “so universally sung and so highly prized, not only in [Britain], but throughout Christendom”, that later editions of *Songs of Zion* were compelled to incorporate a fair sampling of them; their popularity became a selling point for other books – almost everywhere:

They have been translated into the language of almost every people among whom the Christian Church exists, and, if we except the Psalms, have had a circulation, and wielded a power, unparalleled in the history of the Church. They are known and sung in every country in Europe. They have spread throughout Eastern lands. They are to be heard in the various tongues of India and China, and of the distant islands of the sea. They have thus come to

³⁰ “Heaven” was the largest “subject” in Ira D Sankey’s expanded, 750-piece late-century edition of *Sacred Songs and Solos* (c. 1890; 1st publ. c. 1882).

constitute a new bond of Christian brotherhood, uniting together the East and the West, the North and the South (Wilson n.d. [c. 1877]: 3).

Sankey's music had an enthusiastic reception in South Africa too. Lovedale campaigned long and hard, to no avail, for Moody and Sankey to make an appearance at the institution; reported frequently on the pair's metropolitan goings-on; as well as on the local reception of Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos* (1st publ. 1873): the song "Home over There", for example, was "very popular, in Shigwamba", and could be heard in "distant villages where nobody would ever dream of hearing anything else but heathen songs" (*CE* Feb. 1878: 7). Closer to home, the music inspector of the Cape Education Department attributed the lack of "real native tunes" in the eastern Cape mission schools to the "vogue" for Sankey's hymns (*RS-GE* 1903: 165a). At Lovedale itself, the choir, under Bokwe, used *Sacred Songs* as one of two choirbooks (*Letters* 1/12/1883).³¹

"Heavenly Guide" – see example 7 – bears the influence of revivalist music in several respects. One is the conspicuous parallelism. The two voices track each other predominantly at a third (bb. 1-6), and less often at a sixth (b. 13), letting up almost only for cadencing. Parallelism has for long been recognised as a feature of Nguni musicking, but it is not confined to thirds and sixths, and more typically occurs at the fourth, fifth and

· Example 7. Vocal part of John Knox Bokwe's "The Heavenly Guide" (A Duet). Autograph manuscript (c. 1894). Cory Library, Rhodes University.³²

I know not the way I am going But well do I know my Guide, With a
 5 child-like trust I give my hand To the mighty Friend by my side.
 8 The on - ly thing that I say to Him as He takes it, is, "Hold it fast,
 13 Suf - fer me not to lose my way, But bring me home at last".

³¹ Dale Cockrell mentions Sankey's presence in late-nineteenth-century Natal (1987: 418).

³² The E natural in b. 5 is probably a misprint for an E sharp.

Example 8. Gospel parallelism. Opening of J McGranahan's "That will be Heaven for Me". Ira D Sankey, *Sacred Songs and Solos* (c. 1890).

I know not the hour when my Lord will come To take me a-way to his own dear home;

But I know that His pre-sence will light-en the gloom, And that will be glo-ry for me.

octave (Kirby 1926: 958; Hansen 1981: 698; and Dargie 1988: 75-89).³³ Xhosa parallelism, then, was not compositionally operative in "Heavenly Guide", and the most one can claim is a relationship of affinity. Revivalist hymnody, on the other hand, was dominated by a third- and sixth-based parallelism – see, for instance, the first two lines of example 8, "That will be Heaven for Me" (*Sacred Songs* c.1890 [1873]).³⁴ Both an acceptance and refusal of the rules of Victorian popular harmony, consecutive thirds and sixths, unlike fourths, fifths and octaves, were permitted, though the incidence of their occurrence was to be limited. With the upper two voices of entire songs often in thirds, the excesses of the gospel song flaunted this prescription. In the revivalist hymnal, third- and sixth-based parallelism occurred more typically in the upper two voices of a four-part texture than in a duet song, a technique Bokwe was to use extensively in four-part settings throughout his career, and in the song immediately preceding "Heavenly Guide", "Iculo Lomtshato" ("Wedding Song") (*Amaculo* 1894).

The distinction between LOVEDALE and "Heavenly Guide", between dominant Victorian hymn composition and the sacred song, was above all marked by a different sense of time, by what I will call "movement".³⁵ When John Spencer Curwen suggested that the "one question asked about a [Salvation Army] tune [was], 'will it go?'" , the popularity he

³³ Practising his motto that "the musical historian should call in the aid of the ethnologist", Kirby intervened in debates on the nature of early European polyphony, claiming that the parallelism at the fourth, fifth and octave of African "primitive polyphony" was evidence that "medieval 'diaphony'", or organum, was the earliest European polyphonic practice (1926: 952-60).

³⁴ I base my claims for gospel hymnody on an analysis of *Sacred Songs and Solos* and *Songs of Zion*. Although known as Sankey's *Sacred Songs*, the songbook is a compilation, mostly of American music, with few songs composed by Sankey himself.

³⁵ Albeit popular, the movement I analyse below is not a compulsory feature of gospel hymnody. More generally, there is no single gospel song type. The revivalist hymnal included, for example, many mainstream type hymn-tunes. Conversely, the "Standard collections" incorporated revivalist hymns, though typically, as Curwen noted, reharmonised (1885: 40).

referred to was literally a matter of the tune’s peculiar movement (1885: 24). This temporal difference has been represented simply as “rhythm”, the hallmark of gospel songs signified especially by the prevalence of dotted rhythms and a quick tempo; “catchy” tunes at a “lick” (see, for example, Curwen 1885: 24-5; and Watson 1997: 494). A closer reading of the revivalist hymnal reveals these to be only the surface markers of how musical time worked. “Heavenly Guide” is not only a good example of the process by which gospel song movement was constructed, but it does so in an unusually subtle way.

The two-note anacrusis is crucial to the song’s movement. Not required by the text, it provides a “smooth”, yet impelling “kick-start”, at the same time setting in motion the basic quaver “pulse” maintained almost throughout in the accompaniment; the phenomenology of pulse – more important I think than “beat” in this song type – is the ground from which the particular movement of which I am speaking is experienced. Against the pulse, movement is created through lengthening and shortening the melody notes, a procedure that from the outset establishes a basic rhythmic pattern of quaver-quaver-crotchet. In the logic of both the anapaest pattern itself and its repetition the gospel song’s movement comes into being: the divided upbeat of the basic pattern heightens the emphasis of the strong beat, the repetition of this movement-rest pattern generates, I feel, both a sense of “swing” and “flow”.³⁶ “All to Christ I Owe” (*Sacred Songs*) – see example 9 – operates on the same principles. Here, the basic pattern is an entire phrase, constructed again as an alternation of movement and rest, and repeated almost exactly four times. The swing of the basic pattern propels the musical time, as the pattern’s repetition instills a regular, flowing momentum. “Heavenly Guide’s”

Example 9. Revivalist “movement”. Opening of JT Grape’s “All to Christ I Owe”.
Ira D Sankey, *Sacred Songs and Solos* (c. 1890).



³⁶ John Heywood noted that a successful gospel tune had to “run along quickly, have ‘a swing’ with it, be ‘springy,’ with some ‘touch and go’ about it” (1881: 11-12).

practice is more subtle than this standard procedure. As in *LOVEDALE*, where the melodic motif is varied for accumulative effect, Bokwe reinforces the sense of movement in “Heavenly Guide” through manipulating the movement-generating pattern in successive phrases. So in the second phrase, the second repetition of the pattern is disrupted by extending the quaver motion, making it, if not quite a “run”, move more. The momentum is increased in the third phrase, first by reigning it in – the dotted crochet of b. 5.1 prolongs the basic pattern’s strong beat – and then by giving it free rein to run on to the climax of the first half of the song, before letting up in the denouement of the fourth phrase.

At this point I might pursue a semantic reading of movement in “Heavenly Guide”; one aesthetic that sacred song did share with dominant Victorian hymnody was the premise of semantic setting. Mainstream hymn composition, as we saw with *LOVEDALE*, performed this largely through harmonic “colour”, by enriching the basic primary triad canvas with a brush of seventh and chromatic chords. The gospel song attended to the text more by brushing up against musical time, through procedures which collectively might be called the “rhetoricising of musical time”. This involved less a composed rhythm than its performance, and most commonly signified through the deployment of pauses; sometimes composed as rests, more usually signalled by the pause sign. In example 10, “Go Work in My Vineyard” (*Sacred Songs*), both strategies are at work. The basic pattern, here, is an entire phrase, constructed, as we would expect, by much movement and a little rest – a musical working out of the message of labour? – and its repetition three times generates the swing-flow movement of the gospel song. In the fourth repetition, though, the pattern is disrupted through a series of interruptions. First by the pause-stressed rest, then by two further pauses: one unexpectedly on a “moving” note, the other less surprisingly on the final note of rest.

In light of the gospel song’s swing-flow movement the start-stop rhetoric seems incongruous. The contradiction, however, resolves itself in the text. Until the pauses, the text is an invitation to work, a farm-worker’s job description. The fourth phrase – “and gath’ring of fruits” – continues the theme of labour, but also heralds its end, a distinction marked by the paused rest. After this, the remaining pauses progressively slow down musical time until the song, like the worker, comes to rest. If the basic pattern’s movement establishes the rhythm of work, then the fourth phrase disrupts it only because the message of work has concluded; at least temporarily before the second section starts up, restarting the pattern amidst a resumption of the job description. The pauses, in addition, emphasise the final reward – the “fruits” of work – made emphatic in the final note by the “clipped”, staccato-accented quaver preceding it.

Example 10. Musical rhetoric in TC O’Kane’s “Go Work in My Vineyard”.
Ira D Sankey, *Sacred Songs and Solos* (c. 1890).

In moderate time.

"Go work in My vineyard;" there's plenty to do; The har vest is great, and the lab' rers are few;

There's weeding, and fencing, and clearing of roots, And ploughing, and sowing, and gath' ring of fruits.

There are fox-es to take, there are wolves to destroy, All a-ges and ranks I can ful-ly employ; *D.S.*

The rhetoricising of musical time entailed a whole set of tropes – sudden pauses, unexpected rests, jarring accents, “misaccented” rhythmic patterns – that seem, in the musical discourse, misplaced, but which more properly considered as “rhetorical figures” deliver the verbal text oratorically.³⁷ Whether evangelical oration had a direct influence on musical style – Sankey’s partner, Dwight Moody, was a renowned speaker – is of less importance to establish than to acknowledge the general oratorical thrust of aspects of the gospel repertory. Curwen concluded that Sankey’s “style” was “more recitative than singing; he sacrifice[d] time unnecessarily to impulse and feeling. The effect [was] often jerky, intermittent, disconnected. It [was] speaking with a sustained voice” (1885: 42). Indeed,

³⁷ While not conceived as a “system” of figures, as has been claimed for instance for especially eighteenth-century German *Figurenlehre*, musical rhetoric in gospel hymnody functioned similarly and for the same end as in pre-nineteenth-century European practice: to create meaning, and to persuade, through the strategic deployment of musical figures (see McCreless 2001).

some of the pieces in *Sacred Songs* are identified as “recitative”. Bokwe frequently employed a range of rhetorical figures in songs throughout his career. In “Heavenly Guide”, for instance, b. 11 is musically awkward in the wake of the song’s flow. Both signed and lengthened, the off-beat accent “distorts” the verbal accent as a crude means to flag the arrival of a change in narrative voice. Similarly, the pause in b. 14.3 on the final note of the penultimate phrase – a favourite rest station in revivalist hymnody – suspends movement as it generates suspense: “will the sinner lose her way?” (Pause...). “No”, proclaims the *music* triumphantly as it resumes *a tempo*, “the Lord will guide her home”.

What I have called movement and the rhetoricising of musical time were, of course, conceived as strategies of “moving”: the body, the heart, and, ultimately it was hoped, the soul. For Curwen, the repetition of a “simple phrase” “over and over again” was evidence that the “American Gospel Hymn [was] nothing if it [was] not emotional” (1885: 40). The late Victorian (and more recent) construction of the hyper-emotionalism of revivalist hymnody (see, for example, Heywood 1881: 11-12, 16-17; and Watson 1997: 496) inscribed gospel hymning within the discourse of emotional “difference” that I explored in chapter one. For the hymn critic John Heywood, the gospel tune was the province of “Camp meetings, and Mission services for ‘outside Christians’ and practical heathen in schools and halls, where violent appeals [were] made to the feelings” (1881: 16-17). By contrast, the Anglican “Englishman” did “not greatly like sudden outbursts of popular feeling” (Shuttleworth 1892: 4; my emphasis). Gospel hymnody’s emotionalism, then, made it the music of “mission work”, suited to “reach[ing] the masses” (Curwen 1885: 39-42). It is unlikely that Bokwe employed the compositional discourse of revivalist hymnody specifically as a strategy of evangelising; he composed as often in the dominant idiom of LOVEDALE. More likely, gospel songs were just one of the genres of Victorian choral composition that Bokwe used as a model. His composerly intervention in the mix of mission choralism was, however, for the sake of another revival.

***Lovedale Music* (1885): music and revival (1)**

The first decade of Bokwe’s compositional activity climaxed in the publication of a “small collection” of about a dozen songs in mid-1885 called *Amaculo ase Lovedale / Lovedale Music*.³⁸ Its contents hold no musical revelations; no “development” of a personal style, no

³⁸ I have been unable to locate a copy of the first edition, but its content may be established with a fair deal of certainty (see Appendix).

departure from the discourses of LOVEDALE and “Heavenly Guide”. But its appearance does speak of a black politics that was beginning to crystallise at the time.

We saw that Bokwe’s “knowledge of music [was] self-taught”. This led him to conclude that *Amaculo* was “not likely to be a scientifically ... got up affair!”. And as the mission press had feared financial risk, *Amaculo* was also a self-funded project. In the face of potential financial loss, and the possible loss of face for the perceived sketchiness of his compositional knowledge, why did Bokwe take on the risk? The composer provides an answer: *Amaculo* was intended to “fill a humble gap somewhere for the good of [his] countrymen” (*Letters* 14/7/1885; 20/5/1885). On the one hand, Bokwe’s first compositions were written as a reply to the “Kaffir Songs” letters: they exploded the myth of the black music void, beginning the process of plugging the musical gaps wrought by the mission’s proscriptions (see chap. 2). Where one “Kaffir Songs” correspondent, therefore, complained that “Hymns for praising God [were] being misused at marriage feasts” (*KE* Jan. 1872: 4), Bokwe composed a “kaffir wedding song”, “Iculo Lomtshato”.³⁹ *Amaculo*, in short, acceded to the requirements of mission, and it did so in the musical language of the civilising mission. On the other hand, it marked a juncture in the narrative of progress, and in mission musicking. For what could not be claimed for the metropolitan choral music long popular at Lovedale was claimed for *Lovedale Music*: “Its chief interest [lay] in the fact that it [was] the first effort of the kind *by a native*” (*Imvo* 23 Sep. 1885; my emphasis).

By at least the early 1880s, the black elite had begun to situate “civilised” black cultural capital within a discourse of black self-empowerment. While unquestioningly upholding the idea of a progressive modernity, the new politics queried the relations of its enactment. At stake was who owned the discourse of progress, who had the right to preach it to whom. Seeking not to reverse the discourse but to wrest it from its white bearers, the idea of self-empowerment was grounded, in the first instance, in the Victorian moral of “self-

³⁹ The “social functionality” of Bokwe’s work exists doubly. First, the majority of his songs were either event-specific “occasional” music – “Welcome Home”, for Stewart’s return from Scotland in 1875; “[South African/Queen Victoria’s] Jubilee Ode” – or, more generally, exemplified a functional genre, most commonly the devotional hymn, but also, for example, wedding and funeral songs. All of these, including hymns, could, and most did, perform the function of “autonomous” art on occasion. Second, the few songs composed for concert performance, such as “Vuka, Vuka, Debora!” (about which more later), were conceived as “socially relevant” art.

Too much has been made of the social function of African music, often contrasted to Western musicking by invoking the counter-example of the concert music tradition, though of course symphonic culture is no less, if differently, socially functional (see, for example, Small 1998). Those wishing to detect “Africanness” in mission musicking need look no further than the functionality of Victorian choral culture, which bound music to the rituals of life in the dual sense that I cited for Bokwe

help”.⁴⁰ Briefly, I outline two examples of this politics, both of which intersected with Bokwe’s life.

Just half a year before the publication of *Amaculo*, the first black-owned and -managed newspaper in southern Africa, *Imvo Zabantsundu / Native Opinion*, was launched by John Tengo Jabavu in King William’s Town in the eastern Cape (see Switzer 1997: chap. 1; and De Kock 1996: chap. 4 for *Imvo*’s early years under Jabavu’s editorship). In 1898, Bokwe would retrace Jabavu’s steps, leaving Lovedale to become co-proprietor of *Imvo*. But that was much later. In 1884, *Imvo* styled itself as “the medium of communication between the vast masses of the aboriginal population of this country, and the ruling power which hails from Britain”. Specifically, the paper’s audience was a more narrowly defined group of “School Kafirs” who had sighted, but not quite reached, the “shores of civilisation”. The newspaper’s task was to provide “a rope to tow these stragglers to the desired shore” (3 Nov. 1884). Some years earlier, circa 1879, an organisation called the Native Educational Association had been founded, with Bokwe its sometime treasurer (see Odendaal 1984: 7-8 for more on the Association). Hailed as “the first Society launched among and by the natives themselves independent of the well-known missionary and magisterial props that have been ... so valuable to our people” (*Imvo* 26 Jan. 1885), the Association’s aim, as enshrined in its “Constitution”, was to continue the civilising mission – “the improvement and elevation of the native races” – only through the agency of the black elite (quoted in *Letters* 1882: 68). “[E]fforts from the natives themselves”, concluded *Imvo*, were “the only sure index of real and solid progress” (26 Jan. 1885). *Amaculo* was one of these efforts.

⁴⁰ My formulation of black political action in these terms is slightly, but crucially, different from the emphasis usually given to independent black politics of the early 1880s. While historians of the late-nineteenth-century colonial moment have repeatedly emphasised that black elite politicking was conducted on the terms, and in the language, of Victorian modernity, they have also pointed out that the appropriation of that discourse was used as a counter-text, to show up where the colonisers had departed from the script (see, for example, De Kock 1996: chap. 4). Independent action, here, is figured as an act of protest. It is, however, difficult to read *Amaculo*, either from its musical or verbal texts, as critical protest. Written at Lovedale, as *Lovedale Music*, it is more fruitful, I think, to explore it as a fulfilment of the logic of progress that the mission was still pedalling.

And so, I point out that the institutions of early black politics were also organisations of self-help, rather than, as is conventional practice, reading them solely for their oppositionality based in a politics of discontent (see, for example, Odendaal 1984). Of course, black appropriation of the discourse of self-help could be, as it later was, used to highlight the mission’s reneging on its original promises. But in the early 1880s, Lovedale considered that the “object of parental government [was] to teach the child to govern himself; and the faster you can bring him to the knowledge of self-government the better” (*CE* Feb. 1882: 8). The time of a more dogmatic missionary paternalism was still to come. Half a year after *Amaculo*’s publication, a “native concert” opened with the chorus “Help Yourselves” (Feb. 1886: 20). In short, I see the nature of *Amaculo*’s independence to be the idea of progress taken to its conclusion by the black elite, rather than as protest *per se*. Below, I show how the idea of self-help would later fuel acts of protest, but this was not the case for Bokwe’s *Amaculo* of 1885.

As the examples of the Native Educational Association and *Imvo* suggest, the independent organisations were, in one sense, black Victorian philanthropic reform agencies tasked with civilising a broadly conceived black constituency.⁴¹ As bodies of social reform they were involved in the work of reconstructing the black social body, whose state – through war, famine and land dispossession, and, lest we forget, heathenism – the black elite represented in the metropolitan discourse of degeneration. The message, then, of the Association and *Imvo* was the same that Bokwe ventriloquised through Ntsikana for the amaXhosa: their salvation lay in Christ and civilisation. Bokwe began to put that message into practice when he offered his “countrymen” *Amaculo*. For *amaculo* was not just any music. Originally referring to “little” or “short” songs performed without dance, the term lent itself to the mission’s idea of music. Henceforth, *amaculo* has referred to church or school music (Kropf 1899: 65; and Dargie 1988: 64). With Christian texts set to civilised music, *Amaculo* was indeed the music of the church and school – of the mission. Only now, it was part of the *black* mission to reform.

I would like to think that Bokwe’s life’s work was conceived as a fulfilment of his reading of Ntsikana’s message. That Bokwe was devoted to the idea of social action from the start is evident from his stillborn political career.⁴² Nominated in mid-1883 to the town council of Alice, nearby Lovedale, he was, for reasons that are unclear though procedural error was cited, asked to withdraw. For Bokwe, the “matter” “open[ed] a broader native question”: if blacks sat on the council then “their rights [would] sooner or later be better represented, and their claims receive better consideration”. Further, he indicated, Lovedale’s “people” considered his nomination as “a test whether a native c[ould] really get in or not”. A few days later he withdrew his candidature (*Letters* 19-24/7/1883). Frustrated in the arena of formal politics, to which he never returned, Bokwe’s social conscience found an outlet in, amongst other things, composition. His music was to serve his countrymen in two ways. The one, which I have begun to outline above and whose audience was primarily black, was as an example of self-help, a Victorian model for reconstruction. The other, for largely white ears, was as an exhibit of black civilisability. In both, the message inhered in the compositional discourse itself.

⁴¹ In naming that community in the language of “nationalism” – “our countrymen” – these organisations have been persistently identified as sites of proto-black or -African nationalism (see, for example, Saunders 1969-70; and Williams 1970). If, as is widely claimed, anticolonial nationalisms are to an extent a “derivative discourse”, I point out that early black South African nationalism had its origins also in the politics of Victorian reform.

⁴² Through the “politics of mention”, histories, political and cultural, have recognised that Bokwe was a key figure in Cape colonial public life. Beyond the Ntsikana connection, though, they have been less keen to engage with his life and/or work.

“Plea” and auto-exhibiting: mastering form (3)

Amaculo's publication coincided with the South African Industrial Exhibition, a regular trade fair at which the mission displayed its works. Bokwe insightfully captured the logic of this exercise: “There seems such a call always for Native work especially from Lovedale ... it seemed almost compulsory to do something, lest harm should occur from absence of this required evidence of progress” (*Letters* 16/11/1885). This was the other discourse within which Bokwe inscribed *Amaculo*, his other use of music, and of himself.⁴³ The black elite's “complicity” in the missionary discourse of trophyism is not difficult to understand. Given the always precarious position of the mission, on the one hand competing for resources from the home public, on the other up against an often hostile colonial government, the self-exhibiting game was, as Bokwe noted, compulsory – a matter of the mission's survival.

Bokwe's image is best known from a publicity shot. Clearly a posed portrait, the composer in figure 5 alone commands our attention; all we must “see” is Bokwe. As we look



Figure 5. John Knox Bokwe. Bokwe, *Ntsikana. The Story of an African Convert* (1914).

⁴³ From a visit to an earlier exhibition in Cape Town, Bokwe reported that “*Lovedale Music* was one of the curiosities sought for” at the printing department stand (*CE* Dec. 1884: 190). All available evidence, much of it from Bokwe himself, suggests *Amaculo* was first published in mid-1885. The reference here is perhaps to a specimen copy.

at him, he stares back, his expression frustratingly expressionless: slightly bemused, somewhat severe, a hint of melancholy – we cannot know. But certainly he must be learned. The marks of a distinguished, elderly gentleman are all present: the coat, the beard, and, of course, the book. For his face having nothing definite to say to us, we look below and see the photographic props. Like Bokwe’s expression, the book is a blank: the preacher’s Bible, *Amaculo* – again, we do not know. But it is no blank text. For the visibility of “the book” narrativises the subject in a “regime of recognition”: an “insignia of colonial authority and a signifier of colonial desire and discipline” (Bhabha 1994: 102). In the world of colonial evangelism, as we saw in chapter two, the discipline of textuality was the desire of civilising. Bokwe was only too aware of the power of this – of his – image, offering it to different publics in a variety of texts. It heads, for example, the Ntsikana “Story” of 1914, displaying Bokwe as the fulfilment of Ntsikana’s twofold conversion. But if he exhibited himself while exhibiting others, he more typically did so through his music, his very own civilized book. A metropolitan notice for the second edition of *Amaculo* (1894) suggests that the image and music were often part of the same message: “We have received (with the author’s portrait) a book of tunes in four-part harmony, composed by John Knox Bokwe. The record of his life shows how even an African newly emerged from barbarism may be tamed by the strains of music” (*MH* March 1895: 95).

More than any of Bokwe’s songs, “Plea for Africa” performed the work of trophyism. The events surrounding its composition are unusually clear. Having spent twenty-five successive years at Lovedale, Bokwe requested a “short relaxation” from the mission, during which he planned to join the “African Choir” then touring Britain (Bokwe-Mrs Stewart 13/6/1891).⁴⁴ It was just before, or during, his trip to Scotland, that he wrote “Plea”

⁴⁴ It is unlikely that Bokwe joined the African Choir. There is no record of it, and he stipulated that he would do so only if they were “proceeding successfully” (Bokwe-Stewart 13/6/1891). By mid- to late 1892, when Bokwe finally got to Scotland, the Choir’s tour had been derailed (see Erlmann 1999: 14, 99-100).

In a complex analysis of late Victorian Britain as a “society of the spectacle”, Erlmann reads the British reception of the African Choir, as well as other exhibition-type events that involved Africa, for how their production of “race” was implicated in the history of commodity consumerism (1999: chap. 4). Only in a discussion of the Choir’s costume does he address the chorister’s self-(re)presentation, as dressing to advertise the civilising mission (100-7).

Elsewhere (chap. 5), while not specifically discussing the Choir’s repertory within the analysis of spectacle, Erlmann’s reading of the British press’s reviews of the music itself is revealing of a point relevant to my discussion. The programme consisted of a mix of Victorian music and “traditional” southern African musics; at the least the latter category was a mix of the two, the “Great Hymn”, for example, being programmed. To varying degrees and, as Erlmann shows, for diverse politics, the press picked up on details of the musical texts and inscribed them variously within a civilised sameness or primitive difference. Erlmann does not emphasise, however, that the hybrid programme *on the whole*, and its inclusion of a musical “racial” otherness, in no way seemed to jeopardise or negate the Choir’s message of its civilised status. For instance, while the first half of the programme was performed in “native” dress, and the second in Victorian, thus illustrating quite literally, as one paper put it, “Africa Civilized, African Uncivilized” (100), both halves of the programme, contradictorily,

on 21 July 1892. Composed for a British audience, its text, “by a Glasgow Lady”, is a typical mission hymn: pricking the white conscience through a diagnosis of Africa’s benightedness as it prescribes the cure of the Gospel. Equally, the song in example 11 is exemplary revivalist music.

The verse-chorus form is perhaps *the* hallmark of revivalist hymnody, “that most social, most heart-impelling contrivance” which “unite[d] soloist or choir with the congregation in inter-reacting sympathy, drawing all into the circle”. Most of Sankey’s pieces thus have a “refrain, burden, or chorus, which a congregation pick[ed] up by ear in a moment” (Curwen 1885: 41).⁴⁵ “Plea’s” debt to Sankey’s songs was more specific. It seems that the “effect” of Sankey’s own performances inhered in his “power of expression, and especially of soft singing”, through means of which he compelled vast congregations to silence in order that they might hear, and listen to, him (40). Curwen contrasted this to the practice of the home mission choirs, which, no sooner had Sankey’s “influence withdrawn”, reverted to “a level and noisy monotony”; Sankey attributed this to the “impression” that “not to exert the full power of voice [was] to show lukewarmness in the cause” (41). The solo verse–choir/congregation chorus, I suggest, was a structural solution to the problem. Through his soft-singing during the solo verse section, Sankey would quieten the audience, who, their attention captured, would then be rewarded, and sufficiently enthused to join in, as the choir let rip in the chorus. The musical logic of this complimented that of the text. As the verbal text differed with each verse, Sankey’s quiet solo singing forced the congregation to focus on the changing words, whereas in the chorus, constructed of repeated stock verbal phrases, the “music” took over. In addition, the excitable choir was held back during the solo sections either by being silenced by the accompanying organ or by having its mouths shut as it hummed the accompaniment; “Plea” gives the option, while another “Plea” – “Africa’s Cry, A Plea for Africa”, “inscribed to all Missionary Societies”, with words by S Trevor Francis and music by Livesey Carrott – also has a slow moving organ accompaniment in the solo section, “*with Chorus (ad lib.) humming*”. Bokwe was to structure much of his music in the solo-chorus form and he used the humming accompaniment elsewhere.

included both “civilised” and “uncivilised” music (see 88; and *Ludgate Monthly* Dec. 1891: 111-12). In the hierarchy of signifiers music seems not to have occupied too important a place.

Bokwe did not risk the possibility of musical misrepresentation, displaying only the music that white audiences were familiar with as their own, only the civilised music that was his own.

⁴⁵ *Songs of Zion* justified its introduction of “refrains” because of their suitability for “evangelistic meetings and gatherings of children” (Wilson n.d. [1877]: 4).

Example 11. John Knox Bokwe's "Plea from Africa".
Autograph manuscript (c. 1894). Cory Library, Rhodes University.

Acornpt.
by
Organ
or
Sustained Vocal
Humming

Give a thought to A - fri - ca 'Neath the burning sun There are

5

hosts of wea - ry hearts Waiting to be won. Ma - ny lives have pass'd a - way; but on

11

swamps and sod There are voi - ces cry - ing now For the liv - ing God.

16

Tell the love of Je - sus, By her hills & wa - ters

21

God bless A - fri - ca, And her sons & daugh - ters.

These features came, in fact, to be seen as “African”. At least by the British press in its reports on the African Choir’s repertory. One review, “The Music of Africa”, picked up on “the native fondness for vocally accompanied solos”, “how the natives hum some portions of their songs”, and the preference for the solo-chorus form. These markers occur, or were only noted, in the Victorian-influenced works.⁴⁶ But the review did not essentialise them; they were simply “fondnesses”, perhaps for something familiar to the reviewer. The bodily movement of the “traditional” songs, by contrast, was “singular”; unspecified performance practices were in “true Kaffir style”; and a “Kaffir wedding song”, its harmonies not “in any way Europeanized”, “purely native” (*Ludgate Monthly* Dec. 1891: 11-12). Even as it was implicated in a discourse of racial otherness, the compositional discourse of the Victorian works was not specifically racialised. The distinction is crucial. For while the humming and solo-chorus form are not essentialised, they have nevertheless become part of “The Music of Africa”. This recognition of Victorian music as African choral music is the dawning not of black choral composition but, to paraphrase Mthethwa, of how Victorian hymnody came to be received as black South African choral music (1988: 28).

Bokwe’s choice of the compositional discourse of revivalist hymnody for “Plea”, for his personal anthem for the Scottish trip, is hardly surprising. Not only did his mastery of that discourse clearly exhibit him as “a specimen and fruit of the work of Lovedale” (Stewart 1887: 23), but it put on display the *raison d’être* of Bokwe’s double mission: to appeal to those in the metropolis to support the foreign mission, to encourage those in the colonies, including the black elite, involved in the thick of evangelising and civilising. All of which accounts for its popularity. It was one of the few of Bokwe’s songs to be published as a

⁴⁶ The possible exception is “Lutukela”, “a duet, composed by a Kaffir”. The “duet”, however, was a favourite metropolitan form, for instance of revivalist music, and the authorial designation distinguishes it from the other “traditional” music on the programme which is authorless except for the “Great Hymn”. The other pieces from which the “native” preferences were identified are all exemplary Victorian choral compositions: “Lovedale” by R Kawa and JJ Sikwebu (*Amaculo* 1910); “Does anybody here know the Big Baboon?” by the colonial composer James Hyde; “Africa”, which *The Times* had difficulty in accepting “as a specimen of native music at all”; and “Send the Light”, arranged by Bokwe (*Amaculo* 1894), and published as a companion piece to “Plea” by the Scottish firm Paterson and Sons. By contrast, none of the descriptions of the traditional songs makes mention of humming, vocal accompaniment or the solo-chorus form (see *Ludgate Monthly* Dec. 1891: 11-12).

Though they may well have done so. Various called “ukumemelela”, “ukumbombozela”, or “imbuyo” in the ethnomusicological literature, humming is a common vocal technique in traditional Xhosa musicking, either accompanying or alternating with singing (see Hansen 1981: 132; Dargie 1988: 60). Similarly, the idea of a solo and chorus defines communal Xhosa musicking (see Hansen 1981: 116-17, 240, 616; and Dargie 1988: 103-4). But to look for structural affinities in the details of the solo-chorus relation between traditional Xhosa musicking and revivalist hymnody would be an exercise in vain. I make these observations to point out that similarities between Victorian choralism and traditional Xhosa musicking can be found, not to suggest that Bokwe’s music includes Xhosa African characteristics. In the Xhosa-text versions of “Plea” and “Accept the Light”, the instructions remain the English “Humming”, “Very softly. With closed lips” (*Amaculo* 1910).

separate sheet, both in Britain and South Africa, its influence extending even beyond the Anglophone mission.⁴⁷

Lovedale Music (1894): music and revival (2)

At the same time that the African Choir was performing at the tonic sol-fa jubilee in Crystal Palace, as “proof that the large amount of money spent for missionary purposes had not been wasted” (*MH* Aug. 1891: 241), Lovedale was celebrating its own jubilee. Bokwe used the occasion as an opportunity for reflection. But while “rejoicing over the progress of [his] race due to civilization and Christianity”, he put a damper on things, dwelling at length on the “Dark Side”, the “evils” which “the European races [had] brought to our shores” (*CE* Sep. 1891: 149-50). Less an exposé of the underbelly of Victorian culture than the “respectable”, puritan mission never tired of inveighing against, it was an analysis of the fissures that appeared in “civilisation” from the colonial time-lag: the slippage, of which Homi K Bhabha has written, between the metropolitan enunciation of civility and its colonial address, and which opens up a space for critique (1994: 93-101):

The point of view from which I regard the influence of the European races upon my fellow-countrymen (and all the native races of Africa I hold to be my fellow-countrymen), is this. The European races being professedly the dominant race, in power, in knowledge, and in character, what effect is their presence and power, and character having in moulding the character and stimulating the energies of the Native races? That is a wide question. But, here is another which will serve to illustrate it. How is it that we, the Native races prefer, in the majority of cases a European straight out from Europe to the sons of Europeans long resident in our country? That is a universal preference in the minds of the Native races ... It is a strange and sad fact that the sons of Colonists, according to the native mind, swerve from the upright courses of their fathers. They deteriorate ... There is the fact; answer it (*CE* Sep. 1891: 150).

Bokwe’s solution to a regressive Colony was twofold.

First, and in what has long been recognised as an essential component of Cape black elite ideology, he appealed to an idealised Britain: “Let her remedy these [“wicked things”], according to her promise of good government and equitable laws. Let her restrain her violent sons; and let her abolish the evil things that are among them; so that we may have free course to redeem our time and ways and manner of life” (150). Lest we rush to celebrate black redemption as a turn to “nativism” here, I point out that in the language of Bokwe’s

⁴⁷ “Plea” was translated into French as “L’Afrique malheureuse”, published by Berger-Leovault, and advertised in the *Journal des Missions*. Even “[t]ho’ the reprint in France [was] trespassing on Copyright”, Bokwe gave his blessing to the publication in the hope that it would arouse interest in the mission to southern Africa as it had done in Scotland in 1892 (Bokwe-Stormont 14/12/1898; *Imvo* 12 Dec. 1898). Bokwe’s daughter, Frieda Bokwe Matthews, reported that “Plea” was sung “as far afield as Ghana” (1995: 2).

cultural identity politics the pronouns “our” and “their” had become occluded.⁴⁸ In interrogating the colonial state, then, Bokwe held up the cracked mirror of civilisation to the civilisers as a gesture that they might take a leaf from their own civilising book.

In the idea of the civilised book, Bokwe proposed the second solution to black disillusionment. For only by educating themselves by themselves could the “native races” hope to escape their “subordinate position”. Hence Bokwe’s command: “Take full advantage of schools wherever and whenever you can. But you don’t need to depend only upon them – you can also learn for yourselves. Standards you must pass; but don’t stop at Standards” (150). To the limitations of missionary schooling, like the sol-fa “standards” (see chap. 3), Bokwe offered a constructive proposal that would challenge, by circumventing, the “dark side” of the colonial order. In a complimentary move, he challenged the “native intellectual” to a similar self-responsibility: to “write and translate, [to] be the pioneers of a Native Literature”. For “native needs” had to “find expression through native channels, else their word [would] never be listened to, their voice [would] never be heard” (150). It was to give voice to his “fellow-countrymen” that Bokwe had given them his music, a new musical voice central to the programme for black renewal:

Awake! awake! The trumpet calls you to a new warfare, a warfare not of darkness against the light, as when we strove to keep back the European nations; but a warfare of light against darkness, the warfare against sin and self and Satan. Awake! awake! the trumpet calls you to a brighter day, the day of true liberty...” (151).

The clarion call with which Bokwe concluded his jubilee address may disappoint the postcolonial critic; the church militant somehow doesn’t satisfy as liberation rhetoric. But in Bokwe’s politics, liberation was only complete in the salvation offered by an orthodox Christianity. He was, after all, to become a minister of the Church of Scotland.⁴⁹

To summarise thus far. Bokwe’s formulation of an African renaissance premised on self-help was not, I suggested, at first oppositional. But by the early 1890s, though, it had come to be uttered increasingly within in a discourse of critique. In further developments of what we can, I think, now call Bokwe’s anticolonial politics, he paid increasing attention to

⁴⁸ He makes this clear further on in the address: “Let us discriminate the good influence from the bad [in the European] ... Let us mould our character upon theirs; let us drink at the same fountains as they drink; and then we shall find ourselves growing in wisdom and strength” (150). Bokwe’s point was that given the colonists’ “influence” on the native, the former’s “deterioration” inevitably entailed the latter’s. It was only in a return to a humanist ideal that white, and therefore black, redemption would be possible. Bokwe’s espousal of revival through self-help is a caveat, as it became a counter-ideology, to white paternal influence.

⁴⁹ Bokwe studied theology in Scotland during 1900 and was ordained in 1906. He headed the United Free Church Mission in Ugie for almost two decades until his retirement due to ill health in 1920 when he returned to the Lovedale area. The tiny mission church building in Ugie now houses the Presbyterian John Knox Bokwe Memorial Church.

enacting what he preached, to creating channels through which the black voice could be heard. 1894 became a crucial year for such tasks.

One such task involved a polemic with William Charles Scully, the colonial administrator and later novelist who in a much-publicised lecture on “The Native Question” had sought to revive white interest in the civilising mission.⁵⁰ Underlying Scully’s intervention was the reality that the “Aryan race ha[d] never secured a permanent footing on the African continent”, while, contrary to popular opinion, “the Bantu” were not becoming extinct, and would remain a force for whites to reckon with. For Scully, it was time “to settle the terms of that reckoning” (*CE* March 1894: 34). These were many, but I mention just two: first, and generally, that it was the “European Task” to “improve the moral and social condition of those masses of humanity stagnating in savagery” (34); second, and one of several specific proposals, that as “the mixing of civilized and uncivilized Natives” was a recipe for their relapse into barbarism, they had to be separated by means of a “tenure cleavage”: individual property rights for the converted and “tribal tenure”, “under proper check and control”, for the heathen (35).⁵¹

In reply, Bokwe’s critique of the colonial situation became less muted as it offered a more developed counter proposal. At base this entailed a further elaboration of the ideas of unity and self-help that he had been preaching since the first Ntsikana “Story”. Bokwe’s answer in, and to, “The Native Question” began thus:

My doubt as to the full extent of white co-operation to help the Black to rise leads me to express the opinion that the Native himself *must* have a solid self-reliance as a backbone to enable him to stand erect, and that against all odds, and in spite of the preponderance of evil in many white men with whom he comes in contact (*Imvo* 4 April 1894; reprinted *CE* May 1894: 67-8).⁵²

Here, Bokwe emphasised as much the failed white model as failing white interest in the civilising mission. Accordingly, it was up to the black elite to take up the slack: to influence, educate, “give up many of their customs”, all of which “would help to bring about the

⁵⁰ For a reading of Scully’s lecture, see Cornwell (1995: chap. 2 section 2). Cornwell does not consider Bokwe’s reply.

⁵¹ Again, this is not evidence of the late-nineteenth-century colonial government’s reputed turn to “tribalism”. For Scully, “the comparatively rudimentary condition of tribal tenure [was] to be looked upon as preparation for the more advanced one of individual tenure”. Further, while the colonisers had replaced the “chief” with the black “headman”, Scully thought the latter a “mischievous anachronism, [to] be forthwith abolished”, and replaced by a “European Inspector” (*CE* March 1894: 35-6).

⁵² It is surely significant that Bokwe’s reply to Scully was first published in the “independent” black newspaper *Imvo* and not in Lovedale’s *Christian Express*. Stewart questioned why the reply had not appeared at “home”; Bokwe responded that the “*C. Express* somehow [did] not encourage [illegible]”, that “no offer to publish it was forthcoming, though it afterwards was obliged to make extracts a month later owing to the attention accorded the subject by the colonial press” (*Letters* 23/6/1894).

solution of the Native problem sooner than [would] be obtained from a reliance only upon the white man". At no point did Bokwe equivocate that the solution lay in Victorian civilisation, but Scully's terms did force a shift in emphasis in Bokwe's sense of unity. In the "scheme" to legally separate the Christian, educated blacks from the rest, Bokwe detected "*the infringement of the social tie*", for "the very basis of a well-organised state [was] the social unity of the people". Ideally, he imagined social unity as existing between black and white. Conceding that this was unlikely at the time, he articulated union as an issue in the first instance of black unity: "in the solution of the Native Problem, the Natives must be regarded as a Unit".

I cannot here pursue the details of Bokwe's reply, not just to Scully's, but to the Cape government's, "native policy", except to say that shortly thereafter the reply was elaborated into a serialised consideration of "The Native Land Question" (*Imvo* 26 May-6 June 1894). Written during the genesis of Cecil John Rhodes' Glen Grey Act, land legislation that has been described as central to the formulation of segregationist policy (Dubow 1987: 74), *The Native Land Question* (1894) was the first detailed black counter proposal to colonial land policy.⁵³ Neither did Bokwe's political intervention stop there, and as a sequel he penned a series of articles on black administration, described as a discussion of "the kindred question of Native self-government" (*Imvo* 1 Aug.-12 Sep. 1894).

Amidst all of this, in what was the most politically public period of Bokwe's life – he wrote to Jabavu that there was perhaps "too much 'J.K.B.ism' of late" (*Letters* 10/7/1894) – the second, much enlarged edition of *Amaculo* appeared. What would we like to discover in this text? No doubt some parallel movement with the radicalisation of Bokwe's politics, an "Africanism" or two that would yield a locally hybridised compositional style to be read as anticolonial. Some of the texts point enticingly to the tenets of Bokwe's politics: "Umanyano" ("Unity") and Bokwe's own words for "Let Us Help Each Other". But they fail to completely satisfy as they trumpet the values of the Christian "nation". More to the point, the music is more of the same, more tunes in Bokwe's Victorian style; in a typical revivalist move, the music for "Let Us Help Each Other" is "adapted from an English Air". The musical language of *Amaculo*, in short, was still that of the civilising mission.

⁵³ It was published in pamphlet form due to "great demand in the higher political circles" and debated in parliament (*Imvo* 4 July 1894). A discussion of *The Native Land Question* is beyond the scope of this thesis, but Bokwe seems to have endeavoured to accommodate government and what he took to be black interests, his proposals being a thoroughly hybrid reformulation of ideas on communal land proprietorship. Bokwe's pained reaction to the Glen Grey Act is evident from working "Notes" he made on the legislation (see *Letters* 1894: 44-56).

Yet, as we saw with the British reception of the African Choir, around the 1890s black-composed Victorian music was beginning to be read as “black”. The same was happening in the Cape, as a colonial review of *Amaculo* makes clear:

So far as we know, this is the most complete collection of music pieces, composed by a South African Native, that has yet to be published. From the songs, and the music, one is able to discern more clearly the prevailing qualities of Native music. Every nation has its own peculiar way of expressing its joys and its sorrows, its aspirations and its defeats in the music of song, and the South African Natives are no exceptions to the general rule. In reading through the pages of “Lovedale Music,” we could not help being struck with certain traits (*Imvo* 25 July 1894).

The “traits” of the new black South African national culture, however, are grossly unspecific: “The melodies are very simple”, “the harmonies ... are very simple”. In sum, “it is a very noticeable fact, that, the first and last quality of the music in ‘Amaculo ase Lovedale’ is its simplicity of melody and harmony”. Just one only slightly less broad analytic observation is made: the “pronounced” “tendency of the minor mode”. Clearly a misprint, the songs in *Amaculo* are all in the major mode, with exceptional localised modulations to, or tunes starting out in, the relative minor (for example “Imini Zokupila Asizazi” [“Days of Life Uncertain”]).⁵⁴ There are two Victorian antecedents for the majorness of Bokwe’s and subsequent black choral composers’ works. The first is compositional model. The influence of *Sacred Songs and Solos*, for instance, which similarly makes only exceptional excursions into the minor, extended perhaps to modality.⁵⁵ The second is pedagogical. In the sol-fa course the minor mode was introduced long after the “common scale”, and only as part of the requirements for the advanced certificate, which most black sol-faists, as I discussed in chapter three, never attained because their mission music education stopped short of it.⁵⁶ The compositional “traits” identified as black South African, then, don’t tell us much about Bokwe’s music. But this is beside the point, which is that *Amaculo*’s Africanness was located *in its music*, its *Victorian music*. For had the writer cared to look beyond “race”, s/he would have found contemporary Britain awash with songs like *Amaculo*’s.

⁵⁴ While the predominance of the major mode in black choral composition has long been noted (see, for example, Kirby 1979: 88 on Bokwe), reasons for the preference have seldom been forwarded. Mthethwa attributed it enigmatically to Nguni “taste”: the minor mode being considered “unmusical”, “musical sadness is expressed in intense harmonies in major tonality” (1988: 30-1). There seems not to have been any consideration of possible affinities between precolonial Xhosa tonality and the major modality of black choral composition. For a discussion of indigenous Xhosa tonality, see Dargie (1988: chap. 6).

⁵⁵ As we saw in chapter one, the majority of Victorian hymn-tunes were in the major.

⁵⁶ One example each from the metropolis and the Colony: in Curwen’s *Standard Course* the minor mode was introduced as late as the fifth, penultimate “step” of the sol-fa course (1896 [1858]); in the Cape Education Department’s syllabus it appeared only from standard 6 on (*EdGaz* 25 Oct. 1901: 43).

It is surely significant that the moment black elite oppositional politics took off the music that accompanied that politics was closed off by race. The race spin it seems could be, often was, put on anything – even Victorian composition. This move is more than just the displacement of race politics on to culture, it is the racializing of music *for* politics: a black music that would bolster the colonial state’s nascent segregationist intentions, a black music that could charge an emergent black South African consciousness. Bokwe’s music, for example, became part of The Struggle. Writing from prison in 1987, the late ANC elder statesman Walter Sisulu claimed “Plea for Africa”, that exemplary Victorian mission hymn and text of trophyism included in the second edition of *Amaculo*, unambiguously for Africa. Sisulu suggested, though he gave no evidence, that “JK [Bokwe] inspired the composition of our ‘Nkosi Sikilel’ iAfrica’ by his own composition ‘Give a Thought to Africa’”, the first line of “Plea”. Perhaps the textual affinity suggested the influence; the chorus in “Plea” ends with the benediction “God bless Africa”, also the preferred translation the of ANC anthem’s title line. From this Sisulu concluded that it was “obvious” that Bokwe was “concerned with the whole of Africa”, “a forward-looking outlook much advanced for his time” (quoted in Bokwe Matthews 1995: 105-6).⁵⁷ The illustrious genealogy into which Sisulu inserted “Plea” is not that far of my mark. As inspiration for “Nkosi”, the “African” credentials of which are as impeccable as Ntsikana’s hymns (Blacking 1980: 197), the status that Sisulu accords it as progenitor of black choral composition is little different to the reception of Bokwe’s Victorian music as black South African music almost a century earlier.

Bokwe’s Nehemiah; or, a *pièce de résistance*

The conjunction of work and politics – even “life” – is nowhere more clearly inscribed than in Bokwe’s 1905 “cantata” *Indoda Yamadoda / Man of Men*. More correctly a “service of song”, a popular genre in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, it consists of a series of homiletic sermons based on the Old Testament story of Nehemiah interspersed with music. Bokwe explained the utility of the service of song form: “Africans are lovers of song. So to

⁵⁷ The pan-Africanism that Sisulu claimed for “Plea” derives from the song’s evangelical message for the continent, a legacy to a more broadly conceived Christian-influenced “humanism” that informed the worldview of Sisulu’s generation as much as Bokwe’s (see Chanaiwa 1980). In the language of *patria*, Bokwe’s favoured mode of address was pan-Africanist; his English use of “countrymen”, we saw, was qualified with the parenthetical “(and all the native races of Africa I hold to be my fellow-countrymen)” (*CE* Sep. 1891: 150). Whatever the address, though, Bokwe’s political action, and his composition as political act, was intended primarily for local effect. Certainly, it was devoid of the internationalism that marked early pan-Africanist politicking.

make the story attractive, it has been arranged in the form of a simple Cantata, each chapter or period being relieved by a suitable song, the music of which is of African origin” (*Indoda* 1905: n.p.). In one sense, *Indoda* was the summation of Bokwe’s compositional part-time career, including songs he had written throughout his life from LOVEDALE on. Its more immediate genesis can be traced to 1899, during his partnership with Jabavu at *Imvo*.

Bokwe’s move to *Imvo*, away from Lovedale, was itself a statement. In small part due perhaps to disillusionment with the mission, it was probably more the result of self-frustration at the limited opportunities offered by mission life for the enactment of his politics of envoicing. Already before his Scottish trip of 1892 the isolation of mission life told: “I do not wish”, Bokwe wrote about his request for a break from Lovedale, “that period to be one of sitting still, but one of gaining more experience and if possible a little knowledge of the world outside of Lovedale where I have hitherto remained almost stationary since I was born”. His composing at “a standstill”, he was especially eager to “get an insight into the music world” of the “great country” of Britain (Bokwe-Mrs Stewart 13/6/1891). It was all about moving – on and up. The *Imvo* move was a promotion – Bokwe’s position as manager of the Lovedale post office had been a “confinement” (Stewart-Roberts 30/7/1900) – and, after thirty-one years of continuous service to Lovedale, his motive for leaving was crystal clear: “I am going to work among the older men of our race, and help on the cause of our people” (*Letters* 29/9/1897; *CE* Jan. 1898: 4).

The convert’s journey away from the coloniser’s mission has too often been narrated as an act of resistance; the most spectacular narrative of revelation to revolution being the rise of the independent black churches. It so happened that Bokwe’s own journey of “independence” – from Lovedale to *Imvo* – coincided with Lovedale’s first secessionist troubles. *Imvo*, though, came out forcefully against what Bokwe called the “race religious movement” (Bokwe-Stormont 25/4/1898). On the one hand, the paper’s campaign against the secessionists appears oddly reactionary in light of much of its anticolonial politicking. On the other, the position was consistent with its reading of the separatist movement as undermining of its oppositional politics. Hence *Imvo* persistently represented the secessionists as divisive: of black society, the colonial state, and the Christian family. “The efforts of these people”, the paper concluded, “are exceedingly ill-timed; for the tendency [of] our times in all spheres is towards union” (14 Nov. 1898). Just as Bokwe had used Ntsikana’s “Story” more than twenty year earlier to articulate his first ideas on unity, so he publicised his latest through *Indoda*, which was first serialised in *Imvo* just as news of the

separatist churches was beginning to disappear from the paper's front pages (2 Oct. 1899-6 Nov. 1899).⁵⁸

Homiletic exegeses of Nehemiah's story seem to have honed in on the prophet's patriotic act. This could be appropriated both for revolutionary and conservative politics: an "oppress'd and enslav'd" New Englander, for instance, read Nehemiah's patriotism as a model for American liberty (Webster 1774), while in Victorian England, Nehemiah's patriotism was refashioned, in dozens of sermons, as the social reformist conscience (see, for example, Booth et al 1880). Bokwe's own anticolonial interpretation, as we might expect, drew out the reformist message. Indeed, Nehemiah's story lends itself to such a reading: the prophet's rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall was as much an act of resistance against the Jews' enemies as a metaphor for the social reconstruction and moral redemption of a still colonised society. Thus throughout *Indoda*, Africa's "bondage" is a moral and social matter, and its liberty uttered in the Christian language of reform as "salvation" and "upliftment" (from "ukunceda"=to help, aid) (1905: 6, 26).⁵⁹ Nehemiah's story, in addition, allowed Bokwe to pursue the logic of self-help to its oppositional end. As the prophet had declined the help of the coloniser in his home reforms (12), so *Indoda's* address is exclusively black: its audience and message for black (South) Africans, the coloniser, previously a central player in Bokwe's politics, is now unscripted.

The central message of *Indoda*, then, was black unity. It was worked out through several sub-plots about black disunity that overwhelm the narrative but that are insignificant in the biblical version. Time and again, through focussing on Jewish opposition to Nehemiah's work, Bokwe moralised that the consequences of internecine conflict were worse even than the state of colonisation, while also playing into the coloniser's hands (20-1). Specifically, Bokwe emphasised priestly hubris, as a riposte I suggest to the independent black churches (16, 25). His ideal of a reunified black society, by contrast, envisioned a time

⁵⁸ The *Imvo* serialisation did not include music, and by the time that *Indoda* was published as a service of song, Bokwe had left the paper after only a two-year stint, posted by Lovedale to a remote mission station at Ugie.

Indoda's publication by the Glasgow firm Aird & Coghill is odd. The majority of Bokwe's works were published by Lovedale Press, as *Amaculo* continued to be until the fifth and final edition of 1922. The few pieces to be published in Europe were either intended for a metropolitan audience or because Lovedale didn't have the type to print staff notation. *Indoda*, however, was notated in sol-fa, and, being in isiXhosa, would have had no British market. There are several possible reasons for its metropolitan publication, one being that the mission did not agree with *Indoda's* message. The Lovedale Press, we know, did on occasion censor black work through refusing publication (see Peires 1980).

⁵⁹ All translations of *Indoda* are by Jackson Vena, to whom I am much indebted. In the end we attempted to approximate Bokwe's "Victorian" language, especially where he is known to have used English equivalents, rather than translate it for the twenty-first century. Where there are particularly loaded words I appealed to Kropf's *Kaffir-English Dictionary* (1899), for which Bokwe acted as a consultant.

when division based on “race religious movements” (from “isizwe”=tribe, clan, nation, people; and “-hlela”=divided, “a sect, religious denomination”) “shall have come to an end, [when] divisions shall have been sealed” (6).

Nehemiah’s story, it seems, was not message enough, and so Bokwe interpolated *Indoda* with another biblical story, on the prophetess Deborah. This too was about dis/unity, but also more explicitly about political liberation. Again, Bokwe focussed on the divisive moment in the story, when the inhabitants of Meroz had refused to follow Deborah against the Canaanites (16-17). Above all, it was in Deborah’s song that Bokwe’s message crystallised: action against the coloniser was premised on the enactment of a unified colonised. Thus his juxtaposition of the revolutionary cry to battle with the curse of Meroz, thus his ambiguous use of the Xhosa “fight”: “In this song we sing today, we call you to rise up [“ukuvusa”=wake up, rouse to action] and enter the fight [“idabi”=“conflict between people of the same district; a civil broil”]” (17). The song, “Vuka, Vuka, Debora!” (“Awake, Awake, Deborah!”), became arguably Bokwe’s most well-known work. As the only piece newly composed for *Indoda*, we would expect it to be a statement of his “mature” style – he composed little thereafter – just as the development of his political thought, of his ideas on self-help and unity, culminated in *Indoda*’s verbal narrative. Whether we can read the one language, the musical discourse, as or against the other, political ideology, is the challenge at hand.

It is one that the few scholarly excursions into black choral composition have declined to take on. Veit Erlmann, for one, in an otherwise thoroughly attentive reading to the ambiguities of the politics of another elite composer, Reuben Caluza, has this to say on the matter: his “early nationalist songs are a good example of the futility of bringing plain structural approaches to bear upon analyses of popular black music in South Africa. An etic analysis of the surface structure in these compositions would indeed bring to light only a limited number of technical resources”. The “limited” technique that informed Caluza’s songs owed a debt, Erlmann tells us, to “the older generation of choir composers such as John K. Bokwe” (1991: 120). And so, in a not particularly satisfying move for the musicologist, it is to the songs’ verbal texts that Erlmann turned to chart Caluza’s politics.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Martin Scherzinger suggests that the logical consequence of Erlmann’s reification of “the social” is a resistance to immanent considerations of African music. Further, by “failing to apply the same standards of analytical rigour to the musical dimensions of African music (as Western practitioners do for Western music ...), the music cannot take the findings of the study in unanticipated directions” (2001a: 129, 133). My sympathy with such thinking in this chapter should by now be obvious. It is precisely by facing the music that we are forced to face “the truth” of Bokwe.

“Vuka, Vuka, Debora!” is a gospel hymn with a difference. To start, its form is atypical. One type of revivalist hymn, we saw, was structured with a solo section followed by a chorus. “Vuka” follows this pattern, but is also prefixed with the chorus, or rather a section of the chorus; the full chorus, which Bokwe labels as such, follows the solo section, the latter having an accompanying humming choir. Except for the “misplaced” chorus introduction, then, the song is in conventional revivalist form. Having located my “hermeneutic window”, what can it tell us?

The chorus introduction – see example 12 – is structured around a single idea, consisting of two elements. One voice, the tenor, repeats a two-note motif based on a leap of changing interval, the crotchet regularity of which is now and then disrupted by a dotted rhythm for prosodic reasons. Against this quasi ostinato, the remaining three voices sing two-bar phrases of homophonic blocks largely in the tonic and dominant harmony. These two elements suggest a separation of the chorus itself into solo and choir parts, where the relationship of solo to choir in the chorus is not one of solo followed by chorus, as in the gospel song’s large-scale form, but a simultaneity of solo and choir. For this reason, I suggest, Bokwe begins with the tenor line alone for two bars, precisely to interpolate it as the solo. Elsewhere, during the remainder of the chorus, the solo is almost subsumed in and by the texture of the choir; all that distinguishes them are minor rhythmic differences and the solo’s continuation after the choir’s phrases, and even the *dal segno* repeat omits only the two bars of solo. Why, one could ask, did Bokwe set up this distinction, between solo and choir, only to downplay it? There are several possibilities: one “dramatic” and two musical.

A case for “Vuka” as a semantic setting is easily made. From the evidence of the music-text amalgam in just the section of the song reproduced in example 12, it is understandable how the work lent itself to “dramatic renderings” (see *South African Outlook* May 1922: 105). Marked “*Marziale con spirito*”, the tenor solo’s banally repetitious two-note motif becomes the march step – I can even hear “left-right, left-right” in “vu-ka, vu-ka” – over which the choir’s battle song is sung as Deborah is called to war: “Arise and capture your captives” (“Suk’utimb’abako abatinjwa”).⁶¹ The tenor not only establishes the march time, but does so as the “native captain” who headed Lovedale’s work companies as well as “Jehovah’s warriors” (“umkhosi kaYehova”). Given *Indoda*’s message of black action in black unity, the choir quickly falls “in step” with the solo, the two parts, like the Jewish army, united completely by the final phrase.

⁶¹ The English translation of “Vuka” is taken from Khumalo (1998: 6).

Example 12. Introductory chorus of “Vuka, Vuka, Debora!” (“Awake, Awake, Deborah!”). John Knox Bokwe, *Indoda Yamadoda* (1905). Transcription from sol-fa.

Marziale con spirito. ♩

Vu - ka, vu - ka ke De - bo - ra!
 Vu - ka, vu - ka ke De - bo - ra!
 Vu - ka, vu - ka, vu - ka De - bo - ra! Vu - ka, vu - ka, vu - ka De - bo - ra!
 Vu - ka, vu - ka ke De - bo - ra!

Vu - ka hla - be - la i - ngo - ma. Ba - ra - ki! nya - na ka' Bi - no -
 Vu - ka hla - be - la i - ngo - ma. Ba - ra - ki! nya - na ka' Bi - no -
 Vu - ka, vu - ka, hla - be - la i - ngo - ma Vu - ka Ba - ra - ki
 Vu - ka hla - be - la i - ngo - ma. Ba - ra - ki! nya - na ka' Bi - no -

D.S.
 ham, Suk' u - ti - mb'a - ba - ko a - ba - tin - jwa
 ham, Suk' u - ti - mb'a - ba - ko a - ba - tin - jwa
 vu - ka! Suk' u - ti - mb'a - ba - ko a - ba - tin - jwa.
 ham, Suk' u - ti - mb'a - ba - ko a - ba - tin - jwa

Alternatively, the tenors become the lead singer of a “traditional” Xhosa song structure. Earlier, I drew attention at a very general level to the affinity between Victorian gospel and precolonial Xhosa song in their solo-chorus structure. This might be more fruitfully explored in the chorus section itself of “Vuka”. The song begins thus: “Vuka, vuka, Debora! Vuka, hlabela ingoma” (“Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, and sing a song”). But

the isiXhosa “ukuhlabela” means specifically to lead the song; the song leader who sings the solo sections is called “umhlabeli” (Dargie 1988: 64; Hansen 1981: 116; Kropf glossed “umhlabeli” as “precentor”). The tenor solo, as well as the rest of the choir, then, call on Deborah not just to sing her song, but to lead the singing, as she leads the Israelites against their colonisers. In addition, certain structural affinities suggest themselves. Unlike the large-scale structure of the gospel hymn, where extended solo and chorus sections are distinct, the “Vuka” chorus and traditional Xhosa song practice start with a brief solo, or “call”, followed by a short “response” that overlaps with the solo as they interact. Moreover, and as I mentioned above for “Vuka”, in some Xhosa songs the distinction between leader and choir sections often dissolves (Hansen 1981: 240). There are other similarities between “Vuka’s” introductory chorus and traditional Xhosa song structure that, at a push, I might pursue, but there are also many dissimilarities. And my opportunistic attempt to “Africanise” “Vuka”, to locate *Indoda’s* anticolonial politics in a precolonial nativist music, falls somewhat short in the realisation that there is precedent for the structure of “Vuka’s” chorus in the gospel song chorus. While the textural norm of the revivalist hymn chorus, like mainstream Victorian hymn composition, is four-part homophony, there are numerous choruses in which the rhythmic relationship between the parts is loosened up. The means by which this is done are various, but one pits a single voice, the solo, which may be continuous throughout the chorus, against the other three parts, the choir, which may consist of slightly varied phrasal interjections, and always, as in “Vuka”, the parts combine in the last phrase (see bb. 8.4-10.2). The cliché of the communality of “African” musicking is no less, as Curwen noted, to be found in the gospel chorus: “that most social ... contrivance”, which “unites ... drawing all into the circle” (1885: 41).

To return to my original question: how do we square *Indoda’s* anticolonial politics with its eminently Victorian music, which included not just “Vuka”, but also “Plea” and LOVEDALE? One solution, if we must have one, is to pay attention to the reception of Bokwe’s Victorian music as “African”, which, as we saw, was already beginning to be inscribed within discourses of Africanness by the early 1890s. “Vuka” was no different. At a “hurriedly arranged” concert organised by a group of black teachers on learning about Bokwe’s death, “Vuka” – the composer’s “masterpiece” and the “*pièce de résistance*” of the event – was offered as a tribute to the composer, “who, more than any other ... had given definite form to Bantu Music”, “enabling [“the natives”] as perhaps none other could to find expression for their thoughts and feelings through song” (*South African Outlook* May 1922: 105). From the postcolonial moment it would be easy (and an easy way out) to claim “Vuka”

as a piece of the “resistance movement”. For the generation of black elite growing up at the time of Bokwe’s death, “Vuka’s” biblical origins seem to have been quickly forgotten, as the song became, in the recollections of Govan Mbeki while on Robben Island, simply a “spark of national pride” (quoted in Bokwe Matthews 1995: 105).

hymnody and hybridity, resistance and “race”

In August 1874, an anonymous article on “Kaffir Poetry”, or Xhosa hymnody, appeared in *The Kaffir Express*. At issue, as the subtitle, “accentuation in relation to sacred music”, made clear, was the always slippery relation of verbal accent to musical accent. The “problem” was foregrounded in mission hymnody, which in the nineteenth-century Cape generally worked as follows. The text was either a metropolitan hymn translated into the vernacular, or an original text in the vernacular. The tune, however, remained the untranslated, metropolitan melody (see Jones 1976: chap. 1; and Dargie 1997 for an overview of Xhosa mission hymnody). Taking as its premise “the proper coincidence of the musical and rhetorical accent”, the article pointed out a disjunction. While English-language hymns were largely iambic, so accordingly were the “greater portion” of the tunes to which they were set. In isiXhosa “the case [was] totally different”. “Owing to the structure of the language, and especially from the accent falling almost invariably on the penult[imate syllable], the poetry [was] mostly Trochaic”. Iambic tunes, then, were being used to sing trochaic hymns. “Kaffir Poetry” translated this “evil” into English for its non-Xhosa readers, suggesting they sing “Rock of Ages, cleft for me-me / Let me hide myself in thee-thee” to OLD HUNDREDTH. In short, the apparently anomalous situation pertained that the poetic foot was out of step with the music, “every word [was] misaccented ... all accentuation ... destroyed”. The consequence: “havoc” was being made of the black convert’s religious experience.

“Kaffir Poetry” initiated a long-standing concern with metrical accent in black hymning. At first a missionary matter, it became, from the late 1920s on, an ethnomusicological issue. With this shift in institutional discourse the problem of accent came to be increasingly racialised.

From the start, the talk on accent had been all white. The “Kaffir Poetry” article was almost certainly written by a white missionary, all the ensuing discourse on accent was white

authored, and the few attempts at compositional solutions were white initiatives.⁶² This is hardly surprising given that the discourse on accent was an old one in metropolitan hymnography. The most immediate of “Kaffir Poetry’s” respondents thus cited a leading Victorian church musician on the matter (see *KE* Sep. 1874: 2). Moreover, it had once again become a hot topic in late Victorian hymn criticism, where a genre of hymn-tune, the “sacred part-song”, bore the brunt of the renewed critique of misaccentuation. The reception of John Bacchus Dykes, one of the most popular of mid- to late Victorian hymn-tune composers and leading exponent of the sacred part-song, is a case in point. His *S. AGNES* was said to do “violence to the accent of the words in about 17 lines out of 28”, and made “an iambic hymn begin, as [Dykes was] wont, on the first beat of the bar!”. For these all too common prosodic misdemeanors *S. AGNES* was labelled “baby-twaddle”, “effeminate, and ultra-sentimental” (Heywood 1881: 60, 63). Hardly a colonial novelty, the discourse on misaccentuation was an enduring feature of Western hymnology.

The accent matter was not quite as white as I’ve made out though. Bokwe, for one, had prefaced *Amaculo* with the following note:

Departing from the usage his own people had grown accustomed to in their religious hymn singing, [the author] composed his tunes so as to preserve in singing the correct accentuation followed in speaking the Xosa language. The practice in church praise had hitherto been to adapt English tunes to Kafir words, but the different usage of the two languages in placing the accent made the accentuation fall quite out of place on the Kafir words in most of the hymns (1910: iii; also 1894: n.p.).

Indeed, Bokwe’s first composition, “Msindisi Wa Boni” was advertised as “suited to pure Trochaic ... perfectly preserv[ing] the Kaffir accentuation” (*KE* June 1875). With such credentials Bokwe has been persistently summoned as the exemplary case of black African response to white mission hymnody. Kirby wrote that from “the very first, Bokwe deplored the manner in which his *European* colleagues distorted the Xhosa language by disregarding its accents” (1959: 38; my emphasis). More recently, Erlmann cites the composer as the example that the “point about misaccentuation ... was aimed indirectly at the *white*

⁶² Erlmann implies that the article was black authored by discussing it within the context of black anticolonial nationalist thought and action (1999: 128). The verbal discourse and address of the article suggest otherwise. For example, at the time Lovedale used any opportunity to publicise its civilising successes precisely by naming its converts as literate; Bokwe’s contributions to *The Kaffir/Christian Express* were acknowledged and even enumerated. In addition, lead articles were written by the editor, generally Stewart, and the article did not appear in the Xhosa version of the paper, suggesting its primary audience was the white providers of hymns.

Other articles on accent to appear in the Lovedale paper were all white authored (see *KE* Oct. 1871: 2-3; *CE* Nov. 1883: 162-3; Aug. 1909: 132-3; May 1917: 74-5). Christopher Birkett and Thomas Daines, the latter of whom held “native singing class” in King William’s Town, were among the first to put into practice compositional solutions (see n.d. [1871]; and *KE* Sep. 1874: 2-3 respectively).

missionaries themselves and the utter disregard in mission hymnody ... for the prosodic subtlety of the Xhosa language” (1999: 128; my emphasis).

There are several points to note about this ethnomusicological discontent. The first is that the matter has become black and white, or black versus white: black disaffect at white hymns. Bokwe excepted, though, the late-nineteenth-century colonial discourse on accent was a white initiated and sustained affair; ethnomusicological interest continued that.⁶³ The racialisation of the accent problem is an invention on other, musical grounds. Tunes by black mission composers, for example, are no less exempt from misaccentuation. The weight of evidence that especially Bokwe has been made to bear for the ethnomusicological case against white mission hymnody is, upon scrutiny of his work, hardly secure. For while his tunes often follow the injunction to the trochaic and penult, as do Christopher Birkett’s (n.d. [1871]), many do not. In Bokwe’s own translation of “Plea for Africa”, for instance, he simply overlaid the Xhosa text on to the existing melody, making no compensatory melodic adjustments for the new language. In the composer’s own words, he was “murder[ing] Xhosa” himself (quoted in Shepherd-Kirby 10/3/1958). My point is that if there was an ideal text-music amalgam in Victorian hymn-tune composition, its practitioners, both metropolitan and black colonial, often failed to live up to it.

The ethnomusicological prescription that black hymnody should do so stems from a regnant idea within Africanist musicology that black African music exists in a special relationship to language; Hugh Tracey claimed that “African folk music ... was developed primarily as an embellishment to the languages” (1953: 42; also 1932: 111). For black mission hymnody to be a genuinely African hymnody, then, it has had to satisfy the requirements of that mythical unity between African melodies and their texts. But closer attention to the ethnomusicological literature quickly problematises such a deterministic view. In the most extensive ethnographic work on Xhosa musicking, Deirdre Hansen found little correlation between speech- and song-rhythm, and further, while the penultimate syllable takes the stress in spoken language it does so as often as it does not in song settings (1981: 231, 217, 201). Other research that has debunked the accentual integrity of black South African song includes David Rycroft’s work on Zulu poetics (for example 1971: 237-9; and 1982: 308) and John Blacking’s on Venda children songs, the latter clearly

⁶³ AM Jones charted the “Rise of Dissatisfaction” with the “old-style hymnody” from Birkett, through Kirby’s and his own interventions, amongst others, during the 1930s, to the beginnings of *African Music* (1976: chap. 2). Note how white was the dissatisfaction.

demonstrating the gap between the rhythms of speech and song for the most “natural” of singers, children (1967: chap. 3).⁶⁴

Just as ethnomusicology was taking up the mission’s concern with misaccentuation in the 1920s and 1930s, it “discovered”, in the wake of comparative linguistics, what was then named “tonetics”. Broadly, this concluded that the semantic content of black African languages was partly determined by pitch movement in speech.⁶⁵ On the one hand, the “tonality” of African languages provided further evidence for the difference of those languages for colonial linguistics. On the other, it was central to ethnomusicological arguments for the unity of black language and music, which no less differentiated African from Western music. Far more than accent, and perhaps even more than rhythm in the 1920s and 1930s, the category “African music” was constructed on the back of the invention of tonal speech.⁶⁶ Hugh Tracey, for one, established as the “first rule” of “Native music” its basis in language, such that “a change of tones, either in talking *or singing*, ma[de] rubbish of the words”, whereas the “relegation of tone in European languages ... accounted for [the] disregard of th[is] first rule” (1932: 111; my emphasis). For Kirby, “‘speech-tone’ ... affected profoundly [not only] the melodic line of Bantu music, [but even] directed the course of ‘polyphony’ when it came to be evolved” (1934a: 131; also 1926; and 1930: 406). Such was the deterministic nature of the relationship of language to music that the “preservation of ... indigenous *languages* in their pristine purity” depended on educationalists recognising the value of traditional *music* (Kirby 1949: 621; my emphasis).

Musicalising language and speechifying music meant more bad press for mission hymnody. In a review of AM Jones’ *Lala Hymnbook*, Kirby proclaimed that for “a long time it ha[d] been felt ... that the Bantu word-system fit[ted] ill with European tunes. Laws of stress and – more important in certain languages [and Kirby cited isiXhosa as an example] – laws of tone are over-ridden and broken when European tunes are forced upon Bantu words” (1931: 203). Above all, the verse structure of Western hymnody – different words, same music – made nonsense of the supposed correspondence between speech and tune contour.

⁶⁴ Given the extent of the “mutilation” of the rhythms and stress of speech in traditional song, which could “not be blamed on the earlier ‘misguided’ hymn writers”, Rycroft even suggested that the “[o]lder hymn writers or translators often seem[ed] to have fallen unwittingly somewhere between the subtleties of Nguni tribal convention ... and the unsubtlety of Western tradition” (1971: 238).

⁶⁵ For an account of references to tone in isiXhosa in nineteenth-century colonial linguistics, and of more thorough descriptions from the 1920s on, see Claughton (1992: chap. 3).

⁶⁶ IsiXhosa had been musicalised long before linguistic science’s insights into its tonal nature. The early missionary-linguist John Appleyard, for instance, spoke of the “euphony” of the “Kafir language”, which was “melodious; possessing ... a peculiarly easy and agreeable flow” (1850: 65, 72).

Kirby concluded that “the forcing of Bantu words into the Procrustean bed of European hymn forms led to a degradation of the language, which was at first bitterly resented by thoughtful converts” (1959: 38; also Jones 1950 [1931]: 9). Except, again, for Bokwe, the protesting converts are never named in Kirby’s or others’ narratives of discontent. Thus for Coplan it was only

Bokwe [who] was disturbed by the way in which European hymnody destroyed not only the poetic beauty but even the intelligibility of the Xhosa language. He attempted in some of his works to combine traditional melody, proper tone/tune relationships, and Xhosa patterns of accentuation with four-part harmony ... his hymns were the first good Xhosa verse set to music (1985: 30; also Erlmann 1985: 192).

Bokwe, we saw, made the occasional utterance on accent, but he made none on tone/tune. Because during his compositional life, from roughly the mid-1870s to 1910, there was no tone/tune problem. It was not only a discovery but a part invention of a later colonial linguistics and ethnomusicology.

By suggesting this, I am not denying the fact that some languages are more dependent on pitch for meaning than others. What needs to be reconsidered is how such knowledge was generated, why it has acquired the force of fiat, and what the implications of this have been for, say, the historiography of black hymnody. Tonetics appeared on the colonial scene during the final phases of a protracted linguistic project to “know” African languages fully. It was around the same time that colonial linguistics was rewriting orthographies as “standard” and producing phonetic dictionaries that Jones, for example, began “marking the complete tones” of sub-Saharan black languages (Westphal 1948: 14).⁶⁷ In its frenzy to classify and systematise completely, though, tonetics overshot the mark of how language works. In isiXhosa, for example, there are only around fifty homonyms in the entire vocabulary that are distinguished by tone; there are a similar number not marked even in this way. And while tone is not marginal to the workings of isiXhosa – it is a recognition clue in processing speech – neither is it as important as in some languages (see Claughton 1992: 11-12).⁶⁸ If the correspondence between tone and language is not as simple as some have dogmatically made out, what becomes of the alleged influence of speech-tone on Xhosa music?

Three points suggest that the tone/tune relationship is less stable than has often been admitted. First, the whiteness of the position from which the utterances of affinity have been

⁶⁷ Kirby had assisted the noted linguist CM Doke in his phonetic work on southern African languages.

⁶⁸ John Claughton, of the Rhodes University School of Languages, has said that even Xhosa-speaking residents of neighbouring towns can speak with different tonal patterns. Marking the tones for the language as a whole, then, is an always non-definitive exercise.

made seems to have troubled the ethnomusicologist. Hence statements, from Kirby through Erlmann, that largely nameless black converts protested at mission hymnody. Jones knew “only one African [also unnamed] who ha[d] sufficient *conscious* awareness of th[e] problem to protest openly” (1950 [1931]: 10). The other points proceed from the early ethnomusicologists’ desire to turn this ventriloquising of black agency into black compositional agency, a position based in the belief that only Africans know their languages well enough to set them correctly, and that black composed tunes would be the ultimate solution to white mission hymnody; “the *real* hymns for Africans should be created – both words and tunes – by Africans themselves” (Jones 1976: 21; also 1950 [1931]; and Tracey 1932: 112).⁶⁹

Black authored hymn-tunes tell a different story, disregarding the tone/tune injunction as firmly as white metropolitan tunes. Kirby conceded that while Bokwe got accentual matters right, his “imitat[ion] of European musical models made him guilty of linguistic distortion in other directions” (1959: 38). And Jones was not overly satisfied with Bokwe’s contributions to an Anglican Xhosa-language hymnal (1976: 40). But even in traditional Xhosa music, where there is no Western musical interference to blame, the evidence for speech-tone’s influence on melody is tenuous and contradictory. Hansen concludes that while the tones of speech influence melodic contour “up to a point”, “ultimately musical preferences prevail”, and the correspondence is not “as excessively strong as has been suggested” (1981: 230, 224).⁷⁰ Moreover, when attention is shifted from

⁶⁹ Similar thinking informed southern African Catholic efforts to create church music in an “indigenous style” from the 1960s on. The project aimed to get congregations to compose their own worship music using “Xhosa techniques”, participants being encouraged, for example, “to listen to the natural melody in the spoken words”. To ensure that the resultant song had the proper affinity with the speech on which it was based, though, it seems that some rather artificial, certainly non-traditional, methods were employed in the process of group composition (see Dargie 1981).

⁷⁰ Hansen used as a foil for her examination of the tone/tune relationship an early thesis on the subject by Amy Starke (1930). For most aspects of Starke’s work, Hansen showed that Starke’s findings were not as conclusive as was claimed (see 1981: chap. 6). The other major late-twentieth-century writer on Xhosa musicking, Dave Dargie, has been more dogmatic in his statements on the speech-song relationship (see 1988: chap. 6).

Hansen briefly touches on the problem of mission hymnody’s distortion of speech-tone. Claiming that Bokwe drew attention to the “problem” – the quotes are hers – she comments that in “doing so [he] did not realize that, in traditional Xhosa music, the melodies do not ‘slavishly imitate’ the speech-tones and ‘intonation’ patterns of the spoken language” (221-2). As I mentioned, there is no evidence that there was any tone/tune problem for Bokwe. Hansen’s point, nevertheless, holds, and is the crux of my argument.

It is beyond my present concern, but it seems to me that all the work on tone/tune is methodologically flawed. Most seriously, a single informant – Stanley Bentele of the then African Languages Department at Rhodes University – has been responsible for marking speech-tones for Hansen’s, Dargie’s and Claughton’s researches. As all the writers comment on the significance of regional dialect, both musical and linguistic, I am not convinced of the validity of using, as Dargie did, Bentele to mark the tones for the song texts of singers from the Lumko district, Dargie’s ethnographic field. Initially, I had intended to get the texts of some of Bokwe’s tunes marked to demonstrate the gap between the “melodies” of the text and his setting. I too had been directed to Bentele.

the general terrain of “Xhosa music” to the specifics of genre and form the waters become muddier. The significance of tone for tune is limited to certain sections of songs and certain song categories (218, 223-4, 227-8). As Blacking pointed out:

if the traditional relationship between patterns of speeche and melody is such that in the solo section speeche influences the patterns of melody while in the chorus musical forces take over, then hymns ... may be the consequence not of “slavish imitation” of European models, but of their classification as *choruses*, in which the speeche patterns of the words may be ignored (1980: 196, also 210; and Hansen 1981: 218, 224).

The invention of Africanisms such as tone/tune is the racialising of music. Born of, as it engenders, a denial, it speaks of the impossibility of Western hymning as authentic black cultural practice. Kirby thus asked of the mission tune, “whether a simple Native, accustomed as he [was] to voice his sentiments within the confines of his own limited though definite musical forms, [could] ever truly express them through the medium of an alien design” (1931: 204; though cf. Kirby’s utterances that I explored in the introduction). Such thought has come to be seen as the norm in pre-1950s ethnomusicology, shot through, as it often explicitly was, with discourses of scientific racism, and allied, as it occasionally was, with state racism. On the South African scene, Tracey’s work often hit both marks. Speaking in the language of pre-War eugenics, he insisted on the “impossibility of one nation to assimilate with any degree of accuracy the musical make-up of another, except through the transfusion of blood”, imagining that the “type of musical hybrid that develops in a Native who has been taught European music to the detriment of his own, being neither one nor the other, is utterly unpleasant ... and like some hybrids is completely sterile” (1932: 111-12).⁷¹ Here, hybridity is negativity, the flip-side of an essentialised notion of culture as racial: if the “substance” of the black man’s music changed, it would “spell death to his art and to his true self” (114).

It is a position well critiqued by revisionist ethnomusicologists in their own inventions of “the traditional” (see, for example, Erlmann 1991: 1-2 and 16 for the original critique; and my introduction for a rejoinder). And while the revisionists re-evaluated the concept of hybridity, and importantly some of the musics it describes, I want to argue that

⁷¹ This is not the place to discuss Tracey’s scholarly politics, but he did envisage his work on the state of black musicking as complementing thought on the political economy of the state. In the article on mission hymnody, from which the above quotes are taken, he concluded his thesis of separate church musics for black and white by arguing that the “industrial side of [“native”] education” was being overdone “in light of racial competition”, and that mission schools should rather have the “kraal as the objective of their training” (1932: 115).

their revisions stopped short, that hybridity remains a racially dirty word in the twenty-first century.

The ethnomusicological rethink of hybridity in around the 1960s and 1970s transformed it from being a negative criterion of delimitation into a condition for celebration. Erlmann registered the paradigm shift when he suggested that the notion of “syncretism” no longer adequately reflected the reality of global cultural production because culture contact was all-pervasive rather than exceptional (1991: 16). The move towards hybridity, then, observed its universality, its globalisation. But hybridity has come to mean more than just cultural fusion of the world’s musics, or “world music”. Substantially shored up by the rise of postcolonial theorising, its new status has also seen its subversive potential re-emphasised.⁷² Thus it was only with the introduction of hybridity into his thought that the major critic of the concept, Homi K Bhabha, is said to have cleared the theoretical ground for anti-colonial practice and agency. For one of Bhabha’s most energetic expositors, Robert Young, hybridity articulates “native knowledges ... which can, it is now claimed, enable active forms of resistance” (Young 1990: 148, also 149). More generally, Young notes that while hybridity denotes fusion and dialectical articulation, it has increasingly come to stand for the interrogative languages of minority cultures (1995: 24). In short, hybridity has become reified as resistance.⁷³

Recent work on black South African music has also tended to emphasise the resistance potential of hybridity.⁷⁴ Take, for instance, the reception of the “Kaffir Poetry” article. Certainly, it is a critique of mission hymnody; in fact, self-criticism. Lately, though,

⁷² In its nineteenth-century racial-sexual formulation, the context of Tracey’s use, hybridity was no less a subversive phenomenon. For a history of hybridity, particularly of its racial and cultural politics, see Young (1995).

⁷³ Peter Childs and Patrick Williams suggest that hybridity for Bhabha is not the introduction of cultural relativism or a synthesised position but the return of what colonial authority has disavowed, something menacing (1997: 134; also Young 1995: 22-3). Bhabha’s thoughts on hybridity are most fully written in the essay “Signs Taken for Wonders” (1994: 102-22, esp. 111-16).

While almost impossible to characterise a terrain as diffuse as postcolonial studies, it would not be amiss to rename part of the field resistance studies. So much does a resistant postcolonialism seem to have become orthodoxy, that Childs and Williams speak of a necessary “corrective to those critics who would see post-colonialism as (all too easily) resistant” (1997: 19; also Young 2001: 355). In his recent history of postcolonialism, Young traces its theoretical foundations to historical moments of resistance to colonialism and imperialism (2001: 16, 60-1).

⁷⁴ This is clear from developments in Erlmann’s work on *isicathamiya*. In *Nightsong* (1996), the politically ambiguous contexts in which the hybrid genre has been involved are finely traced in a balanced narrative. By *Music, Modernity, and the Global Imagination*, *isicathamiya*’s resistance value is emphasised, the genre posing, for example, “its own hybrid aesthetics against apartheid’s doctrines of racial purity” (1999: 208, chap. 11). In the latter work, *isicathamiya*’s induction into an academic context where hybridity means foremost resistance – “hybridity” appears noticeably more than in the earlier text – is also Erlmann’s introduction into the postcolonial studies library. Lara Allen acknowledges the politically protean potential of cultural hybridity theoretically, while privileging the subversive nature of hybrid popular black musics, like township jive, in her interpretive practice (2000: 4, 145).

it has acquired added value, advancing, according to Erlmann, “an early and timid critique of the civilizing mission”, an act even of “anticolonial nationalism” (1999: 128). Earlier, I pointed out that this has been made a matter of black and white; Erlmann and others state that Bokwe wrote back to the white missionaries. But the enunciative position has proved insufficient, and Bokwe has to be shown to have written “black” as well. To this end, the inventions and perpetuation of Africanisms such as the tone/tune relationship and accentual integrity, thus making of black hymnody an exemplary hybrid product, both fused and refusing.

It has been argued that this current desire to read “hybrid musics as embodiments of a new and effective cultural politics from the margins, as productive ways of ‘writing back’ against the centre”, is a strategy that has seen hybridity become the new authenticity (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000: 27, 30). To this I would add that hybridity incorporates that other idea of “authenticity”.⁷⁵ Far from acting as a denial of “the essential”, from enacting the erasure of “race”, hybridity’s very identity depends on race. If cultural hybridity is “itself an example of hybridity”, as Young proposes, “of a doubleness that both brings together, fuses, but also maintains separation” (1995: 22), then one of the separations it performs is racial, a split produced in the (con)fusing of race as/and culture. At the same time, this (con)fusion of hybridity racialises the act of resistance itself. The possibility of “white” colonial culture, for example Bokwe’s Victorian songs, as oppositional becomes an impossibility, a hybrid black hymnody all too easily anti(/post)colonial.⁷⁶

To talk of “race” is particularly distressing for those of us who take culture seriously. For, where race works – in places where “gross differences” of morphology are correlated with “subtle differences” of temperament, belief, and intention – it works as an attempt at a metonym for culture; and it does so only at the price of biologizing what *is* culture (Appiah 1986: 36; also Todorov 1986: 376; and Solomos and Black 2000: 20-1).

The exposure of what has been called “the illusion of race” is an on-going project. It is important to show how music is involved in the construction of the category “race”, how the historiography of black South African Victorian hymnody continues to be implicated in the

⁷⁵ Scherzinger notes the contradiction by which Erlmann at times situates political resistance in *isicathamiya*’s hybridity, and at other times in “a kind of Africanist aesthetic purity” (2001a: 135). As I have suggested, the former cannot be separated from, but is crucially dependent on, inventions of the latter.

⁷⁶ For a similar argument that “Western art music”, as the dominant institutional musical language of apartheid South Africa, could function as a critique of apartheid ideology, see Muller (1999/2000). I point out, however, that Muller’s example – John Joubert’s Second Symphony – uses black African music, even if heavily mediated.

“racial formation process”. As Kwame Anthony Appiah writes of the academic’s ethical imperative: “What we in the academy *can* contribute – even if only slowly and marginally – is a disruption of the discourses of ‘racial’ and ‘tribal’ differences” (1992: 290). But equally, as the sociologist of race Howard Winant proposes, we must argue against the “recent discovery of the illusory nature of race”, for the meaning and salience of race is always being reconstituted in the present. One of the directions in which such an investigation could proceed would be to explore how race is articulated in contemporary political relationships. Winant suggests that today the meanings of race proliferate “chiefly at the point where some *counterhegemonic* or *postcolonial* power is attained” (2000: 181-2, and 185-6).

It is at, and for, this point, that the contemporary ethnomusicologist invokes the language of race music. For recent histories of black South African musicking have positioned themselves within South Africa’s second struggle for decolonisation, fought under the banner of black nationalism.⁷⁷ Coplan’s *In Township Tonight!* introduced itself as “a record of and a small contribution to the efforts of black South Africans to gain control of their national culture and to use it to regain control of their individual lives” (1985: 1). The research for Erlmann’s *African Stars* “into the work and careers of some of South Africa’s unsung black musicians ... became a quest for the very foundations of a new South Africa” (1991: xvi). It seems that contemporary ethnomusicology has had to appropriate the role of the historical “native intellectual” for itself. For while there is little doubt that the black elite of the late Victorian years engaged in anticolonial nationalist action, the musical programme accompanying that action, as Bokwe’s music shows, was *composed*, if not sung, unambiguously in the language of Victorian Britain. And this, of course, runs counter to the master narrative of cultural nationalism, in which the decolonisation of culture involves its black Africanisation (see the introduction). In order to rescue the music of colonial black hymnody, to identify its resistant politics, the postcolonial ethnomusicologist has been forced to turn to the Africanisms of an invented precolonial tradition.⁷⁸ Ironically, it is Bokwe’s “pure” music that offers a cautionary tale to those of us unable to resist thinking racially: by facing the music we may discover that music’s race need not exist “in the music”.

⁷⁷ The first was fought in the name of Afrikaner nationalism.

⁷⁸ The essentialising strategies of identity politics, as well as their resistant natures, are well known. For an overview of the issues, see Hall (2000) and Gilroy (2000). The identity politics in which I am suggesting the contemporary ethnomusicologist is engaged is not, I think, akin to Gayatri Spivak’s idea of “strategic essentialism” (see esp. 1993; also Parry 1994: 176). Here, the critic makes political use of categories rooted in “the natural” in acknowledgement of their epistemological error, while some ethnomusicologists proceed seemingly unaware of the partially invented nature of the Africanisms they employ.

Chapter 6
The Class and Colour of Tone

There has seldom been an occasion on which “scientific” enquiry was more explicitly brought to bear on a musical object than Milton Metfessel’s experiment in mechanical transcription, or “phonophotography” (1928). As Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman have recently pointed out, Metfessel chose as his laboratory specimen “the Negro voice” (2000: 22). For his success, it seems, would best be demonstrated if he could capture the character of the “true ‘Jubilee Voice’”, a sound that, up to then, had eluded the best efforts of American folklorists (Metfessel 1928: 20). At the same time that science legitimised the idea of “race” by racialising music, it appealed to race for its own legitimacy.

From the outset, transcribers of black American song were all too aware of the inadequacy of their tools. As the pioneering editors of *Slave Songs of the United States* admitted: “The best we can do ... with paper and types ... will convey but a faint shadow of the original. The voices of the coloured people have a peculiar quality that nothing can imitate; and the intonations and delicate variations of even one singer cannot be reproduced on paper” (Allen et al 1995 [1867]: iv-v; see Radano 1996 on the politics of “writing” the spirituals). With the conviction that “everything in the nature of musical emotion that the musician conveys to the listener can [now] be recorded, measured, repeated, and controlled for experimental purposes”, Metfessel set out to map black singing more accurately (1928: 6). His notational solution combined a “scientific, graphic method with a modified musical staff” (8) – see figure 6. On the top level pitch was graphed on an expanded staff, in such a way that even minor variations in frequency, like vibrato, were represented. Below this, a time-line plotted absolute duration of rhythm, and included a phonetic transcription of the text. But if, as Radano has argued, the impossibility of the transcriptive act engenders a kind of “counterviolence”, as the excess of black musicking compels its ethnographers to alter “their” occidental notation, there remains still and always “sounds-beyond-text” (1996: 525).¹

¹ Alan Lomax stated the problem more memorably, if less politically correct: the “more refined the scores, the more certainly the essence of the exotic music escapes through the lines and spaces” (1956: 48). In reply to the ethnomusicological gripe that “Western” notations have failed African musics, Kofi Agawu points out that the problem of notation is a universal one (1995: 390-3). Concerned to expose the “ideology of difference” that has structured ethnomusicological endeavours, he might well have added that it is in the encounter with aural difference that the failures of notational representation have been most plainly laid bare.

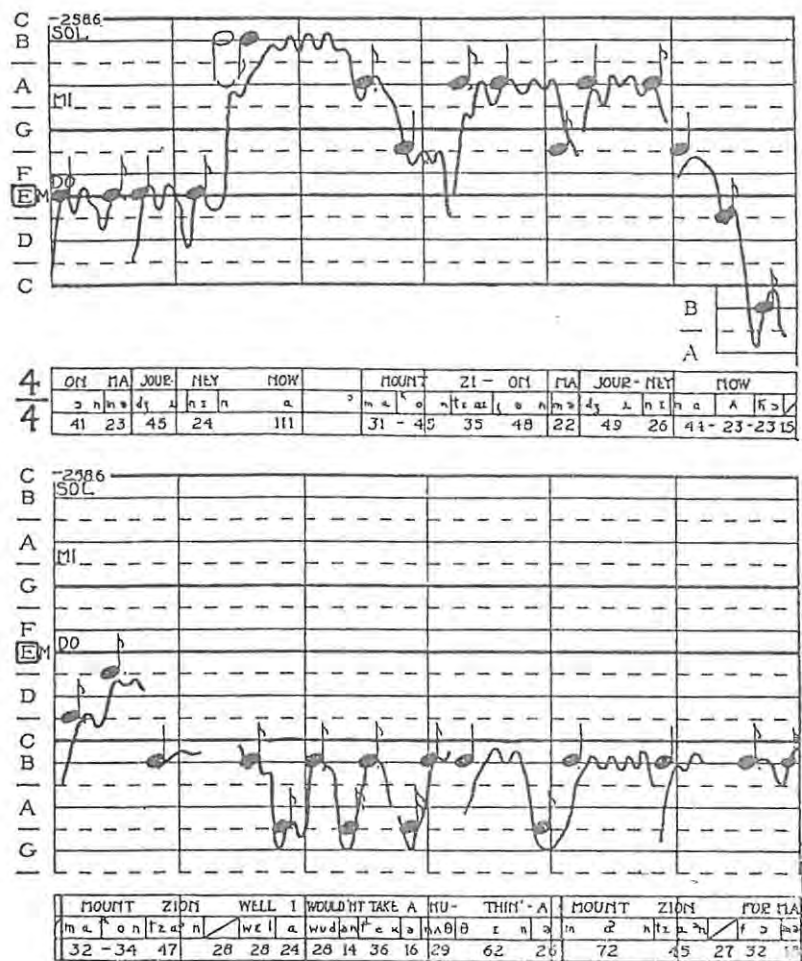


Figure 6. Phonophotographic transcription of “On Ma Journey”. Milton Metfessel, *Phonophotography in Folk Music* (1928).

No less do Metfessel’s graphs harbour lacks. He may have been supremely confident in the representational abilities of phonophotography – “the word ‘unnotatable’ no longer need be used with reference to music” (1928: 21) – but he still delimited the scope of his project: “of the many measurable aspects of singing ... pitch and duration factors were the most readily attacked”. Timbre, therefore, received “incidental attention” (45-6).² It was only as incidental, as secondary to the primary concerns of pitch, that Metfessel engaged with aspects of the voice conventionally associated with timbre. Vibrato, as a “Negro vocal ornament”, for example, was considered not for its modulation of timbre, but for its ability to be graphed as a pitch pattern (43, 133). Pace Radano and Bohlman, Metfessel was concerned not with the Negro voice as sound object *per se* but with a notion of singing style as complex melody.³

² In his introductory chapter to Metfessel’s monograph, the psychologist Carl E Seashore was more candid: science’s “instruments” were apparently not yet up to the task of “measuring” timbre (1928: 15-16). By the 1970s and 1980s, science had apparently caught up (see, for example, Cogan 1984: 1-3).

³ Though I have nothing to add to the conceptual ambiguity that surrounds the nature of timbre, or its related terms “tone quality” and “tone colour”, a few preliminary thoughts on mapping my terrain. As is well known, pitch and timbre are mutually constitutive: register influences timbre and vowel changes alter pitch. However, not only have we conceptualised timbre and pitch as independent “parameters”, but it is possible to analyse one

What does this erasure of the black voice tell us? Nothing new perhaps. That even 1920s racial science had little to say about the colour of vocal tone confirms what has almost become a truism: the linguistic impotence of ethno/musicology when faced with the voice's timbre. Cornelia Fales has written most recently of the "paradox of timbre". If by no means "deaf" to it, as "pitch-centric" ethnomusicologists have frequently been accused, we nevertheless, she suggests, suffer a peculiar amnesia with regard to timbre; we hear it – of all sonic phenomena timbre carries the most complete information about a sound source and its location – but we have no language to describe it; with "no domain-specific adjectives, timbre must be described in metaphor or by analogy to other senses" (2002: 56-7). When we get to timbre, then, it is only by getting beyond it. But mostly we never get there at all.⁴

The black voice became an analytical problem for me not because of ethno/musicology's erasure, or the paradox of timbre, but through an act of amnesia of my own. Apartheid broadcasting gave generous play-time to black choral music, but on "black" stations; there were separate stations for "them" and "us" (see Hamm 1991 and 1992 for an account of apartheid radio broadcasting). As a white child I would probably never have encountered this other musical world but for being a choirboy. It was out of musical curiosity that one day, sometime round the mid-1980s, I went to the "wrong" TV station. The first item on the programme was that war-horse from *The Creation*, "The Heavens Are Telling". I recall quite clearly my reaction: this intimately familiar music sounded so very different – ugly, to be honest – that, Haydn or not, I changed channels and forgot about black choirs. Almost twenty years later I re-encountered them at a six-hour festival celebrating Eastern Cape choral composers in early 2000. Saturated with the sound of black voices just

for the other, as in Metfessel's consideration of vibrato. *Phonophotography*, moreover, was subtitled *American Negro Songs in New Notation*, and Metfessel identified his object as black song and singing rather than the voice. His notion of music as texted, then, partly accounts for his privileging of pitch. For while timbre, as obviously as pitch and rhythm, is a feature of vocal performance, it is less typically conceived as essential to notated musical structure (see Middleton 1990: chap. 4 for a discussion of "notational centrality" and the privileging of pitch and rhythm). In work on musical traditions less dependent on a score, such as popular and non-Western musics, the problem of timbre has at least been acknowledged, if hardly adequately addressed. I want, then, to distinguish between my use of "the voice" as timbral entity and its frequent conflation with "vocality" or "singing style", of which timbre is just one aspect. Much work purportedly on the voice, such as Dunn and Jones' *Embodied Voices* (1994), has very little to say on timbre. There is also the common metaphoric use of "voice" (see most famously Abbate 1991), which has still less to do with timbre.

⁴ "The evaluation of tone color (*Klangfarbe*)", wrote Schoenberg in 1911, is "in a still much less cultivated, much less organized state than is the aesthetic evaluation of ["pitch"]" (1978: 421). Not much seems to have changed since then. Even work in the cognitive-acoustic tradition positions itself thus: timbre "has for millennia proved to be inscrutable – beyond description and analysis in almost every musical tradition" (Cogan 1984: 1). Prominent Africanists who have helped create the paradox, by affirming the import of timbre to African musicking while failing to analyse it, include Lomax (1956: 48), Merriam (1982 [1959]: 67, 95-6), Bebey (1975 [1969]: 115), and Nketia (1974: 145-6).

as I embarked on my PhD, I was compelled to ask, not as Deborah Wong has: “Can one hear race?” (2000: 72), but: Why did I hear race so palpably in the voice?

classifying the voice

The singing voice is, of course, part of the body, produced by body parts. A commonplace, but a fact too easily forgotten in Africanist ethnomusicology, where the bodiliness of black musicking is usually signified by, and so confined to, dancing. As part of the body, the voice stands for the subject more directly than any other instrument. Indeed, so tied to the body is the voice that even when disembodied we easily identify it as belonging to a particular subject, individual or social.⁵ Thus, when the late-nineteenth-century armchair ethnomusicologist Richard Wallaschek sought to classify the “the primitive” in music, he focussed not solely on the structural triumvirate of rhythm, melody and harmony, but located primitiveness as readily in the voice itself. Africans, for example, “seem[ed] to think that a song [was] no song unless it be sung with the whole power of the lungs” (1893: 4).⁶ By the end of the Victorian century, then, the singing voice had become involved in subject formation, an object that located its owners in time and place.

Shouting singers were not confined to Africa; Wallaschek had regretfully to concede that they could be discovered in “much more cultured countries” too (1893: 4). Other Victorian commentators did not balk from naming those primitive voices that had survived on in “civilised” time. For in the Victorian imagination discourses of alterity were often elided, and this was no less the case in representations of the voice.

Of the several spaces of social identification in which the voice was placed in Victorian Britain one, not unsurprisingly, was class. The historical ground for this classification of the voice was prepared doubly. On the one hand, the beginning of Victoria’s reign, in the 1830s, is generally considered a moment of arrival for the British middle classes, a time by which middle-class cultural seers had imagined their class identity in

⁵ Instances of the recorded voice “passing” for a gender or race other than the one the singer “really” embodies might be cited in counter argument (see Gitelman 1998; and Hayes 2002 for discussions of racial ventriloquism). Such arguments fail to stress that it is only possible for a black women to “sound white” because the voice is always-already racialised or gendered. Simon Frith makes this point when he suggests that we don’t hear technologically mediated voices as bodiless. Rather, we assign bodies to them, imagining their physical production by labelling them with a range of social attributes, “everything that is necessary to put together a person to go with a voice” (1998: 196).

⁶ Wallaschek’s *Primitive Music* has been cited as an exemplary application of evolutionary thought to a world music history. For recent critiques, see especially McCall (1998: 95-6) and Zon (2000: chap. 4), but also several of the essays in Nettl and Bohlman (1991).

relatively cohesive terms.⁷ On the other hand, the 1830s and 1840s is the moment to which historians of vocal pedagogy date the appearance of the “modern” singing voice, defined predominantly by the lower larynx position and a systematic breathing technique, and so by a specific quality of tone. John Potter has linked the rise of this “art” or “classical” singing to that of the middle classes (1998: chaps. 4 and 5), a thesis that shares affinities with William Weber’s work on the emergence of the idea of “classical music” (1992). Whatever the case, the embourgeoisement of the singing voice brought the idea of othered voices into play.⁸

The working-class voice was one of these. Not a voice *sui generis*, it was rather one of several instances of a type that in chapter four I called the “anachronistic voice”; the black voice, we will see, was another. On one level the working-class voice was defined through the use of a vocabulary of aestheticised notions of class. The “pure”, “good” tone of the bourgeois voice was not only “that kind of sound which satisfie[d] the educated ear”, but also a “refined” and “cultured” sound (Birch 1893: 3). “Bad”, working-class tone, conversely, was “rough” and “vulgar”.⁹ This means of classing the voice informed the story, retold in *The School Music Review* late in the century, of a group of coal miners’ children taught a Mendelssohn song. “[B]rought up in the slums and rough environment of poorly paid, ignorant working people”, the children’s voices were accordingly “harsh, ugly, noisy, meaningless”. After training they became “refined”, “delicate”, indeed “perfect”. The reward for overcoming their working-class voices was that the “seeds of gentility [had been] sown” (Feb. 1895: 161). If it would be pressing the point to suggest that a promise of upward mobility lay in the fortunes of the singing voice, this does indicate that a class-based vocal identity had become a commonplace.¹⁰

⁷ In their now classic account of this narrative, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall assert, too confidently some protest, that “by the middle of the nineteenth century, these disparate elements [of pre-Victorian middle-class consciousness and praxis] had been welded together into a powerful unified culture” (1987:23). Much recent work has problematised the idea of a monolithic Victorian middle class, but I mention that the transgressions are so easily exposed because the borders were so rigidly (mis)represented by the leaders of the bourgeoisie themselves.

⁸ While Potter (1998) points out that middle-class appropriation of the classical singing voice and its institutionalisation as hegemonic sound, or “vocal authority”, has set it apart from other types of singing, he does not explore how it became a normative ground against which specific other voices were invented.

⁹ My account of the classed voice is based on a reading of about twenty late Victorian and Edwardian voice trainers, written predominantly for amateur and children’s choirs, which are listed in the bibliography.

¹⁰ An Edwardian choral manual proposed to add a caveat to the “manners makyth man” motto of an upper class public school: “children should be taught early in life to realise that the very best behaviour w[ould] not atone for a rough repellant voice” (Bates 1907: 7).

colonial politics and the black voice

Pierre Bourdieu has famously written that the invention of, say, anachronistic voices is a distinction of taste as a matter of class (1984). But this distinction of voices involved more than the differentiation of identities. It also allowed for the pathologising of other voices as a justification for their reform. Hence the preferred Victorian name for vocal pedagogy was “voice culture”, where “culture”, in the nineteenth century, was also synonymous with “civilisation” (Young 1995: 31). Voice culture aimed to involve the singer in the cultivation of the voice so as to re-form the voice to conform to the middle-class idea of the vocally civilised.

On the one hand, then, the bodiliness of the voice facilitated its representation as working-class or black, involving it in the making of difference; I should point out that the voice does not seem to have been drawn into the biological essentialism of late-nineteenth-century thought. For on the other hand, while the voice supposedly gives us access to an “authentic” and “natural” identity, there is no such thing as an essential voice (Frith 1998: 196-7). The voice culture project, premised on the idea of a changing voice, recognised this itself. In theory, a working man could acquire a bourgeois voice, as could a black a white voice. So, as it attempted to refashion identity at the most fundamental level, that of the body, voice culture provided not just an argument for, but powerfully performed, the erasure of difference.

Popular Victorian choralism, we saw in part one, functioned within the politics of ethico-social reform, brokering institutional affiliations with other reform initiatives as its practices worked in fulfilment of the requirements of reform. Significantly, nineteenth-century reform typically had the working classes as the beneficiaries, and choralism too, and unlike solo singing, was persistently represented as non-bourgeois by the Victorians (see, for example, Russell 1997: chap. 10).¹¹ It was as part of a global reform movement, the foreign mission, that choralism had been introduced to the Cape Colony’s black singers just after mid-century. Nowhere was this more forthrightly stated than in a review of a concert given by a black choir in Grahamstown, the Colony’s second city. For the city’s British settlers, the concert demonstrated:

¹¹ As such, it is hardly remarkable that the representation of vocalicity in terms of class was worked out as part of the discourse of choralism. With the amateur, middle-class solo singer in mind, early Victorian singing manuals no less distinguished between good and bad tone; it was, after all, in the pages of these manuals that the modern singing voice, and the techniques to produce it, were being inscribed, and along with the practices and sound of cathedral choralism, many of the techniques of the modern singing voice were appropriated by popular choral vocal training. But it was only in the late Victorian vocal trainer, typically aimed at the chorister, or a dual audience of solo and choral singer, that tonal quality became a matter of class – and race.

a truth of no ordinary importance, at a moment when the taming of our savage neighbours is looked upon by many as an utter impossibility, namely, the capacity of these savages for civilization ... music has been able in a few short weeks to subdue and discipline natures so wild and intractable that moral teaching, law, and even our holy religion itself have laboured for years to conquer them with but very inadequate success (*GTJ* 4 Sep. 1863).

Voice culture was eminently suited to the reformist intent of the civilising mission.

As recent work in historical anthropology has detailed, the impact of the South African mission can be traced on people's bodies. Movements of social reform, like the mission, tend to work on the body as "*fons et origo* of the [new] world", precisely because hegemony, suggest John and Jean Comaroff, "has its natural habitat in the human frame" (1992: 40).¹² As musical practice directly targeting the body, voice culture provided the opportunity for re-forming the voice, for colonising yet more of the other's body. And at least ideally, it was conceived as part of the programme to civilise black South Africans. A turn-of-the-century report on "Music at Lovedale", assured its metropolitan readers that in the "small Scottish colony planted in the heart of Kaffraria" attention was being devoted to "voice production" (Aitken 1899: 183-4).

Against this, looms a voice persistently represented as different, uncultured. The civilising claims made for choralism notwithstanding, white colonial writings on black choral singing, almost without fail, noted a difference in the black voice. The review mentioned above found the "native voice [to be] harsh and disagreeable"; "the European voice [was] far more agreeable, far better qualified to render the sublime conceptions of great composers than the natives". So marked was the difference that the writer summoned the voice to insist on the segregation of settler and black choristers, "question[ing] whether a mixed choir, of Europeans and natives, would be half so good" (*GTJ* 4 Sep. 1863). Half a century on, the "Western ear" of the colonial press still found the black voice to have "an uncommon ring" to it (*CT* 4 July 1912: 11).¹³

It is not, I think, especially helpful to wish away "the black voice" as a textual misrepresentation that one can chalk down to a ruling epistemological framework of racial difference, to the colonialist invention of Africanisms. Rather, the black voice is something very real that has a history; this much we can hear from seventy years of recordings of black

¹² Conversely, and in John Fiske's felicitous phrase, the "body is the Achilles heel of hegemony" (1989: 76). The Comaroffs' work on the body as a site of regulation and resistance has been enormously influential (see esp. 1997), though neither they, nor anyone else as far as I am aware, have attempted an "historical ethnography" of the voice.

¹³ I stress that the represented voice I am concerned with here is that of the black Victorian chorister, and not that of the precolonial singer.

choirs. I want to begin to chart that history by addressing the paradox of the black choral voice sounding “against the grain” of metropolitan voice culture.

The point at which voice training was incorporated into choral practice was politically inopportune. In Britain, voice culture for popular choralism only became standard during the 1870s, and in the Cape mission only in the late 1890s.¹⁴ Not only did science’s ideas about race gain “strong” form at this time, but in South Africa such attitudes became increasingly institutionalised. So, for example, the civilising mission, of which I have suggested voice culture was a logical component, began to backtrack on its mid-century promise of fully assimilating black South Africans (see, for example, Dubow 1987: 71-4). Although this in no way meant that the mission gave up on its civilising project, it did, as Homi K Bhabha has famously argued, expose it more clearly than before as an ambivalent project, in which “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other [was] *a subject of a difference that [was] almost the same, but not quite*” (1994: 86).¹⁵ In such a regime, one could ask if the transformative potential of voice culture rendered it problematic, even subversive? Certainly, its only partial application to black voices ensured that black choralism functioned as an exemplary instance of the ambivalent civilising mission. On the one hand, the mission continued to teach the repertoire and practices of Victorian choralism as part of a residual assimilationist ideology. On the other hand, and regardless of the assurances given by the author of “Music at Lovedale”, the mission’s commitment to voice culture seems to have been equivocal. A lack of vocal technique was thus routinely noted of mission choirs.¹⁶ Despite their civilised repertoire, then, black choirs remained unmistakably black because of their voices; almost the Victorian same, but not quite, because not a white bourgeois voice.

¹⁴ Before this, literature on choral training was concerned primarily with music literacy. The proliferation of writings on voice culture coincided in both Britain and the Cape Colony with state intervention in music education, that is from the early 1870s and late 1890s respectively, suggesting that the new support enabled an expansion in the scope of a singing-based music education.

¹⁵ The Comaroffs put a slightly difference spin on this scenario. In seeking to rework the African body, the civilising mission laid the ground for “two contrasting ontologies of personhood”: one a modernist citizen, the other a primordial, ethnicised subject. The “epistemic abyss” by which these subjects were sundered, they conclude, demonstrates “one of the great contradictions of colonialism”, the “coexistence of irreconcilable signs” (2001: 120-1). My attempt to read the black voice within dominant politics clearly resonates with these sentiments on difference.

¹⁶ Witness the adjudicators’ reports on early black choral competitions, started in the western and eastern Cape in 1901 and 1902 respectively (see, for example, *EdGaz* 15 Nov. 1901: 66; 18 Dec. 1903: 229; 4 Jan. 1905: 318; 29 Dec 1905: 325-27). The situation appears not to have changed by the next decade, a *Cape Times* review of two black choirs concluding that “[v]oice production [was] unknown to either of the choirs yet” (4 July 1912: 11).

This explanation of the fact of the black voice is hardly satisfactory. From the early twentieth century on, white music educators associated with the mission repeated the details of Victorian voice culture, occasionally even in publications aimed at the black singer.¹⁷ These supplementary efforts would have offset the mission's tepid commitment to voice training. More importantly, black choristers, who viewed "concerted singing" as an "assurance of civilized advancement", as "a chance ... to prove to the world that they [were] progressive", seemed indifferent to calls for the training of their voices (*Ilanga Lase Natal* 23 June 1911: 4). The "proper" Victorian voice, it seems, was negotiable for the black singer in the way that the Victorian musical repertory was not. So rather than seeing the voice as a product of an insidious missionary ideology, we might instead pursue it to the politicking of its own bodily bearers. How, if at all, were black South Africans involved in the production of the black voice?

As so often with the colonial archive black voices are less forthcoming than we'd like; I have found no black utterances on the voice. White colonial writings, however, attributed an agency at the very least of indifference to black singers: they preferred to "ma[k]e plenty of noise without a corresponding amount of music", to "shout" as they sang (*RS-GE* 1894: xxxvii; 1898: 111a). This state of (in)action was illustrated in the outcome of the Xalanga School Choir Competition of 1902: the winning choir was trained by a white nun, while the other choirs, all "in the hands of Natives", were "much inferior". But the reality may have been less the "superiority" of white teaching skill than black apathy or refusal (*RS-GE* 1903: 164a; *EdGaz* 21 Feb. 1902: 171). It suggests that the black voice was fashioned less by white actors, reformist or not, than by black singers. The demographics of colonial music educationalists by the turn of the century, when voice culture was being established, reveals that the everyday overseers of choral culture, conductors and teachers, were predominantly black. It seems reasonable to conclude that the non-engagement with voice culture was a matter of black choice, of agency in the intentional mode.

In the current critical climate, this leads inevitably to the question: was the black voice an act of *resistance*, a refusal of the colonising efforts to reform the voice?¹⁸ Certainly,

¹⁷ James Rodger's *Elementary Native Songster* (1907) included voice-training exercises, though without any explanatory text, perhaps because the metropolitan literature circulated so freely in the Cape. Much later, in segregationist South Africa, Hilda Parker (1930) continued to peddle Victorian voice culture to black singers.

¹⁸ It is an old ethnomusicological claim that the meaning of black South African musicking resides above all in its "African" performances and not its sometime "Western" texts (see, for example, from Tracey 1957: 23; and Rycroft 1959: 28 on). With regard to choralism, Bongani Mthethwa has said that "it is rather hard to trace any African roots" in black choral music when it is played on instruments, its Africanness, it seems, residing in its vocal performance (1988: 29, 31). More recently, political import, that is resistance, has been attributed to Africanising performances (see Blacking 1995 [1981]: chap. 5; and 1987; through Muller 1999: chap. 4).

a case can be made for such a reading. For, what occupies the terrain of resistance has become so diffuse that almost anything goes. Under the influence of James Scott's influential thesis of "everyday forms of resistance" for the "weak", "foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander", and so on were added to the repertory of acts (1985: xvi). If colonial records are to be believed, the black reaction to voice culture was just such an example of "foot-dragging", of disinterest. The historian of postcolonialism Robert Young, however, cautions the postcolonial critic to take heed of in whose name we invoke resistance (2001: 355). My argument is that we might proceed, in the first place, by historicising resistance itself. Did, importantly, the black elite, as the main participants in choral culture at the time, in any way think of their singing voices as resistant?

It is well known that the black elite challenged colonial, including mission, politics in the coloniser's language, and that they most often did so as a protest at checks on their full participation in British bourgeois life. Further, the black middle class often pursued the markers of "civilisation" independently of the mission; recall the classics and higher education debates I mentioned in chapter three. In short, elite aspiration, and so also resistance, was assimilationist at the turn of the century; only later would this become less so. Choralism, we know, was part of this politics. Considered thus, the black failure to assume the white voice would have run counter both to the aims of turn-of-the-century black protest politics and to their claims for choralism.¹⁹ It becomes difficult, then, to square the black voice with an act of intentional resistance.

How, then, might we account for the contradiction of the black voice as difference against the assimilationist programme of elite politics and choralism. One way (or way out) would be to appeal to the idea of a "structural aesthetics of vocality".²⁰ If the voice cannot be

Rarely have scholars of political performance taken cognisance of the voice, though Veit Erlmann has written that "the 'truth' of *isicathamiya* songs ... reside[s] not in their expressive content but in the unique, grainy texture of the voices that generate them" (1996: 203, also 236-8).

¹⁹ Without being dogmatic, I am arguing against the compulsory hybridisation of elite culture, and note several points on the matter. One is the lack of convincing work in this area. For example, the Comaroffs give the Westernised black elite scant attention. When they are discussed, their treatment is telling. For instance, proceeding from the tenet that *all* mission culture was domesticated (read Africanised in its hybridity) (1997: 65, 86, 115), the elite domestication of Christianity within the mission churches seems only to be narrated by its absences: it occurred where it went "unremarked, undocumented", "in the interstices ... the invisible depths ... in unsaid words and unrationalized actions" (108). In short, the reputed hybrid Christianity of the black elite occupied a place from which little concrete evidence has emerged. While I would not argue that a black elite family in the Cape lived exactly like a middle-class Victorian one in England, it is worth keeping in mind that not everything originally "Western" in Africa is localised by a process of hybridisation. As such, I showed in the previous chapter that early black choral composition was thoroughly non-hybrid while thoroughly "black".

²⁰ The turn to what the Comaroffs have called the "fetishism of agency" in twenty-first-century academe, has led away, they suggest, from a concern with "anything much systemic in the world" (2001: 114). A decade

inscribed within narratives of intentional resistance, its resistance to voice culture may lie in its refusal to transform substantially, precisely because it lay below the conscious world of elite protest and choral composition. The “resistance”, if we must have it, of the black voice lies in its relative imperviousness to colonisation and reform, to change in a strong sense (see Blacking 1995: 167). This outlines a very different scenario than the far easier, now conventional narrative that would have the black voice simply as *resistance to colonialism*.²¹

Structural aesthetics also allows for an account of the hybridity of the voice. The black “rejection” of voice culture was never total, and a half-hearted engagement with it did change vocal sonority.²² This produced a hybrid object, in which the intentional act of culturing the voice was mediated by an existing timbral habitus. But hybridity, here, assumes a different hue. Typically, for the Comaroffs and other “historians of hybridity”, it has involved the insertion of local, African content into the coloniser’s products, “of Protestant habits and of *their refiguring*”, “missionary endeavours *indigenised and reauthored*” (Feierman 2001: 27; Piot and Auslander 2001: 3; my emphasis). But with the black voice the balance of power was so heavily weighted in the colonised’s favour that it seems the voice, and its history, issue from Africa. Steven Feierman, noting the loss of African narratives in the story of hybridity, told as part of the master-narrative of colonialism, has proposed a corrective move whereby we seek out the “macronarratives” that originated in Africa (2001: 27-8). In this spirit, structural aesthetics enables us to conceive of an almost transhistorical tonal base content, from which, I suggest, the black choral voice was, and continues to be, made. For now, this must remain a theoretical postulate, though something of a “long duration” for the black voice may be established. From mid-nineteenth-century textual representations of black choral singing, through the first recordings of black choirs in the 1930s, to twenty-first-century performance practice, the black voice is characterised by a relatively consistent tonal identity.²³ In the rest of the chapter I try to describe that sound.

earlier, they differentiated between agentive and nonagentive power, the latter operating beyond human agency and saturating aesthetics and ethics, built form and bodily representation (1992: 28). Taking cognisance of “structures” caused several posts to shift in their work. It lent another dimension to agency, now concerned with mediating between conscious intention and “embodied habituses” (Ortner 2001: 77), and it allowed for a notion of resistance that wasn’t dependent on consciousness (Comaroffs 1991: 31).

²¹ It is also very different from the idea of a revival of black vocality, as part of a return to tradition as resistance, a case for which there is no evidence for this time.

²² The partial engagement with voice culture is clear from early recordings of black choirs, who were, exceptionally, even praised for voice production (see *RS-GE* 18 Dec. 1903: 229).

²³ Black choirs in the 1930s and 2000 do not sound identical, but the overall sonority is similar. Further, the language used to describe their sound in contemporary writings is the same as in accounts from the pre-recording era. Of course, this hardly constitutes sound evidence for timbral continuity: a colonial era’s “harsh” voice may index a very different sound to an apartheid era’s one. However, the reference point for white descriptions of the black voice has always been the modern, bourgeois singing voice, and while this too has

Sherry Ortner reminds us that colonised people occupy “spaces, literally and metaphorically, at least partly outside of that conversation [with the missionaries and West], where they are constructed by other relations, within other conversations, in other ways” (2001: 82). The black voice, I think, was an object that occupied a terrain relatively independent of colonial evangelism and musical colonialism. From the first, during the mid- to late nineteenth century, when voice culture as the means for the voice’s reform had yet to penetrate the Cape in any systematic, broad-based way, and then from roughly the turn of the century on, when the rise of segregationist ideology defused any urgent need for the voice’s reform that there might previously have been, the black voice was never in the thick of colonising action. The exceptional, annual pronouncements of the white music inspector and adjudicator only confirm the voice’s fringe status. Even the utility of voice culture for black singers was questioned: “who shall say that they need it?” asked a critic of *The Cape Times*, “the voice freed from the hereditary consequences of ‘production’ has its own happy method” (4 July 1911: 11). Having no great corporeal-cultural violence perpetrated against it, can we perhaps claim that it was a voice that was never lost, has never stopped sounding. Even in a musical world so thoroughly a fact of colonialism as black choralism, there are spaces of musical action, of identity, that were not determined primarily by that encounter.

the sound of the shout

In Victorian Britain, voice culture’s reform programme operated through a range of techniques. One of these, as I discussed in chapter four, was soft-singing, which became a ubiquitous feature of choral voice training; hushed voices, it appears, would have greeted anyone happening on a late Victorian choir rehearsal (see, for example, the turn-of-the-

changed, it would not be amiss to assume that, as part of the pedagogical apparatus that developed around that voice, the vocabulary attained some stable relation to the sounds it described.

I find myself in conversation here with the older ethnomusicological paradigm of “continuity and change”, which first entered the discipline around the 1950s, and in particular with Blacking’s critique thereof (see the pages of *African Music* during the late 1950s). Several points about the discourse of continuity and change are of relevance. First, the proper province of continuity has been ascribed to performance, and above all performance practices. Taking the example of black choralism: while the compositions, for Blacking, are unambiguously indicative of change, constituting a “new musical system” (1995 [1977]: 150), their performance reveals the continuity within African musicking (for example Rycroft 1959: 28; and more generally Lomax 1959: 930). Other than in passing, the possible continuity of the voice as timbral entity has not been considered. Second, continuity has most often been presented as operating unconsciously, as “structure”; Blacking’s riposte was to argue that it was rather a function of intentional agency (1995: chaps. 5 and 7; and 1987). Third, continuity is the continuation of “the traditional” as the precolonial, though with the important rider that continuity is “flexible non-change”, continuous change within rather than of the tradition (Blacking 1995 [1977]: 164). To talk of the black choral voice as possibly continuous with precolonial vocality raises several problems, foremost of which are evidentiary. Here, I will not pursue that possibility.

century literature: Evans and McNaught c.1900: 25; Richardson c.1900: 29; Venables 1937 [c.1900]: 53-4). The uses of soft-singing were many, but above all it was claimed to be productive of “good” tone, and so became an end in itself. On the one hand, then, the soft singer was an exemplar, the antithesis of the “coarse, harsh, and shouting production of voice ... generally favoured by the ‘Lion Comique’ and the gutter ‘larrikins’” (Hardy 1910 [1899]: 4). On the other hand, it functioned as a technique through which such anachronistic shouting voices could be disciplined or reformed.²⁴ I want to use the discipline of soft-singing as a way into discussing the timbral content of the black voice.

When the “African Choir” was on tour in the United Kingdom in the early 1890s, a section of the British press found that while their music was Western their voices provided the difference. *The Musical Standard* noted that it was “pretty obvious that the South Africa singers ha[d] in the process of civilization adopted more or less the European scale, to say nothing of European harmonies”, but that “due allowance” had to be made “for the roughness of their voices” (11 July 1891: 23; see also *Musical Herald* July 1891: 216). Amidst these generic epithets of othering the voice there emerges a more specific complaint: a preference for volume, and lots of it. Repeatedly the black singing voice was characterised as a shouting voice: “[s]hout[ing] prevail[ed] among native schools”; “it [was] the native custom to shout songs” (*RS-GE* 1898: 111a; *EdG* 4 Jan. 1905: 318). Even if not shouting, choirs sang too loud; few seemed able to sing softly (*EdG* 29 Dec. 1905: 327). On the continuum of Victorian vocal sound, where at the one end – the “right”, white end – soft-singing taught and indexed good, pure tone, the shout of the black voice placed it at the other side.²⁵ With this desire to sing with what Wallaschek described as “the whole power of the lungs” in mind, black vocality was governed by what I will call an aesthetics of the “shout”.²⁶

²⁴ In the earlier solo voice trainer, soft-singing was not prescribed as a corrective against bad tone. Its use as such in the choral trainer, both to reform the anachronistic voice and to prevent its regression once cultured, indicates a more active concern with policing the voice, perhaps because the voices it addressed – working, black and children’s voices – were perceived as aberrant.

²⁵ The “pure tone” of the cathedral choir is often referred to as “white tone” (Day 2000: 125). More generally, John Shepherd speaks about the “white timbres” of classical music (1987: 164).

²⁶ Wallaschek’s black voice, of course, was not that of the black Victorian chorister. Characterisations of black vocality within work on “African music”, rather than within area studies, cast an interesting light on the (racial) politics of critics’ hearing (see Ramsey 2001). White ears have heard the difference of the African voice, which includes the shout (see, for example, Von Hornbostel 1928: 32; and Merriam 1959: 15; 1982 [1959]: 96). Black writers have focussed on the range of vocal techniques and sonorities used and favoured by singers in Africa (Nketia 1974: 145-6; Bebey 1975: 115).

My use of “shout” is not to be confused with the shout of African-American hymnody, one of the techniques which Olly Wilson suggests defines black musicking as a “heterogeneous sound ideal”, the “kaleidoscopic range of dramatically contrasting qualities of sound (timbre)” (1992: 329). The black choral voice, by contrast,

To talk of the black voice as a shouting voice isn't to say much at all. It leaves the voice stuck in the world of what Roland Barthes called the "poorest of linguistic categories: the adjective". His displeasure with music criticism's inability to "translate" music into anything other than the adjective was famously worked out in "The Grain of the Voice" essay (1977: 179). Barthes' proposal was that we change not the language on music, but the musical object itself as it presents itself to discourse (180). His choice of object, the voice, seemed both logical – the textedness of vocal music offering another way in – and bold – the timbre of the voice, which he addresses centrally, proving particularly resistant to language, especially receptive to the adjective. Crucial is the concept of the "grain", which Barthes defines as the encounter between a voice and language; or, more precisely, when the voice is in a "dual position, a dual production – of language and of music" (181). A good sense of its complexity may be gained from Barthes' description of the voice of a Russian bass cantor:

something is there, manifest and stubborn (one hears only *that*), beyond (or before) the meaning of the words, their form (the litany), the melisma, and even the style of execution: something which is directly the cantor's body, brought to your ears in one and the same movement from deep down in the cavities, the muscles, the membranes, the cartilages, and from deep down in the Slavonic language, as though a single skin lined the inner flesh of the performer and the music he sings. The voice is not personal: it expresses nothing of the cantor, of his soul; it is not original (all Russian cantors have roughly the same voice), and at the same time it is individual: it has us hear a body which has no civil identity, no "personality", but which is nevertheless a separate body ... The "grain" is that: the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue (181-2).

Barthes' insights into the relationship of the voice to subjectivity aside, I want to take as my point of departure his final statement: "The 'grain' is ... the *materiality* of the body speaking [or singing] its mother tongue" (my emphasis).

The Victorians were well aware that the voice is partly constituted in the juncture at which musical vocality and the sonority of language coincide.²⁷ Hence the attention given to

like the well-blended Victorian model, has been, and continues to be, characterised by a relatively uniform sound – only, it is uniform in shouting.

²⁷ In "analysing" the black voice I have taken an approach that focusses on what might be called the "phonetics of timbre", marrying the insights of vocal pedagogics and historical sociolinguistics. Popular music studies and ethnomusicology have used the descriptive tools of Western vocal pedagogics to discuss the voice, but the linguistic element of vocal pedagogics seems not to have been similarly employed (for popular music see Shepherd 1987; and Middleton 2000b; and for Xhosa music Hansen 1981: chap. 4). Early music scholarship has proved an exception, stressing the importance of speech sound for, amongst other things, singing tone (see the essays by Hillier, Potter and Wray in Knighton and Fallows 1997). According to Robert Cogan: "although music has often been analyzed in itself, and although phonetics and phonology have been the subject of much research ... these studies have hardly ever been directly related". His own "spectral" experiments led him to conclude that "language sounds and musical features are collaborators of equal importance in creating the uniquely expressive sound shapes of vocal compositions" (1984: 23). I have found cognitive-acoustic work on vocal timbre unhelpful, partly because it has not concerned itself with "social" voices, and partly because, as Johan Sundberg admits, "almost all research on the singing voice concerns operatic singing ... there are not many facts to report about choral singing" (1987: 134). There are of course other approaches to analysing the voice, which may or may not take cognisance of language. David Rycroft, for example, showed how crucial

the enunciative act in the Victorian choral trainer, which was often less concerned with semantic clarity than with the bearing of pronunciation on singing tone. For some pedagogues, “vocalisation”, or vowel delivery, became the key to producing the perfect voice (Bates 1907: 5). It was even recommended that the pronunciation of spoken language be bent, within reason, to accommodate the requirements of the bourgeois singing voice, creating a situation in which that voice might sound against its speaking counterpart.²⁸ One such mismatch stemmed from the reputedly “inferior singing of Southerners” compared to northern county singing. Considered to be “less a matter of *voice* than of *vocalisation*”, it was observed, for instance, that “[p]eople in the North, as a rule, both in speaking and singing, substitute[d] the round *oo* vowel for the *u* of ‘much’”. By contrast, as “the word [was] commonly pronounced in London and the South, it [was] quite impossible to produce singable tone”. Although such wholesale vowel modification proved too radical, a partial inversion of the Pygmalion factor sufficed: changing *u* to *ô*, so that “much” became “môch”, would “greatly improv[e] the tone without marring the pronunciation” (Bates 1907: 5, 22, 26; also Birch 1893: 17).²⁹ This “softening” of English to produce “good vowel-tone”, complemented the more formalised practice of soft-singing to “oo”, which was considered the best phonetic assurance of soft-singing (Richardson c.1900: 30). Literally shutting the mouth to constrain the voice – “oo” was metaphorised as a “muzzle” (Hardy 1910 [1899]: 41) – “oo” was enthroned as the standard rehearsal vocaliser in choral voice training. In short, the genteel voice was very much a product of language.

So were other voices. When *The Musical Herald* heard those of the African Choir as “strange to the European ear” it was because, the paper added, they “mark[ed] a difference in speech-habit” (July 1891: 216). While some of these habits were exotic, such as the much-

Nguni languages are to the “portamento pitch-glides” that characterise the attack and release of notes in a range of Nguni singing, including choralism, a feature thoroughly proscribed by Victorian voice culture (see, for example, 1971: 236; also Seeger 1990 [1956]: 114).

²⁸ Potter points out that the appearance of the classical singing voice roughly paralleled the emergence of “received pronunciation” (RP), and that technically they operate similarly and share tonal qualities. He concludes that “the ideological force of associating singing with high-status pronunciation in Britain can only have made classical singing more elitist” (1998: 65, 192). Certainly, surface parallels can be drawn between the ways in which RP and the bourgeois singing voice worked: both buttressed class identities; both functioned as standards, against which variants became deviants; and both were disseminated to other classes (see Mugglestone 1995: chap. 1; and Görlach 1999: chaps. 2-3 for these and other matters relating to the rise of RP). But, if late Victorian and Edwardian voice trainers are any indication, the tonal content of RP seems not to have been overly valued for its usefulness in producing good choral tone. The “purer and more refined accent of public school boys”, warned one manual, “must not blind us to the fact that vocally there is often room for improvement” (Bates 1907: 6; and see below).

²⁹ Welsh choralism was the other example against which the metropole persistently measured itself. Like northern country choralism, its success was attributed in part to language: “the Welsh sing so well because of the unusual soft consonants, with a good rounding of the lips for the vowels” (Birch 1893: 17).

mentioned clicks of the Nguni languages, others were familiar. Colonial linguistics, for example, easily referenced the vowel sounds of isiXhosa (my focus here) with English-language sounds, often equating them with Italian vowels (see, for example, MacLaren 1906: 2; through Dargie 2000). This meant that Xhosa vowels were “pure”, “usually pronounced with great distinctness”, and “preserv[ing] in all situations the same radical sound” (Appleyard 1850: 74). In other words, there were, “properly speaking, no diphthongal sounds in Kaffir” (MacLaren 1906: 3). The effect of this on black singing tone is significant. The lack of diphthongs and smaller repertory of vowel sounds downplayed the usefulness of the technique of vowel modification which had become central to the production of the bourgeois singing voice. Choral voice culture, we saw, often recommended eliding speech vowels with more “musical” ones. But this option wasn’t easily available to the Xhosa voice, which was made from a more circumscribed phonemic set, a situation that could work both in favour and against the bourgeois tone ideal.

The “a” in isiXhosa, for instance, unlike its many variants in English, was always pronounced “ah” according to colonial linguists, who invariably gave the example of “‘a’ as in ‘father’”.³⁰ Together with the alliterative “euphonic concord” which structures isiXhosa, this often gives rise to a sustained wash of “ah” sound, and it is the prevalence of an unadulterated “ah” phoneme, I argue, that is one of the sources of the black voice as a shout; listen, for instance, to sound example 1, “Isithandwa Sam”, which begins with a series of repeated “hahs”.³¹ For unlike “oo”, “ah” was demonised in choral training.³² Although ideally allowing the voice to flow forth in all its resonant glory, in the throat of the amateur “ah” was more likely to result in an anachronistic voice; the “dangers in its use” included a “strident” tone (Bates 1907: 27; also Hardy 1910: 41-2). “Oo”, in tandem with, and as, soft-singing, was prescribed as a “corrective”, as “*the best remedy for a harsh voice*” (Dart

³⁰ Most nineteenth-century work on isiXhosa was done by missionary-linguists. Given that their own dialects were varied – the Scots were particularly well represented in the eastern Cape – it is not surprising that the English examples they give as pronunciation guides to isiXhosa are often contradictory. “Father”, however, was standard.

³¹ While my use of recordings of Xhosa choirs from the early 1930s, the first recordings of black South African choirs, exceeds the chronological limit of this study, I have found their testimony indispensable; there is only so much that textual representations of the voice can tell us about its sonic content. I have tried to compensate for my white, twenty-first-century ears, and for the technologically mediated nature of the recorded voice, by listening to the historical recordings in tandem with contemporary textual representations of the black voice.

Exploring the “contexts” of the recordings is beyond the scope of this thesis, though clearly they were produced within a colonial “race records” industry. The work on race records, predominantly focussed on the US, does not seem to have considered the centrality of the voice as a racial marker (see, for example, Oliver 1984).

³² The preference for “oo” further distinguished choral from solo voice training, where “ah” was highly recommended.

c.1905: 4; also Bates 1907: 28). The “harshness” of “ah” rendered it a problematic sound also for the proponents of “talking proper”. Lynda Mugglestone has pointed out that in some lexical contexts, such as “father”, the long “a”, far from being part of RP as it is now, was considered vulgar for most of the nineteenth century, perhaps because of its Cockney connotations (1995: 90-1). The polymath Alexander J. Ellis spoke of “the boorish character of *aa*” (1877: 48).³³ So we might read the disciplining work of “oo” against “ah”, as the language of class, as accent as social symbol, having a material effect in classing the singing voice.

The physiology of “ah” articulated more than any other phoneme the grain of the voice as the materiality of the body singing its language. For it was especially in the corporeality of the voice that it was classed and racialised. Barthes implies that not every voice has a grain. Specifically, the “‘grain’ is the *body* in the voice as its sings”; recall his excessive anatomising of the cantor’s vocality (1977: 188, 181; my emphasis). Elsewhere, he recognises that “the whole of musical pedagogy teaches not the culture of the ‘grain’ of the voice but ... the myth of respiration”.³⁴ Indeed, for the modern singing voice breath is its life, “it is the secret of voice production” (Harrison c.1896: 5). While voice culture dwelt in detail on the body parts involved in vocal production, it was only so that in the end those parts are not heard, are heard to be absent in the breath we do hear. Nothing was to get in the way of the free flow of breath. A “pure quality of tone” required vocal chords that “act freely and naturally”, a “loose, open throat”, in general no body part that “obstructs the free emission of tone” (Bates 1907: 9, 11). When anatomy did obtrude, tone was inevitably “bad”. In fact, anatomising the voice signified it as bad: good tone was “pure”, “resonant”, “sweet”; faulty tone was “chesty”, “guttural”, “nasal”. “Ah” is a case in point, for it got the body doubly in the way. First, because in English “ah” tends to be produced towards the rear of the mouth, it marked out the throat which was supposed to act only as an unobtrusive conduit (Hardy 1910 [1899]: 42, 46). Second, it involved the nose. When Ellis warned that “nasal ‘twangs’ [were] serious faults in singing [to be] avoided by sedulous practices with

³³ Ellis distinguished between “aa” and “ah”, the former being the “longest” “a” sound, and contrary to Mugglestone gave “father” as an example of its occurrence. However, he still found English RP to be “deficient” in the longer “aa”; it was “not a recognised English vowel” (1877: 48-9).

³⁴ Barthes opposes Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau’s breath-based singing to Charles Panzera’s body- and language-based sound. In Barthes’ own aesthetics of (sexual) pleasure, breath, and so Fischer-Dieskau, are figured as impotent, while Panzera’s grained voice offers the pleasure of fellation: “The breath is the *pneuma*, the soul ... The lung, a stupid organ ... swells but gets no erection; it is in the throat, [the] place where the phonic metal hardens and is segmented ... bringing not the soul but *jouissance*” (1977: 183). There are of course problems with Barthes’ reading. It universalises pleasure as bodily, at the same time as proscribing what constitutes the body. Others, no doubt, will hear Fischer-Dieskau’s voice as no less bodily, his singing no less orgasmic.

the mirror”, it was “ah” that he cited as the offender (1877: 38; also Dunstan 1896: 39). Hallmarks also of the Cockney accent, twangs and “‘throaty’ enunciation” were the bodily symbols of a voice that transgressed the idea of a grainless bourgeois voice (Bates 1907: 5, 15).

The nasality and throatiness of “ah” are unmistakably present in the Xhosa voice: in sound example 2, “Hayi Abantu Abamnyama”, note especially the alto repetition of “hayi”; in sound example 3, “A Plea for Africa”, the “Ah-fri-cah” and “G-ee-ve”. But the black voice as shout is as much a consequence of these materialities of “ah”, as they are of it. “Ah” is implicated in the shout in another bodily way, its status as the shouting vowel due also to its “essential” volume – the vowel with the mouth most open – and its “natural” place of production. Typically, “ah” was said to be a product of the “chest register”, the source and repository of sonic displeasures, such as the shout, and against which voice culture fought; it “must be silenced” demanded the pedagogue John Spencer Curwen (1888: 315). The “head voice”, advocated in its stead, produced a tone “pure, melodious, resonant, refined, and blending”, by giving the breath easy passage from the lungs – opening the throat, freeing the larynx – impelling it to the front of the mouth and out into the world, rather than trapping it within the body as guttural or nasal tone. The techniques used to practice the head voice were “oo” and soft-singing, the same as those to counter “ah” and the shout (for example Bates 1907: 12-14, 28; and Hardy 1910 [1899]: 4-5, 23, 41). Like these, register too was classed: boys “of the class who play in the streets, and live in an atmosphere of noise, naturally sing in the thick [or chest] register. Boys who are surrounded by gentle influences, and who are taught to restrain their voices, will sing in the thin [or head] register” (Curwen 1888: 314).

Not just the tendency of “ah” to sound from the chest register, but the general use of that register characterises the black choral voice, and accounts for white representations of it as a shout (for example Wallace 1929: 92). This is audible in the opening solo line of sound example 3, in which the only note produced in the head register is to the “oo” sound of “to” (34’); compare the chest voice at the “ah” of “passed” (40’). The shouting voice is especially clear in sound example 1 at the high alto and soprano entries at 31’, which detail a litany of “transgressions” arising from the use of the chest register. Foremost is the violation of the chest voice’s “natural” register, being used in the pitch domain professedly reserved for the head register. In this “unnatural” act, the body, intruding on the voice, does violence to the vocal organs: in the tightened, tense throat the sound is trapped, forced out convulsively in a shout instead of flowing out (Bates 1907: 13, 27; Hardy 1910 [1899]: 4,

18). For white educators, the black voice became indeed a problem of registers. A singing manual “adapted for use in native and coloured schools”, and published at the same time as the recordings were made, dwelt as much on the improper use of the chest register as on the head register required to reform the black voice. In doing so it imported the full armature developed against the uncultured voice in Victorian Britain. Teachers monitoring singers were instructed to be on the alert for the chest register, too loud and harsh a voice: “*Never let them begin a sound with the full strength of their voices*”, “*watch that the tone does not become harsh*”. The use of “ah” was accordingly to be limited, while soft-singing to “oo” and the development of the head register were recommended (Parker c.1930: 1-2, chaps. 1 and 2 *passim.*; also Jones 1948 [1943]: 3, 11-12). Solutions, we hear in the recordings, that were rarely taken up.

One of the early consequences of the ambivalences of the civilising mission discussed earlier was a return from English to vernacular teaching in the first decade of the twentieth century.³⁵ While some of the black elite protested at this turn (see *CE* May 1906: 134), its composers set largely Xhosa texts; in addition, other choral texts were translated into isiXhosa. The language of black choral music, then, was the mother tongue. This presence of the vernacular, and particularly the materiality of black singers using their mother tongue, must go some way in accounting for black vocality. Voice culture, by contrast, was never “translated”. Always in English and proceeding from a concern with the English language, it remained an unsatisfactory tool for reforming the black voice regardless of the Cape politics in which it found itself.

Barthes concluded “The Grain” essay with a provocative challenge:

the simple consideration of “grain” in music could lead to a different history of music from the one we know now (which is purely pheno-textual).³⁶ Were we to succeed in refining a certain “aesthetics” of musical pleasure, then doubtless we would attach less importance to the formidable break in tonality accomplished by modernity (1977: 189).

A call to arms, and one that could be pursued in several directions. I might, for instance, pursue the idea of an aesthetics of musical pleasure into more historically specific terrain.

³⁵ The issue was debated in *The Christian Express* throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. While the discourse within which the case for vernacular education was made was sometimes patently segregationist, the proposal was also, less invidiously, a pragmatic plan to extend the reach of elementary education amongst black South Africans.

³⁶ Borrowing the distinction between pheno-song and geno-song from Julia Kristeva, Barthes aligns the geno-song with his grain, while the pheno-song includes “all the features which belong to the structure of the language being sung, the rules of the genre, the coded form of the melisma, the composers’ idiolect, the style of interpretation” (1977: 182).

Certainly, it would be easy to “read” the grainless bourgeois voice, and especially its choral version, as a representation of a dominant middle-class Victorian society. Most banally, Victorian representations of the bourgeois voice as bodiless conform to a still popular picture of the Victorians as antithalian puritans; it did, after all, take the aristocratic Lady Helen Craven, a “sinner” of the “World”, to denounce the boy treble as a “pure passionless voice” (1897: 98).³⁷ But this is no place for such straightforward accounts. Rather, I want to conclude with a hardly revelatory observation: the voice assumes its identity, its sonic and therefore social identity, from the aesthetics of musical pleasure in which it is embedded. We know what a pleasing voice sounds like and we try, consciously or not, to reproduce it; we don’t usually *try* to sound unpleasant, even if that’s what we might end up doing, and of course “unpleasant” voices may be purposively produced for any number of ends. From this aesthetic habitus of sonic pleasure that we inhabit, we could conceive of the voice as being fashioned along a continuum, from being unconsciously structured to self-reflexively made.

But an aesthetics of pleasure has more to do with perception, less with the voice than with aurality. It is in what we prefer to hear that the voice is fashioned. So instead of the colour of the voice, we might speak about the colour of the ear. Three examples, indirectly related to my colonial story, illustrate the relationship between aural pleasure and the voice. The first is an anecdote from the colonial archive:

A missionary who counselled one of the leading Hindoo converts to “sing softly,” found himself speedily silenced on this wise – “Sing softly!” he replied. “Is it you, our father, who tells us to sing softly? Did you ever hear us sing the praises of our Hindoo gods? How we threw our heads backward, and with all our might shouted out the praises of those who are our gods! And now do you tell us to whisper the praises of Jesus? No sir, we cannot; we must express in loud tones our gratitude to Him who loved us and died for us” (*TS-fR* Sep. 1876: 279).

The second example is from the voice of a black musicologist, perhaps uttered in response to the lingering colonising intentions of the voice culture project:

What do the Nguni people find beautiful in their music if a person is singing with a screaming voice? If I am listening with a Haydn or Mozart ear the intonation is out, *the tone is out*, but if I am listening with an *isicathamiya* ear this is expressive (Bongani Mthethwa, quoted in Lucia 1986: 163; my emphasis).

Lastly, a recent video aims to sell South African choral music, “the rhythms and exciting sound from the heart of South Africa, to choirs all over the world”. A narrator gives us the promise of the country’s “unexplored treasure of choral music in eleven languages and eleven cultures”, but the music on the video is all “traditional” black music arranged for

³⁷ Timothy Day, somewhat ahistorically, suggests that the English cathedral style was shaped by what one could call clichéd Victorian values, such as understatement, self-control, and uniformity (2000: 126-7).

choir (2001). The “singers” accordingly signify an authentic Africanness: in bright neo-traditional garb, they dance-move to the rhythm of a drum against the backdrop of a township, or a *kraal*. As it turns out, though, they are vocal frauds: the black choristers don’t sing, they lip-synch; “their” voices belong to four white singers who produce an impeccably quasi-cathedral “white” tone. This piece of curiosity from the postcolony suggests one conclusion. The market for the video – “choirs all over the world” – is, I think we can assume, primarily the Western world; the amateur American choir on the lookout to augment its programme of “music from around the world”. Knowing that market’s aural preferences, the white producers of the video feared that the sound of black voices would scare away their business – much as I had been as a child. The voice, it seems, is sometimes too real for our racialised ears.

Epilogue

**The “Black Peril”, Black Choralism:
Thoughts Post Writing on “Music and (Post)Colonialism”**

In colonial South Africa the black menace to white power went by many names. One was simply the “Black Peril”. A refrain in the debate on the Native Question, the Peril irrupted periodically in the pre-Union colonies, reaching a climax in the discursive outbreak of 1911 and 1912 where it popularly signified black rape of white women. Widely regarded, even then, as a product of sensational colonial journalism, the Peril registered doubly: psychopolitically: articulating some of the most basic of the colonists’ fears, feeding from and into the newly ascendant ideology of “segregation”.¹ As Gareth Cornwell has put it: “the political scandal of the Black Peril [was] the subjection of a woman of the dominant race to the power of a man of the subordinate race; the penetration of a white vagina by a black penis [was] an act of insurrection” (1995: 107). The myth of mass rape, then, was a symptom of a more general white fear of losing control. It was a scenario astutely analysed in the eponymous novel, *The Black Peril* (1912), which suggested that the crux of the Native Question was not which of either segregation or socio-political equality would be the better “solution”, but that there existed the haunting possibility of a radical reversal in the relations of power: a future South Africa would no longer be “a white man’s country” but “a veritable black man’s land”, “the great Black Peril that threatened the ultimate subjugation of the two races [English- and Dutch-Afrikaans-speaking whites] by the coloured peoples was the real shadow that hung over the land” (Hardy 1912: 135-8, 142).²

The Peril attracted the attention of the South African mission, ever a keen interlocutor on all matters black. This time, though, missionary intervention was more than usual self-interest. Not simply a black mark on the mission’s record, the Peril posed fundamental questions about the validity of its enterprise, of its disciplining mission. Missionary reaction was swift. A commission of inquiry was established to investigate the

¹ The mission’s inquiry into the “so-called Black Peril” found, amongst other things, that (1) assaults on black women were much higher than on white women, (2) a white woman was safer from assault in South Africa than in England, and (3) assaults by white males were underreported, in part due to the prevalence of “concubinage” (*Report of the Fourth General Missionary Conference* 1912: 80-90). This evidence led John L. Dube, a prominent member of the black elite, to suggest that there was also a “white peril” (*CA* 4 July 1912: 7). My account of the Peril is drawn in part from Cornwell (1995: chap. 3, section 3).

² In his submission to the missionary commission, WC Scully wrote that “the average European in S. Africa ... regards the black man as a tremendous menace; he feels that there is a danger, as there undoubtedly is, of the European being overwhelmed in the not very distant future ... Africa, from north to south, will eventually be a black man’s country” (Questionnaire 30/3/1912).

“so-called Black Peril”, and its finding, conveyed to the General Missionary Conference of South Africa held in Cape Town in 1912, and to the public at large, was that there was no Peril. The debunking report received some press, but more effective as damage-control, I suggest, were a series of choral concerts and a missionary exhibition organised to coincide with the conference.

The exhibition was the first of its kind in South Africa and the choir singing of an unprecedented scale; for the few musical events, the always cash-strapped mission had dispatched over 300 black choristers, from at least three different missions in different parts of the country, to the capital by “special train” (*CE* Aug. 1912: 135). Clearly, a massive exercise in mission public relations was under way. As impressive was its audacity. For while the legislative and intellectual centre of early-twentieth-century South Africa, Cape Town was somewhat removed from the lived realities of everyday South African “race relations”. The *Handbook and Programme* to the exhibition suggested that “the inhabitants of the Cape Peninsula [had] not much first-hand acquaintance with the native and his environment” (1912: 3). Even more, given the topicality of the Peril, it was particularly daring to send hundreds of black males into the white “mother city”; the eastern Cape missions had put together a 200-strong male-voice choir. The pay-off was extensive publicity for the mission and the largest audiences the city hall had ever accommodated (*CT* 11 July 1912: 6). For the Cape Town public, however, black choralism held potentially nothing more than the novelty value of the exotic. It had, thus, to be made to “mean” for a specifically white Capetonian audience, to deliver unambiguously the message of the disciplining mission. In part, this was achieved through the manner in which the choral performances related to the exhibition. Briefly, then, I want to discuss the exhibition itself.

Compared to the metropolitan exhibitions, the Cape Town exhibition was small in scale, occupying a single, though large hall.³ A spectator moving anti-clockwise about the hall would have witnessed the following: the first half consisted of several living ethnological exhibits, with various “ethnic” peoples in “characteristic” settings, which were interspersed with displays of “native crafts”. Having reached the halfway point, and turning back towards the entrance, the spectator then passed a series of stalls, exhibiting and selling

³ For a discussion of the colonial and missionary exhibitions in late-nineteenth-century Britain, see Coombes (1994: chaps. 4, 5 and 8). If there is a paucity of work on the home mission’s role in the representation of the mission fields abroad, this is even more true of the foreign mission’s self-representation in the colonies. We should remember that for the South African mission circa 1910, the fate of the mission project lay as much in the hands of various South African publics – legislators, donors, students – as in the dictates of the mission’s headquarters at home.

the products of the mission industrial school, and which showed “in what directions the native has been changed and uplifted by Christian missions” (*CT* 8 July 1912: 8). The plan of the exhibition, then, told a familiar, nineteenth-century evolutionary tale. Indeed, it was billed as “a complete historical, ethnological and cultural exhibit of the native races of South Africa in relation to the white man” (*CA* 29 June 1912: 9). But in elaborating the rider – “in relation to the white man” – the Cape Town exhibition offered a twist to that tale. While the civilising plot of the metropolitan colonial exhibition had the white bourgeois self as hero of the story (see Corbey 1993: 340-1, 359), the (end)point of the Cape Town exhibition was the mission-educated black. It was a point *The Cape Times* seemed to have got when it moralised the exhibition as “an opportunity for ocular demonstration of mission work”: “The object lesson afforded by the Bushmen in their cave at the one end of the scale, and the skilled workmanship displayed by natives trained in industrial institutions at the other end, is one effective answer to those who doubt or deny the use of mission” (11 July 1912: 6). In the context of the Peril, the utility of mission was to display the civilised black as a model, working, disciplined citizen.⁴

It was for these same ends, as I explored in part one, that the mission had employed the practices of choralism. The Peril choirs put the utility of choralism additionally into practice. For, as Foucault maintained, discipline imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility, and possesses, accordingly, “its own type of ceremony” (1979: 187-8). The black choirs exhibited discipline. They did so, moreover, in a display that was crucial. For the romance of the exotic proved a powerful distraction. It was not the industrial products, but the Bushmen and “native curiosities” that had caught the public and press eye. To trump these exoticisms with the message of discipline was the choirs’ allotted role.

All of this was minutely scripted. The relationship of the choirs to the exhibition, for a start, was circumscribed both physically and temporally. Usually, the exhibition was open only during the afternoon and evening. After having witnessed at the exhibition hall the transformation of savage to civilised black wrought by the mission, spectators attended, as a crowning confirmation, the nightly choral performance of discipline in the city hall;

⁴ The participation of prominent members of the mission-educated elite is a case in point. John L Dube, for one, was quite aware that he, like the other exhibits, had been sent to Cape Town as “a curiosity of what the native people could do”. Nonetheless, he took the stage to assure white audiences that, with a mission education that had taught him, amongst others, “discipline”, he was not the perpetrator of the Peril (*CA* 4 July 1912: 7). Bokwe too got in on the act, giving an illustrated talk on “Native Music”; the contents of the lecture were unfortunately not specified (*CT* 9 July 1912: 11).

evolutionary time had been collapsed into a day's outing. For the spectator attending only the evening meetings, the narrative of progress was no less on show. Bioscope screenings of "characteristic scenes from native life" provided a counterpoint to the choirs, and the chair of the event, whether mayor, missionary or liberal politician, introduced the black singers as "a tribute to the missionary enterprise" (*Report of the Fourth General Missionary Conference* 1912: 126; *CT* 2 July 1912). In addition, there existed little opportunity for misreading black choralism, of being lured by manifest exoticisms. Unlike the "African Choir" on tour in the UK, for example, no pseudo-primitive *mise-en-scène* was enacted for Cape Town; there was no neo-traditional costume, no precolonial songs were programmed (see Erlmann 1999: chap. 4).⁵ These fed into a tradition of exoticism in ethnological show business that played to the British publics' and science's ideas about race (see Lindfors 1999), but did not suit the mission's message in and for South Africa. Rather, if the choirs were to act as a popular public refutation of the Black Peril, which so imperiled the mission's own existence, then they had to be exemplars of the work of civilising-disciplining. The plan seems to have worked. As a *Cape Times* leader summed up the week's events:

The visit of these 300 native singers has been something of a revelation to the public of Cape Town, no less on account of their admirable *behaviour* than on the score of their vocal performances. They commended the cause of missions, and provided an argument for them which appealed to many people much more than addresses and reports (11 July 1912: 6; my emphasis; also *CA* 2 July 1912: 8).

The performance of missionary ideology, then, was most successfully propagated through the power of black choral performance. The mission breathed a sigh of relief: "there is cause for deep thankfulness on account of the impression that ha[s] been left behind in the Mother City. One feels confident that many misunderstandings have been removed" (*CE* Aug. 1912: 135).

What does this tale tell us? Certainly that black choralism was still being used by the mission, and the black elite, as an advertisement for the disciplining mission in 1912. But that is only part of the story. The black reception of the practices of Victorian choralism and the reception of mission choralism as "black" is the other part. The Peril choirs told the full story.

Clearly not intended by the mission organisers to be specimens of the exotic in its strong form – the choirs were ideally the evolutionary opposite of the troglodytic Bushmen,

⁵ The mission had registered its disapproval of the "African Choir's" costume, regarding "the old barbarian dress, a dress none of [the choristers] ever wore at home, [as] physically and morally dangerous" (*CE* Nov. 1891: 170).

closer to the side of the civilising same – the success of the choral mission, nevertheless, traded precisely in difference-familiarity.⁶ Why, in the first instance one might ask, did white audiences pack out the city hall night after night to hear black choirs?⁷ First, and simply, because the choirs were good: they “had been carefully trained”, satisfying the requirements of Western performance “standards” (*CT* 2 July 1912). Hence white “admiration”, the “vast amount of appreciation” (*CT* 4 July 1912: 11). But second, and severally, because they were also different. Black choirs from the east, the location of an “authentic” blackness, *were* a novelty in the capital (*CT* 4 July 1912: 11); the trope of black musicality had preceded the choirs (*CA* 29 June 1912: 9; 2 July 1912: 8; *CT* 4 July 1912: 11). Most significantly, their performances weren’t quite the white same; that is, still different in their familiarity. The “large and varied repertoire”, for instance, which changed for every concert, was described as “native, adapted, and European” (*CT* 11 July 1912: 6). From the programmes printed in the daily press, “European” meant white-composed music in English; “adapted”, for example, Stainer in Xhosa translation; and “native” signified not precolonial music, but primarily choral music newly written by a mission-educated, black composer; Bokwe’s “Msindisi Wa Boni” and “Vuka, Vuka, Debora!” were programmed.⁸ Here, black choral music was music composed by blacks even when in the compositional discourse of the metropole. Nor was it performed quite the same. “Voice production [was] unknown” to the choirs, so to “the Western ear” the voices sounded “black”, they had “an uncommon ring” (*CT* 4 July 1912: 11). I might pursue the difference-sameness of the Peril choirs into “the political”. How it affirmed the ambivalences of the civilising mission discussed earlier. How the complicity of the back elite signalled their struggle to maintain their almost-but-not-quite-white status in the newly formed Union of South Africa, which they had opposed for the erosion of the rights they believed, quite rightly, it would herald. But I want to use the story of black choralism for another end.

The idea of colonialism as an historical conversation has informed my work on choralism. But the idea of conversation, and the evidence of choralism as a dialectic, also provides a

⁶ My use of “exotic” here is not to be confused with “exoticism in music”, generally defined according to the formula: “the composed evocation of...”. For Jonathan Bellman, musical exoticism works by assimilating musical difference into the familiar (1998: ix, xii). If this necessarily makes the familiar unfamiliar, my reading of black choralism emphasises that it primarily defamiliarises, making the familiar a little different (at least for the white listener).

⁷ By contrast, concerts by the visiting Royal Welsh Ladies’ Choir that followed the Peril choirs in the same venue were poorly attended (*CT* 11 July 1912: 8).

⁸ The exceptions were one of Ntsikana’s hymns and “plantation songs”. Hymns were the most popular genre.

useful way into thinking through a much-discussed problem of “theory”: the relationship of postcolonialism to colonialism. In offering the following not especially systematic thoughts I claim to offer no special insights, simply to repose the question: Is a distinction between postcolonialism and colonialism *always* useful?

“Music and (Post)Colonialism” marks a distinction between the object of inquiry and the field of study; my work on music of the time of colonialism is informed by some of that diffuse body of scholarship packaged as “postcolonial theory”, and more generally “postcolonial studies”. This has been involved in its own conversations. One of which is not simply the historian’s dialogue with “the past”, but dialogue with the past as a political conversation with the present. Robert Young is emphatic on this: “The postcolonial does not privilege the colonial. It is concerned with colonial history only to the extent that that history has determined the configurations and power structures of the present” (2001: 4). In one sense, this was the founding motivation of the postcolonial studies project: to (re)tell the stories of colonialism, especially of those who suffered its effects. In giving an account of the beginnings of black choralism, a story yet to be told in any detail, this thesis does just that; I note that work on black South African musicking has been doing precisely this since the 1970s. But Young’s charge goes beyond the righting – writing – of historiographic wrongs and the empowering, for example, of memory entailed therein. For him, the postcolonial conversation is also an active, and activist, engagement with the structures of colonialism lived on after decolonisation. I do not explicitly take on this challenge here, though my work provides a ground for such intervention. By attending to the *history* of our fields we may find cause to interrogate the lingering colonial epistemologies driving, say, the currently fashionable “action research” projects aimed at “improving” contemporary black choral practice.

“Music and (Post)Colonialism”, then, records its debt to the procedures and politics of postcolonial academia. It does so, however, in awareness of another conversation that inheres in the postcolonial studies project: the dialectic of the objects of inquiry themselves, the (ongoing) dialogue between postcolonial and colonial cultures. It is with this conversation that I register my unease, not with the cultural conversation itself – to be sure, quite real – but with the naming as (post)colonial of the subjects in dialogue. It is a problem indexed, I think, by the obligatory definitions of the term which haunt the terrain; what constitutes “the postcolonial” – postcolonialism, the postcolonial moment, postcoloniality... – has become a mandatory prefatory concern of the ubiquitous “introductions to” and “readers on”. This was so from one of the earliest statements on the field, *The Empire Writes*

Back (Ashcroft et al 1989). And subsequent writers, in defining their own positions, have redefined postcolonialism, often prescriptively, in relation to *The Empire*; most recently, Young quipped somewhere (my books are in Amsterdam as I write this in Grahamstown) that while the empire writes *back* it is still the *empire* doing the rewriting. Depending on who you read, postcolonialism is the time on from when colonialism was first imagined, that is, long before it was enacted; the moment of decolonisation; or a utopian future from which all neo-imperialist vestiges have been vanquished. Whatever it might be, then, the postcolonial is perhaps best not thought of as a specific, easily datable, historical “period”. Rather, it suggests a relational moment, its time shifting with the times; or, more precisely with whatever constitutes the colonial. Here, it seems to gain its most persistent definition: vis-à-vis the colonial. The “post-” is not necessarily the time after, but in the political wake of colonialism, “conceptually transcending or superseding the parameters of the other term”, postcolonial culture has “‘got beyond’ colonialism and its ideologies, broken free of its lures to a point from which to mount a critique or counter-attack” (Childs and Williams 1997: 4). For Stephen Slemon, “it locates a specifically anti- or *post*-colonial ... purchase in culture” (1991: 3). Postcolonialism’s dialogue with colonialism has been characterised above all as one of antagonism, somewhat in the manner of Foucault’s “agonistic” relationship (1982: 790). Postcolonialism, as I explored earlier, becomes “resistance”, and vice versa. In a corrective move, others have spoken of a “complicit postcolonialism”, the siding with colonial forces of control and exploitation (Mishra and Hodge 1993). Whatever postcolonialism’s definition, then, the black choralism of colonial time is eminently postcolonial: complicit with Victorian choralism’s colonising actions; going beyond, resisting, metropolitan choralism in its reactions. We might thus talk of black choralism as music of the postcolonial.

But for whom would it so be named? In response to Ella Shohat’s question – “When exactly ... does the ‘post-colonial’ begin?” – Arif Dirlik answered only half facetiously: “When Third World intellectuals have arrived in First World academe” (1994: 328-9). By renaming the cultures of historical colonialism postcolonial we politicise it, imbuing it with meaning for this moment – now. I am not arguing that our histories should not moralise – they cannot but do so. But a reminder of the fact is surely not amiss. So, in “Music and (Post)Colonialism” I have tried to resist postcolonialising black choralism, desisted from opportunistically naming it postcolonial; an all too easy temptation writing from the postcolony. “Music and (Post)Colonialism” marks as it elides a distinction so as to unmask, and unmake, its workings in our historiographic practice.

Appendix: John Knox Bokwe Work List

A list of Bokwe's musical works appears in the entry for the composer in the *South African Music Encyclopedia* (Malan 1979: 202; also Huskisson 1969: 8-9). This is incomplete and frequently inaccurate.

The present list includes only Bokwe's original music, except for the always exceptional transcription-arrangement of Ntsikana's "Ulo Tixo 'Mkulu". Excluded, then, is music that Bokwe arranged, as well as music other than Bokwe's; both *Amaculo ase Lovedale* and *Indoda Yamadoda* include works by other composers, metropolitan and colonial, black and white.

I have not given any details for the texts Bokwe set, whether his own or others'; sometimes Bokwe's texts were set by other composers, sometimes he adapted others' music to his words. Nor, then, do I mention the different texts that were occasionally used for the same song, whether different English texts or English or Xhosa translations.

Dates of composition are seldom known, and those given below are generally for the first known publication of or reference to a work. I have attempted to list all the known print appearances of each work during Bokwe's life. All Bokwe's manuscripts, deposited in the Cory Library for Historical Research, Rhodes University, are in staff notation and undated.¹ The majority are probably transcriptions from existing sol-fa-notated works for a planned staff edition of the second edition of *Amaculo* (see *Amaculo2*). This never materialised, but suggests that the manuscripts date from circa the mid-1890s. Some of the staff manuscripts, however, appear to have been written at a different date, and these I discuss where relevant.

The different editions of *Amaculo* are referenced as, for example, *Amaculo2*, which refers to the second edition. A dash immediately following the edition, that is *Amaculo1-*, indicates a song's appearance in that edition of the collection and in all subsequent editions. I note that there are frequently, though almost always minor, notational variations in a work's different appearances. Unless stated, the music is in sol-fa.

"Msindisi Wa Boni" ("Saviour of Sinners") – June 1875

Christian Express (June 1875). *Amaculo1-* (see *Letters* 20/5/1885). *Free Church of Scotland Monthly* (Nov. 1892) (staff). *Hymns and Melodies* (1893) (sol-fa and staff). *Indoda* (1905). MS (c. June 1883 [see *Letters* 14/6/1883]) [Cory MS 11076].²

"Welcome Home" – July 1875 (see *Amaculo2*)

Amaculo2-.

"Iculo Lomtshato" ("[Kaffir/Xosa] Wedding Song") – c. Sep. 1875 (see *Amaculo2*)³

Amaculo1(?)– (see *Letters* 20/5/1885).

¹ The MSS were deposited by Kirby courtesy of Bokwe's daughter, Frieda Bokwe Matthews. Kirby had written to Bokwe Matthews suggesting that the MSS of black composers, as "part of our country's history", should be preserved in South African research libraries (see Kirby-ZK Matthews and Frieda Bokwe Matthews 15/10/1959; 1/11/1959; and n.d. [c. 11/1959]). Except for "Ulo Tixo 'Mkulu" and an arrangement of "Moya Oyingwele" [Cory MS 11086], the staff notation MSS are all of Bokwe's own music.

² The "Msindisi" MS is one of several which use different paper – marked "The 'Portland'" – to the MSS of the mid-1890s. These were probably written out as gifts – "trophies" – for metropolitan visitors, as the "Msindisi" MS appears to have been for the evangelist Arthur Somerville. Given the class and race politics in which notations were implicated (see chap. 3), Bokwe may have considered staff notation a more "civilised" form in which to present his music to white visitors. He did so in manuscript because the mission press did not have the type to print staff notation (see *Amaculo2*).

³ The Rev. John A Chalmers, author of "Msindisi", referred to "Iculo Lomshato" in a letter to Bokwe dated 24 Sep. 1875, which is mentioned in the press section of the second edition of *Amaculo*.

- “Ulo Tixo ’Mkulu” (“Thou Great God”, or “Great Hymn”) – Nov. 1876
 Orig. “composed” Ntsikana Gaba (c. 1820), transcribed-arranged Bokwe.
Isigidimi sama-Xosa (Nov. 1876) (melody only). *Christian Express* (June 1879)
 (melody only). *Amaculo2-*. *Ntsikana. The Story* (1904 and 1914). MS [Cory 11085].
- “The/My Heavenly Guide” – 1876 (see *Amaculo2*)
Amaculo2-. MS (c. ?) [Cory MS 11077].⁴ MS [Cory MS 11082-3].
- “[Nature’s] Giving” – c. 1879 (see *Amaculo3*)⁵
Amaculo2-. MS incomplete, only final bar [Cory MS 11082].
- “Intlaba-Mkosi Yakwa Tixo” (“The War Cry of God”) – Dec. 1883 (see *Letters* 29/12/1883)
Amaculo2-. *Indoda*. MS (c. ? – see fn. 4) [Cory MS 11080].
- Included in *Amaculo1* – c. June 1885 (see *Letters* 20/5/1885):⁶
 “O! Yehova, Vuka” (“O! Jehovah, Arise”). MS [Cory MS 11089].
 “Sindulule Sinoxolo” (“Dismiss us in Peace”). *Indoda*. MS [Cory MS 11094].
 “Ku Tixo U-Yise” (“To God the Father” [Doxology]).
 “Mayenzek’ Intando Yako” (“Thy Will Be Done”). *Indoda*. MS [Cory MS 11091]
 “Imini Zokupila Asizazi” (“Days of Life Uncertain”). MS [Cory MS 11097].
 “Unganxami, Ungapumli” (“Haste Not, Tarry Not”). MS [Cory MS 11098].
- “[South African/Queen Victoria’s] Jubilee Ode” – c. June 1887 (see *Letters* 31/5/1887;
 1/7/1887)
Amaculo2-. MS incomplete [Cory MS 11099].
 Published as a separate sol-fa sheet by Lovedale together with “Plea for Africa”; date
 unknown.⁷
- “The Peace of God” – 19 Jan. 1890 (see MS [Cory MS 11079])
Amaculo2-. MS (c. ? – see fn. 4) [Cory MS 11079].
 Published as a separate sol-fa sheet with “Her Last Words” (Lovedale, South Africa:
 Lovedale Mission Institution, 1893).
- “Plea for Africa” – 21 July 1892 (see MS [Cory MS 11088])
Amaculo2-. *Indoda*. MS [Cory MS 11088].
 Published as a separate sol-fa sheet by Lovedale together with the “Jubilee Ode”;
 date unknown. Separate staff sheet (with “Send the Light”?) by Patterson, Sons and
 Co. (Glasgow); date unknown (see *Amaculo3*). Published by Berger-Leovault (Paris)
 (c. 1898) (see *Imvo* 12 Dec. 1898).
- “Her Last Words” – 17 Oct. 1893 (see *Amaculo2*)
Amaculo2-. MS [Cory MS 11078].
 Published as a separate sol-fa sheet with “Peace of God” (Lovedale, South Africa:
 Lovedale Mission Institution, 1893).

⁴ One of the two MSS for “Heavenly Guide” uses the “Portland” paper, probably indicating an earlier date than the other MS. The same applies for the MSS of “Intlaba-Mkosi Yakwa Tixo” and “The Peace of God”, both of which use the “Portland” paper.

⁵ Press notices in the third edition of *Amaculo* suggest that Bokwe presented the Scottish singer, David Kennedy, with “Giving”, which he sang on his tour of the Cape. Kennedy’s biography mentions an unnamed “original manuscript duet” (Kennedy 1879: 49). Kirby mistook the duet for ‘Heavenly Guide’ (Kirby-Frieda Bokwe Matthews n.d. [c. 11/1959]).

⁶ I have been unable to locate a copy of the first edition of *Amaculo*. According to Bokwe, it contained about “a dozen original songs, set, in the Sol-fa Notation, to Kaffir words” (*Amaculo3*: iii). From a letter Bokwe wrote to Chalmers, we know it contained the six tunes listed above, as well as “Msindisi”, and possibly “Iculo Lomtshato” (see *Letters* 20/5/1885).

⁷ The sheet was mentioned in *Imvo* (16 May 1894).

Newly included in *Amaculo2* – c. 1894:

Sacred Kaffir Songs

- “Bawo Ndixolele” (“Father, Forgive”). MS [Cory MS 11083].
“Buya Mpefumlo Wam” (“Return, My Soul”).
“Guquka” (“Repent”). *Indoda*. MS [Cory MS 11096].
“Imini ye-Nkosi” (“The Lord’s Day”). MS [Cory MS 11095].
“Umanyano” (“Unity”). MS [Cory MS 11092].
“Uzuko ku-Tixo” (“To God Be Praise” [Doxology]). MS [Cory MS 11093].
“Wafa, Wafa Umkululi” (“The Saviour Died”). MS [Cory MS 11081].⁸
“Yesu Hlala Nam” (“Jesus, Abide With Me”). MS [Cory MS 11087].
“Yizani Makolwa” (“Come, Ye Believers”).
“Zulu Kaya Lam” (“Heaven, My Home”).

Sacred English Songs

“I Think of Thee, My God”.

Miscellaneous Songs

- “Five O’Clock in the Morning/Chorus for Lovedale Boys”.
“[Lovedale] Holiday/Vacation Song”. MS [Cory MS 11084].

“Vuka, Vuka, Debora!” (“Awake, Awake, Deborah!”) – c. 1905
Indoda. Amaculo3– .

Newly included in *Amaculo3* – c. 1910:

Xosa Devotional and Miscellaneous Songs

- “Kugqityiwe” (“’Tis Finished”). MS [Cory MS 11084a].⁹
“Ndilundwendwe, Ndingumhambi” (“I am a Stranger and a Pilgrim”).
“Vuka Zion, Kanya” (“Rise Zion, Shine”).
“Sive, Nkosi Yetu” (“Hear Us, Lord”).
“Isibeno so Dade” (“The Sister’s Appeal”).
“Ingoma Yebuto Lomtshato” (“Marriage Social Hymn”).

Music set to English Words

“Ntsikana’s Vision”.¹⁰

Amaculo4 – 1915 ¹¹

Amaculo5 – 1922 ¹²

“God Bless the Prince of Wales” – c. ?
MS [Cory MS 11090].

⁸ Written on the “Portland” paper, the MS is also an English paraphrase of Tiyo Soga’s Xhosa hymn, made by Mrs GH Knight of Glasgow who had done the same for “Msindisi”. If the MS of “Wafa, Wafa Umkululi” accompanied that of “Msindisi”, the composition may date from the early 1880s.

⁹ “Kugqityiwe” is the only song in MS that did not appear by the second edition of *Amaculo* at the latest. This probably suggests an earlier date of composition. The MS is marked p.14, near what would have been the middle of the manuscript book – the MSS are now loose sheets – making it unlikely that Bokwe would have interpolated a copy of a work of much later amongst MSS of earlier works. Of course, as 1910 is the latest possible date of composition for the song, it could have been published anytime between the second and third editions, that is 1894 and 1910. As none of the other new songs that appear in the third edition of *Amaculo* are in MS, it seems that by this time Bokwe had given up the idea of preparing a staff edition of the collection.

¹⁰ The text by AK Soga was published in *Imvo* in Oct. 1897 (Hodgson 1984: 37).

¹¹ I have been unable to locate a copy of the fourth edition.

¹² The fifth and final edition contains no new original music by Bokwe. Newly included, at least from the third edition, are songs by other composers and additional arrangements by Bokwe.

The fifth does not have its own preface, but reproduces the preface of the fourth edition, which suggests that it was probably published posthumously, just after Bokwe’s death. It is likely, therefore, that the contents of the fourth and fifth editions are the same.

Bibliography

The bibliography consist of three sections: 1. manuscript and rare material; 2. published print matter, primary and secondary, including periodical publications and music; 3. audio-visual material.

1. Manuscript and Rare Material

Includes ephemera and government reports. Excludes John Knox Bokwe's music manuscripts (see Appendix).

The location of material is indicated after the reference. Cory=Cory Library for Historical Research, Rhodes University; NLSA=National Library of South Africa (Cape Town division).

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- _____. Letters to David Stormont (25/4/1898; 14/12/1898). [Cory MS 14 303]
- Handbook and Programme of the South African Missionary Exhibition, 2-9 July 1912.* 1912. Cape Town: Cape Times Printers. [NLSA]
- Kirby, Percival R. Letters to and from RHW Shepherd (4/3/1958; 10/3/1958; 15/3/1958; 26/3/1958; 11/4/1958). [Cory MS 14712(u)]
- _____. Letters to and from ZK Matthews and Frieda Bokwe Matthews (15/10/1959; 1/11/1959; n.d. [c.11/1959]). [Cory MS 11071-4]
- Programme of the Tonic Sol-fa Jubilee Celebration, Grahamstown, 30 March 1892.* [Cory PR 2834]
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2. Published Print Material

a. Periodical Publications

Alice Times and Seymour and Peddie Gazette

Bradford Observer

Cape Argus

Cape Times

Christian Express [*Kaffir Express* until 1875]

Education Gazette

Free Church of Scotland Monthly

Grahamstown Journal
Ilanga Lase Natal
Illustrated London News
Imvo Zabantsundu
Isigidimi sama-Xosa
Izwi Labantu
Kaffir Express [Christian Express from 1876]
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Ludgate Monthly
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Magazine of Music
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Musical Herald [Tonic Sol-fa Reporter until 1890]
Musical Standard
Musical Times
Musical World
Parish Choir; or, Church Music Book
Popular Educator
Port Elizabeth Telegraph and Eastern Province Standard
Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review
School Music Review
South African Outlook
Tonic Sol-fa Reporter [Musical Herald from 1891]

b. Music

Excludes Bokwe's printed sheet music (see Appendix).

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3. Audio-Visual Material

a. Discography

John Knox Bokwe. "A Plea for Africa". Hope Fountain Native Girls' Choir. 17 Nov. 1932. Gramophone Company OT 990-2 / HMV GU 261.

Ntsikana Music Collection 2000: Songs of the First Christian Xhosa. Various artists. CD compiled by Dave Dargie. 2000. University of Fort Hare, Alice, South Africa: Dave Dargie.

Education. SABC Choristers. 2000. Gallo CDGMP 40817.

Benjamin Tyamzashe. "Hayabantu Abamnyama". Xabanisa's Xosa Choir. 14 Dec. 1932. Gramophone Company OT 1110-1 / HMV GU 368.

Benjamin Tyamzashe. "Sitandwa Sam". Xabanisa's Xosa Choir. 14 Dec. 1932. Gramophone Company OT 1109-1 / HMV GU 368.

b. Videorecording

Choral Music from South Africa. Allen Glen Ethnic Dance Group. Edited by René Human. 2001. Florida Hills, South Africa: Africa Music and Choral Trust.

